
Chinese speakers

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Distribution

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, TAIWAN, HONG KONG, MACAO, SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA; there are also large communities of Chinese speakers throughout southeast Asia, Oceania and North and South America. About one fifth of the world's population are native speakers of Chinese.

Introduction

The Chinese language, or the Han language, as the Chinese call it, is a collection of numerous dialects which may be classified into eight dialect groups sometimes referred to as different languages): Northern Chinese (also known as Mandarin), Wu, Hsiang, Kan, Hakka, Northern Min, Southern Min. and Yueh (i.e. Cantonese). While the last four dialects are the mother tongues of most Chinese speakers outside China. Northern Chinese is the native dialect of over 70 per cent of the Chinese population at large, and is the basis of modern Standard Chinese, which is the accepted written language for all Chinese, and has been promoted as the national language.

The Chinese dialects share not only a written language but also important basic features at all structural levels. The problems discussed in this chapter are by and large common to speakers of all dialects.

Chinese and English belong to two different language families (Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European), and have many structural differences. Difficulties in various areas at all stages of English language learning may be expected.

Phonology

General

The phonological system of Chinese is very different from that of English. Some English phonemes do not have Chinese counterparts and are hard to learn. Others resemble Chinese phonemes but are not identical to them in pronunciation, and thus cause confusion. Stress, intonation and juncture are all areas of difficulty. In general, Chinese speakers find English hard to pronounce, and have trouble learning to understand the spoken language.

Vowels

1. There are more vowel contrasts in English than in Chinese, so English vowels are closer to each other in terms of position of articulation than Chinese vowels. This means that more effort is required to distinguish them.
2. The contrast between /\i/ and /\u/ has no equivalent in Chinese. Learners confuse pairs such as eat and it, lean and bin.
3. The same applies to /\u/ and /\o/, leading to confusion, for instance, between fool and full, Luke and look.
4. /\e/ does not occur in Chinese. Learners tend to nasalise it. It may also be confused with /\e/, /\o/ or /\ii/, so that a word such as cap might be pronounced \kæp\', \kæp\, \kap\ or \kip\'.
5. /\a/ has no equivalent in Chinese. Learners sometimes make it sound like /\a\, /\o\, /\a/ or a front vowel. So for instance short might be pronounced /\a\r\, /\a\t\, /\a\r/.
6. /\i/ is sometimes replaced by /\i\, which is a close approximation to a Chinese phoneme.
7. Chinese diphthongs are usually pronounced with quicker and smaller tongue and lip movements than their English counterparts. Learners therefore make these sounds too short, with not enough distinction between the two component vowels.

Consonants

1. In the three pairs of stops /p/ and /b/, /\i/ and /\d/, /\k/ and /\g/, the unaspirated group /b/, /\d/ and /\g/ are voiced in English but are on the whole voiceless in Chinese. Chinese students tend to lose the voiced feature in speaking English.
2. /\i/ is absent from most Chinese dialects. As a result, it is sometimes treated like /\i/ or /\u/; invite may be pronounced 'invite'; live pronounced 'lif'.
3. Many Chinese dialects do not have /\i/. Learners speaking these dialects find it difficult to distinguish, for instance, night from light.
4. /\k/ and /\d/ do not occur in Chinese. /\k/ is likely to be replaced by /\k/ or /\k/, and /\d/ by /\l/ or /\l/. So for example thin may be pronounced tin, thin or tin; this may be pronounced 'dis' or 'zis'.
5. /\u/ tends to be pronounced as a heavily aspirated velar fricative (as in Scottish loch), which approximately to a Chinese consonant.
6. Most Chinese dialects do not have /r/. The usual error is to substitute /s/: rise may be pronounced rice.

7. /s/, /z/ and /j/ are distantly similar to a group of three different Chinese consonants. Many learners' pronunciation of these is therefore heavily coloured and sounds foreign.

8. Some southern Chinese find /j/ and /r/ difficult to distinguish, leading to the kind of mistake caricatured in jokes about 'fleed lice', etc.

9. Final consonants in general cause a serious problem. As there are few final consonants in Chinese, learners tend either to add an extra vowel at the end, or to drop the consonant and produce a slight glottal or unreleased stop: duck, for instance, may be pronounced /dak/ or /dak?/; wife may be pronounced /waife/ or /waif?/.

10. /r/ in final position is particularly difficult: it may be replaced by /l/, or followed by /l/, or simply dropped: bill, for instance, may be pronounced /bl/ or /bl?/.

Consonant clusters

1. Initial consonant clusters are lacking in Chinese, and cause problems. The common error is to insert a slight vowel sound between the consonants, pronouncing spoon, for instance, as 'sipoon'.

2. Final clusters are even more troublesome. Learners are likely to make additional syllables, or to simplify the cluster (for instance, by dropping the last consonant). So dogs may be pronounced /dogaz/ or /dogz/; chips may be pronounced /chipsiz/ or /chipsiz/.

Rhythm and stress

Reduced syllables are far less frequent in Chinese than in English. Moreover, these syllables in Chinese are usually pronounced more prominently than in English, and undergo fewer phonetic changes. Thus learners tend to stress too many English syllables, and to give the weak syllables a full rather than reduced pronunciation:

'fish' and 'chips' (with and stressed and pronounced 'and')

'The capital of Britain is London'. (with both the and of emphasised)

When students try to reduce the accent on the English weak forms, they sometimes find them so hard to pronounce that they omit them: 'fish'

'chips'.

Intonation

Pitch changes in Chinese are mainly used to distinguish meanings of individual characters (the 'tones'): sentence intonation shows little

variation. The English use of intonation patterns to affect the meaning of a whole utterance is therefore difficult for Chinese to grasp. Unfamiliar with these patterns, Chinese learners tend to find them strange and funny. Some add a tone value (often a high falling tone) to individual syllables. Thus their speech may sound flat, jerky or 'sing-song' to English ears.

Juncture

The monosyllabic nature of basic Chinese units has led to learners' separating English words rather than joining them smoothly into a 'stream of speech'. This contributes to the staccato effect of a Chinese accent. Learners need considerable practice in this area.

Orthography; reading and writing

Spelling

The writing system of Chinese is non-alphabetic. Chinese learners therefore have great difficulty in learning English spelling patterns, and are prone to all sorts of errors. Common mistakes include:

1. Failure to apply standard spelling conventions:
   - dinner spelled *diner
   - eliminate spelled *eliminat

2. Problems arising from the lack of hard and fast spelling rules in English:
   - *doctor
   - *patten
   - *liv
   - *Wednesday
   - *miser

3. Mistakes resulting from learners' incorrect pronunciation:
   - campus spelled *campus
   - swollen spelled *swollen
   - around spelled *around
   - sincerely spelled *sincerely

4. Omission of syllables:
   - *unfortunally
   - *determin
   - *studing

Reading and writing

Alphabetic scripts present Chinese learners with quite new problems of visual decoding. The way the information is 'spread out' in each word seems cumbersome for a reader used to the compact ideograms of Chinese. Individual words may take a relatively long time to identify, and (since words take up more space than in Chinese) the eye cannot take in so much text at a time. Chinese learners therefore tend initially to have slow reading speeds in English relative to their overall level of proficiency.

Alphabetic handwriting, on the other hand, presents no serious problems for Chinese learners.
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Grammar

General

There are certain similarities between the syntactic structures of English and Chinese, yet the divergence is vast. It is advisable not to regard anything as a 'basic' point which students 'ought to know'.

Parts of speech

Parts of speech in Chinese are not always formally distinguished. There is no established comprehensive grammatical classification, and the same word may often serve different structural functions. As a result, learners have to try hard to remember the set classes of English words and their functions in a sentence. They may fail to distinguish related words such as difficult and difficulty in terms of their parts of speech, or to appreciate the fact that certain functions in a sentence can only be fulfilled by words from certain classes:

- She likes walk.
- I have not son.
- He is not doubt about the correct of his argument.
- It is very difficulty to convince him.

Verb forms

Chinese is a non-inflected language. What English achieves by changing verb forms, Chinese expresses by means of adverbials, word order and context. English inflection seems generally confusing and causes frequent errors:

1. Subject–verb concord:
- Everybody are here.
- I like his story.
- Biling and北京大学 has a shared kitchen.

2. Irregular verb formation:
- strided
- hunted
- flied
- blew

3. Structure of complex verb forms:
- The wind was breaking by the wind.

Time, tense and aspect

1. Chinese expresses the concept of time very differently from English. It does not conjugate the verb to reflect time relations. Learners have serious difficulty in handling English tenses and aspects. Errors like these are common:
- I have seen her two days ago.
- I found that the room is empty.

- My brother left home since nine o'clock.
- She will go by the time you get there.

2. Some students have the false impression that the names of the tenses indicate time. For example, they think that the 'present tense' indicates 'present time'. They therefore find puzzling utterances like:
- *There is a film tonight.
- *The play we just saw tells a tragic story.

3. Progressive aspect causes difficulty:
- *What do you read? (for What are you reading?)
- *I sit here for a long time.

4. Certain conventions in using tenses cannot be explained semantically, which causes problems. In adverbial clauses indicating future time, for example, learners do not necessarily appreciate why the 'present' tense is required:
- *We shall go to the country if it will be a nice day tomorrow.
- *She will submit the paper before she will leave the college.

Verb patterns

1. Often transitive verbs are used as intransitives, and vice versa:
- He married with a charming girl.
- She talked a few words with one of the passengers.

2. Patterns of complementation cause difficulty even for advanced learners:
- I suggest to come earlier.
- The grass smells sweetly.
- Most people describe he is handsome.
- She told that she'd be here.

3. It is particularly difficult for the Chinese to differentiate between the use of an infinitive (with or without to), a present participle, a past participle and a gerund. One frequently hears mistakes like:
- I was very exciting. (or excited)
- I'm sorry I forgot bringing your book.
- You'd better to come earlier.
- She's used to get up at seven.

4. Adjectives and verbs are frequently identical in Chinese. Thus the verb be tends to be dropped when followed by predicative adjectives:
- *I busy.
- *She very happy.

Auxiliaries; questions and negatives

Chinese does not use auxiliaries to form questions and negatives. The insertion of do/don't, etc. presents problems:
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*How many brothers you have?  
*I did not finish my work yesterday.

Question tags meaning Is that so? Is that right? are used very commonly in Chinese. These are often converted to an all-purpose is it? isn’t it? in English:

*He liked it, is it?  
*You don’t read that sort of books, isn’t it?

Modals

Certain meanings of English modals have direct equivalents in Chinese modals and can be readily understood. But other meanings which have no Chinese counterparts are problematic. For instance, should as in I think you should take up writing is easy as it corresponds to a Chinese modal, yinggai. But should is more difficult in the utterances below since it has no straightforward Chinese translations:

*It’s strange that you should say this.  
*We should be grateful if you could do it.

On the whole, English modals indicate a wider range of meaning and feeling than their Chinese counterparts. Chinese learners therefore tend not to use them as frequently as they should, and may fail to express the nuances that English modals convey. Compare:

This can’t be true. I might come.  
This is definitely not true. I’m probably coming.

One point needs particular mention here. Communication in English requires appropriate polite forms of instructions, invitations, requests, and suggestions, in which modals play a central role. Not being able to use modals (and associated patterns) adequately, Chinese students often fail to comply with the English conventions, and may appear abrupt. For example, they may say such things as:

1. Please read this article.
2. We hope that you will come and have lunch with us tomorrow.
3. You come and sit here please.
4. I suggest that you have a word with him.

when it would normally be more polite to say:

1. You may like to read this article.
2. We were wondering whether you could come and have lunch with us tomorrow.
3. Would you like to have a word with him?
4. You might want to have a word with him.

Even advanced learners are sometimes unable to appreciate the shades of meaning involved in the use of different modals:

Can you do me a favour? (for Could . . .)  
I need to finish the report today. (for I must . . .)

Subjunctives

Chinese does not differentiate subjunctive from indicative mood. Learners are therefore likely to replace the former by the latter in English:

*If I am you, I shan’t go.  
*I suggest that this applicant may be considered at the next meeting.
*I wish you can come.
*I t’s time that we should leave.

Articles

There are no articles in Chinese. Students find it hard to use them consistently correctly. They may omit necessary articles:

*Let’s make fire.  
*I can play piano.

or insert unnecessary ones:

*He finished the school last year.
*He was in a pain.

or confuse the use of definite and indefinite articles:

*Xiao Ying is a tallest girl in the class.
*He smashed the vase in the rage.

Gender

There is no gender distinction in the spoken form of the Chinese pronouns: for example, he, she and it share the same sound. Chinese learners often fail to differentiate them in spoken English:

*I’ve a brother, and she’s working in a factory.  
*Look at the actress over there. I know him.
*Julie is a good director. His films are very engrossing.

Number

Plurality is rarely expressed in Chinese. -s tends to be dropped:

*I have visited some place around York.  
*I’ve seen a lot of play lately.

This is particularly true in speech, where there is already a problem with the pronunciation of final consonant clusters.

The countable/uncountable distinction

Chinese students sometimes find the English concept of countability hard to grasp. For example, furniture, equipment, luggage, news, etc. can all be counted in the Chinese mind. Hence such errors as:
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* Let me tell you an interesting news.
* She’s brought many luggages with her.

Pronouns

English uses pronouns much more than Chinese, which tends to drop them when they may be understood. Pronouns such as those in bold type in the following sentences sometimes disappear under the influence of Chinese:

The teacher came in with a big book in his right hand.
I bought the book before I left the shop.

In personal pronouns, Chinese does not make the distinction between the subjective case (e.g. I) and the objective case (e.g. me). In the possessive, it does not distinguish the adjectival (e.g. my) from the nominal (e.g. mine). Students sometimes choose the wrong category of pronouns in English:
* I am like she.
* The book is my.

Word order

A. Questions

Chinese word order is identical in both statements and questions. Inversion in English interrogative sentences may be ignored or may be applied wrongly:
* You and your family last summer visited where?
* When she will be back?
* What was called the film?
* Would have she gone home?

B. Indirect Questions

Chinese uses inset direct questions in indirect questions. This sometimes leads to errors such as:
* He asked me what does she like.
* She wondered where was her father.

C. Inversion in General

Not only interrogatives, but also other sentences with inverted word order are error-prone:
* Only by doing so they could succeed.
* He was unhappy, so I was.

Postmodifiers

Noun modifiers in Chinese, no matter whether they are words, phrases or clauses, come before the nouns they modify. So English post-modifiers often hinder comprehension. In production, errors like these emerge:
* This is important something.
* This is a very difficult to solve problem.
* That is the place where motion pictures are made there.

Position of adverbials

Chinese adverbials usually come before verbs and adjectives in a sentence. A learner is very likely to say, for instance:
1. Tomorrow morning I’ll come.
2. This evening at seven o’clock we are going to meet.
when it is more natural in English to say:
1. I’ll come tomorrow morning.
2. We are going to meet at seven o’clock this evening.

Conjunctions and compound sentences

A common mistake is to duplicate conjunctions, as their Chinese equivalents usually appear in pairs:
* Although she was tired, but she went on working.
* Because I didn’t know him, so I didn’t say anything.

Prepositions

The use of English prepositions is highly idiomatic and difficult for learners. Errors of all kinds are common:
* What are you going to do in this morning?
* I go York in May.
* He is suffering with cold.
* The text is too difficult to me.

Vocabulary

False equivalents

English and Chinese words overlap a great deal in meaning. However, apart from some nouns, they rarely produce exact equivalents. The rough Chinese counterparts given to learners are therefore to a large extent false equivalents, which often lead to ‘Chinglish’ or even nonsensical errors.
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For example, allergic and sensitive can both be translated into one Chinese expression 明感. Thus:

*I have grown allergic to the usage of English.

Similarly, the false equivalent of until, zhidào, leads to this sentence:

*He took a rest until he had finished his work.

when the intended sentence is:

He did not take a rest until he had finished his work.

‘Small verbs’

‘Small verbs’ such as be, bring, come, do, get, give, go, have, make, take, work are characterised by the range of distinctive meanings each of them possesses and by the ease with which they combine with other words to form special expressions, many of which are highly idiomatic. These verbs do not have equivalents in Chinese and are very difficult to handle. Students tend to avoid using them. For instance, a Chinese learner is likely to say:

1. Please continue with your work.
2. He finally yielded.

instead of:

1. Please get on with your work.
2. He finally gave in.

Lack of command of such items leads to various errors:

*The plane takes up easily. (for takes off)
*They’ve worked forward this plan. (for worked out)

Idiomatic expressions

Idioms are as difficult for the Chinese as for any other language learners. One area that needs special attention is that of social interaction, where Chinese and English typically employ different expressions to fulfill the same function. For instance, three common Chinese greetings translate directly as:

Have you eaten?
Where are you going?
You have come.
(And Chinese students are indeed frequently heard to use these expressions in greeting English people!)

Other examples include:

*Did you play very happy? (for Did you have a good time?)
*Don’t be polite. (for Make yourself at home.)
*Please eat more. (for Would you like a little more?)

Culture

Traditional Chinese culture places a very high value on learning. An English language teacher can expect to find his or her pupils admirably industrious and often in need of dissuasion from working too hard.

A related view in many Chinese students’ minds is that learning needs serious and painstaking effort. Activities which are ‘pleasurable’ and ‘fun’ are rather suspect as not being conducive to proper learning. Teachers who have adopted an approach involving ‘learning while having fun’ should be prepared to show its validity.

Teachers are highly respected in Chinese culture, and are typically regarded as being knowledgeable and authoritative. Out of respect, Chinese students are usually not as ready to argue or to voice opinions in class as European students.

Regarding methods of learning, a salient feature of Chinese education is rote memorisation. One reason for this is that all the basic written units of Chinese, the characters, have to be learned by heart individually. This method plays a significant part in the way English is learned in China, and may predispose some Chinese students to spend considerable time on memorisation at the expense of practice.

Sample of written Chinese

Transliteration of Chinese text with a word for word translation

来信收到了，谢谢你的问候。没有早些回信，
请原谅！

liéng:

lìng:

lái xìn shōu dào le, xièxiè ni de wén hòu, méi you zào xiè
come letter receive, thank your regard. not earlier
hùi xìn, qīng yuánliàng!
return letter, please forgive!

ni jīnlái shèngjī zènmeyáng? xué shùn lì ma?
you recently body how? study smooth [interrogative]?

yídīng xiāng wàng chāng yí yáng guò de hén yú kuài
certainly as usual same live very happy
bu duo xie le, qing daiwen quanjia
no more write, please on my behalf ask all family
hao, pan zaori huixin!
well, look forward to early return letter!
zhuni xinnian kuaiile!
wish you new year happy!
cimin yijiuasis nian yuandan
cimin 1984 year new year's day

An idiomatic translation

Dear Lirong,

Thank you for your letter, and thanks for the regards. I'm sorry that I didn't write earlier. Please forgive me!

How have you been recently? Is everything going well with your studies? Are you enjoying life as usual?

I'm very well. I've got a girl-friend now. Her name is Shizhu. She's very beautiful. Yesterday was New Year's Eve. I went to her place and spent the evening with her family. The sitting-room of her house was decorated with all sorts of paper flowers, presents and coloured lights, hanging from the ceiling, the furniture and the walls. Shizhu suggested that we play a game. We were to take down presents with our eyes covered and to keep the first ones we got. The one I got was very good, so was the one Shizhu's brother got. I had a lovely time and didn't leave until nearly dawn. Before I left we all agreed to meet at my house on the second day of the New Year. I really wish you could be here!

Thank you for inviting my brother and me to stay with you in the summer. We would love to come. My sister who is studying abroad will be back by then. I wonder whether she could come with us?

I'll stop here for now. Please give my regards to your family. I'm looking forward very much to hearing from you soon.

A Happy New Year to you.

Cimin
China celebrates Long March with musicals, theme park

By ELAINE KURTENBACH
Associated Press Writer

BEIJING — The 1934-36 Long March, an epic retreat across China that saved the Red Army to fight and eventually win China's long civil war, is a heroic milestone in Communist Party history.

On the 60th anniversary of the march, the political heirs of revolutionary leader Mao Tse-tung have gone all out to dramatize the legend and fortify their own claims to power.

They put the Communist Party propaganda machine to work churning out Long March musicals, exhibitions, ballets, books, even a theme park.

That the government is reaching back six decades for inspiration says much about its desire to draw attention away from more recent, more controversial events.

Last spring, it virtually ignored the 30th anniversary of the start of the ultra-leftist 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, when Mao turned Chinese youths loose on a rampage of destruction and cruelty.

But the former leadership turned out recently for a lavish, nationally televised musical commemorating the 60th Long March.

Soldiers performed precision dances with bayonets.

A motorcade crossed the stage with an actor portraying paramilitary leader Deng Xiaoping waving from the sunroof of his Red Flag limousine.

The TV camera periodically panned across the front-row tier of today's leaders: President Jiang Zemin, Premier Li Peng and others, reminding viewers of their link to the epic event.

Jiang, 70, and Li, 68, are not among the approximately 700 remaining Long March survivors in the senior ranks of the Communist Party. But they have done their best to associate themselves with the civil war feats of the almost extinct revolutionary generation.

The Long March began in 1934 when Nationalist troops launched a powerful offensive against the Communists' stronghold in southern Jiangxi province.

Some 20,000 Red Army soldiers started the trek.

Two years, 7,750 miles and 18 mountain ranges later, only 6,000 remained when various commands reassembled in the north.

But the Long March proved a turning point in the war, by winning the Red Army a safe haven to regroup under Mao's command.

For the next decade, the Communists fought both the Nationalists and Japanese invaders from their base in Yanan, Shaanxi province.

"The victory of the Long March proves that the Communist Party is a great and glorious party," Jiang said in speech commemorating the 60th anniversary. "The Long March stands as a monument in Chinese history and will live forever with rivers and mountains and shine forever with the sun and the moon."

Government officials turned down repeated requests for an interview with a Long March veteran. This is a campaign orchestrated for a domestic audience.

Officials in central Henan province plan a theme park — a road depicting the inhospitable scenery along the Long March. Long March videos and CD-ROMs are on sale in bookstores.

The government-run China Central Television and the navy produced a seven-part Long March movie for television.

Most of the hundreds of schoolchildren brought daily to the Beijing Military Museum's exhibition on the Long March scanner through with scarcely a glance at the murals, historical records and map of the various Red Army routes, traced in red-to-pink neon.

"I doubt it would make much of an impression on children of today," said a teacher visiting the museum with her 6-year-old daughter. "It was a different era."

But some visitors appeared impressed.

"I'm in awe," said a herbal teeseller from Shandong who took time during a business trip to inspect the displays. "People today probably wouldn't have the courage to do that."

That is what worries the Communist Party.

A commentary in the China Daily decried the mind set of Chinese who only think about getting a house in the suburbs, a car and a fat account at the People's Bank of China.

The question is "how to reweave the moral fabric of present day China if we do not want to tarnish the hard-earned victory," it said.
LDS writer leaves mark in China, not U.S.

By SUSAN KENNEDY
Universe Staff Writer

Although she spent her life making history, Helen Foster Snow died last month in relative obscurity.

Despite her Utah birth and ancestry of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, her life and accomplishments are not well-known in the United States or even in Utah.

Several BYU professors and Snow’s niece are working to change that.

“Snow was one of the foremost journalists to chronicle the tumultuous period of Chinese nationalism,” said Alf Fratte, a communications professor with an emphasis in journalism history. He said Snow’s firsthand account helps historians to “see” what happened in China during the 1930s.

Paul V. Hyer, professor of Chinese history, said he became interested in Snow when he discovered she was from Utah. Hyer said he believes she was heavily influenced by her LDS background.

“The informal education” Helen received during her formative years was very important in giving Helen both roots and wings,” Hyer said. “Much of her self-image, values, vision and aspirations came from her mother, her network of relatives, living with grandparents, from family reunions and, especially important, the influence of her mother as a role model.”

Hyer also sees a connection between the work that Snow did with organizing Chinese cooperatives and the United Order, with which she was familiar.

Sheril Foster Bischoff, Snow’s niece, has been working with Hyer to help educate Utah about her contributions.

“The Chinese regard her as a friend,” Bischoff said. “We want to reciprocate the interest expressed by the Chinese so that the bridge that she built between the U.S. and China can continue.”

Bischoff has compiled a photo essay entitled Bridging, which outlines the importance of Snow’s life.

Bischoff, Hyer and others were instrumental in bringing An-Wei, her biographer, to BYU last week. The president of the Sino-American Society in Xi’an, Shaanxi Province in China, An-Wei drew a crowd of around 50 students to his lecture.

Snow dedicated her life to building bridges across the United States and China through her writing. She was one of three foreign women to interview Mao Tse-tung. She also interviewed Chou En-lai and Chu Teh and wrote their life stories, as well as those of about 30 other communists who became leaders of China.

Snow was the second foreign woman to visit Yenan and the Chinese Red areas and the eighth Westerner to get into the “red” areas before World War II.

Under the pen name Nym Wales, she wrote around 50 manuscripts about China. One of her books, “Inside Red China,” is considered to be one of the classics on that period.

Along with her husband Edgar Snow and Rewi Alley, a colleague, she initiated the Gung Ho Industrial Cooperatives in China. She also coined the term “gung ho,” which means working together.

Twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1981 and 1982, Snow was also given an Award for Contributing to International Understanding and Friendship in 1991.

She was given the honorary title of Friendship Ambassador by the Chinese People’s Association last year.
Major University English Tests in China: Their Importance, Nature, and Development

Caiping Sun and Lynn Henrichsen
Brigham Young University, Utah, U.S.A.

Among the world’s languages, Chinese has the greatest number of native speakers. Nevertheless, outside of China (and other Chinese-language countries and communities) Chinese is not commonly spoken. For this reason, English is widely studied in China as a language for international communication. As China has grown into an economically powerful and politically influential country over the last few decades, more and more communication between the Chinese and the outside world has required proficiency in the English language. Consequently, English is now studied in China on a grand scale. The English-learning population in China is estimated to be around 300 million (Hong, 2009). That means there are more learners of English in China than native speakers of English in the United States (Sun, L., 2009).

For these reasons, English language teaching and testing constitute an important part of the Chinese education system. The number of English learners and speakers in the People’s Republic of China has been growing since the start of China’s 1979 Open Door Policy. This policy has led to much international trade by Sino-foreign enterprises and many Chinese students studying abroad. Even more people started learning English when China became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2001, and then again when the Chinese prepared for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 International Exposition in Shanghai. From being a subject that was ignored and even abolished completely in China during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), English has developed into not only one of the most important subjects at all levels of school, from kindergarten to graduate school, but also a subject on which every Chinese student who tries to get into an institution of higher education will be tested.

Many reports have been written by Chinese scholars and outsiders regarding English language teaching in China (Campbell & Yong, 1993; Cowan, Light, Mathews, & Tucker, 1979; Henrichsen, 2007; Liu, 1988; Maley, 1983; McKay, 1994; Wang, 1999; Weng, 1996). In contrast, relatively few articles and books about English language testing in China have been published for international readers and scholars (Cheng, 2008; Guo, 2006; Liu, 2010; Yang, 2003). Chinese language educators and researchers themselves did not start serious studies in foreign language teaching and learning until about twenty
years ago, and the history of research on English testing in China is even shorter due to the relatively short history of English tests in the PRC. In addition, because of the isolation of the Chinese from the rest of the world after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, it is hard to find articles published by Chinese in international academic journals before 1980. This was especially the case during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when China did not have any relations or contact with Western countries.

This situation began to change, however, when China’s doors to the outside world opened, and when more and more Chinese started studying or conducting research at western universities. In China also, Chinese language educators and researchers began doing research on language teaching and learning, and later, on language testing. However, publications in international journals of research conducted by Chinese scholars are still limited. Consequently, there is a serious discrepancy between the huge number of English teachers and learners in China and the little knowledge about this situation that has been disseminated to international educators and the outside world. To help remedy that unfortunate situation, this article provides an introduction to and overview of the Chinese system for testing students’ English language skills.

**High-Stakes English Examinations in China**

More than a dozen different, national, high-stakes English examinations are offered in China every year. One thing is common to all of them—no matter which one students take—the remainders of their lives are determined by the results of those exams, especially the college-level English tests. For example, if high school seniors fail to score high enough on the National Matriculation English Test (NMET), they lose the opportunity to get into universities. If college students fail the College English Test—Band Four (CET-4), they will not receive their degrees, which makes it challenging for them to find jobs after graduation and impossible to pursue graduate studies.

The high-stakes nature of these and other tests makes many educational activities in China very exam-oriented. Teachers and students alike are all very driven by them. The teachers focus on helping their students prepare for these tests, and the students focus on passing them.

High-stakes English examinations in China can be classified into two major types: entrance examinations and school completion/leaving certificate examinations. The entrance examinations are given in order to screen candidates desiring to enter high school, university, or graduate school. The major English entrance exams include the National Matriculation English Test (NMET), the Graduate School Entrance English Exam (GSEE), the English Test for Admission to Institutions of Higher Education for Adults, the Entrance English Examination for Self-Taught Higher Education, the Entrance English Test for TV-University, and the Entrance English Test for Correspondence University.

In contrast, the purpose of the certificate or school-leaving tests is to evaluate the level of English proficiency students have achieved through coursework already taken.

The major certificate tests include the College English Test (CET 4 & CET 6), the Test for English Majors (TEM 4 & TEM 8), the National Professional and Technical Titles English Test, the Cambridge Young Learners’ English Test, the Public English Testing System, the Business English Examinations, the Wǔyǔ Shūpíng Kāoshì (WSK)—an English proficiency examination to select professionals to study abroad, and the National Accreditation Examination for Translators and Interpreters.

Due to length restrictions, this article cannot discuss all of these many high-stakes English tests in depth. Therefore, it will focus on only the four most important and influential college-level English tests in the People’s Republic of China. Two of these tests are entrance examinations: the NMET (National Matriculation English Test) and the GSEE (Graduate School Entrance English Examination). The other two are certificate examinations: the CET (College English Test) and the TEM (Test for English Majors). Each test’s nature, historical development, projected future development, and significance to international educators will be discussed. Before that discussion and as a foundation for it, this article will first provide a brief historical overview of English language learning, teaching, and testing in China.

**English Language Learning and Testing in China**

English was first introduced to China during the Sui Dynasty (581-617 CE) and Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), when the new Silk Road connected China to the outside world and led to “cultural, commercial, and technological exchanges between traders, merchants, pilgrims, missionaries, soldiers, nomads, and urban dwellers” in China and many European countries (Schou zhibu, 2009). For example, when British Christian missionaries came to China during the Tang Dynasty, some Chinese Christians either learned English from the missionaries in China or were sent to European countries to learn English or other European languages (Yingyi zai, 2009). During the 1600s, the establishment of the John Company by the British in India helped introduce the English language to China again through business and missionary work. The Westernization Movement (1861-1894) of the Qing Dynasty brought English to more Chinese through diplomacy, the munitions industry, civil industry, and education (Yangwu yundong, 2009). In 1862, the first school of foreign languages in Chinese history, Jing-shi-tong-wen-guan (Beijing Normal Language School; 1862-1900), was started. It was a school established by the government of the Qing dynasty to train translators, diplomats, and other foreign language specialists for the government. It taught only English in the beginning, but later added French, German, Russian, and Japanese (Jing-shi-tong-wen-guan, 2009).

Although English has been taught at schools in China since those early days, it did not become a subject for all students until the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, when English was introduced to all schools. The existing English language tests, however, can be traced back only to 1977 when the National Higher Education
Entrance Examination (NHEEE, the Quánguó Pǔtōng Gáodēng Xuěxiào Zhāoshèng Tōngyí Kǎoshì or Gáokǎo in Chinese) was resumed after the ten-year Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), during which higher education was forbidden and English was ignored. During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese students did not learn any foreign languages at school, books published in foreign languages or about western countries were burned, and those who tried to teach or learn foreign languages were criticized as being subservient to foreigners. Before 1966, the NHEEE included a required Russian language examination, but English was optional and not as popular. When the NHEEE was resumed in 1977, an optional English exam was again administered. Nevertheless, the English score was merely taken into consideration (not required) for admission into colleges and universities. In schools, English was listed in the curriculum as one of the required subjects, but because there were no qualified English teachers in most parts of China, most urban Chinese students did not start learning English until the sixth grade, while most suburban and rural Chinese students could not start learning English until the last year of high school. Those students who lived in more remote parts of China never had the opportunity to study English.

Following the resumption of the National Higher Education Entrance Examination in 1977, the next great leap forward in English testing in China was made in 1985 when English became one of the mandatory subjects on the examination. At about the same time, another high-stakes, nationwide English test, the College English Test (CET), began. The College English Test Band-4 and Band-6 (CET-4, CET-6) were introduced to Chinese students in 1987 and 1989 respectively, first among college students and then to all levels of public education. As the importance of the CET grew and became recognized, English began to be taught to children as early as the third grade starting in the mid-1990s (Cheng, 2008) and then from the first grade in the early 2000s. Today, parents send their children to bilingual kindergartens or pay private tutors for their children to learn English starting at age 5 and continuing through age 18 when their children graduate from high school.

Twenty years ago, the Chinese people were keen to learn English mostly in order to learn advanced science and technology from overseas. They do so today for a great variety of academic, personal, and professional reasons (L. Sun, 2009). Along with the rapid development of China’s economy, an increasing number of Chinese students have gone abroad to attend universities and graduate schools. With their new prosperity, more and more Chinese citizens travel the world as tourists. In addition, an increasing number of successful Chinese entrepreneurs invest in the outside world, mainly in English speaking countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. For all these reasons, China today has a larger EFL-learning population than any other country in the world.

Exam Orientation and English Tests in China

Chinese education today is often characterized as being examination-oriented. Chinese children, willingly or not, must start taking examinations as early as age 4 or 5 to get into a selective kindergarten, and they never stop taking examinations if they want to get into higher education or aspire to important social positions. “Over the years of primary education (K-Grade 6), secondary education (Junior High Grade 7-9, Senior High School 10-12) and university education (4-year undergraduate), students take numerous examinations at the school, municipal, provincial, and national levels” (Cheng, 2008, p. 15). In China, nine years of education are compulsory, but all students have to pass examinations to move from one level to another. Many take very competitive examinations to get into better schools.

Testing in China also has a very long history. Kējū, the first standardized test to select the highest government officials based on merit, started in the Sui Dynasty (605 CE) and continued until the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1905 (Kējū zhǐlì, 2009). English language testing, however, did not start until 1862 with the establishment of Jīng-shì-tóng-wén-guǎn (Beijing Normal Language School). All these early tests were typically small in scale and aimed at selecting officials for the government (Cheng, 2008).

The present national English testing system has a relatively short history. The only current national English test that existed before 1966, was the pre-standardization National Matriculation English Test (NMET, described below), which was an optional part of the National Higher Education Entrance Examination. The rest of the current national English tests did not come into existence until after 1977 when China resumed its entrance examinations for colleges.

The National Higher Education Entrance Examination (NHEEE)

The NHEEE (National Higher Education Entrance Examination or Quánguó Pǔtōng Gáodēng Xuěxiào Zhāoshèng Tōngyí Kǎoshì in Chinese), known commonly as Gáokǎo, is the major gateway (though not the only one) through which Chinese students must pass to achieve higher education. It is a multi-part academic examination held annually over a three-day period in early June throughout China, and one of its parts is the National Matriculation English Test (explained in the next section). All secondary students in their last year of high school who want to get into colleges and universities must pass the NHEEE, which is a prerequisite for entrance into all colleges and universities.1

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1Although an increasing number of candidates can be accepted by different levels of colleges and universities, about half the candidates still cannot get into higher education institutions through the NHEEE because of limited enrollment capacities at Chinese universities. For those who cannot get into higher education institutions through the NHEEE, various other exams exist, such as the Admission Tests to Institutions of Higher Education for Adults and the Self-Taught Higher Education Examination System.
The NHEEE or Gáokāo (nicknamed the “Footslog Bridge”) is seen as the gatekeeper for formal higher education. It is undoubtedly the most visible and important entrance examination in China. “During the examination season each year, secondary schools, universities, and even government officials at different levels will focus their attention on the examinations that make up the [NHEEE]” (Liu, 2010, p. 35). It is also the most competitive entrance examination in China. Each year, millions of high school graduates and others with equivalent educational credentials try to enter into universities by means of this “Footslog Bridge.” The number of the test takers varies but each year has had more candidates than the year before (see Figure 1).

The Gáokāo was discontinued between 1966 and 1976 due to the Cultural Revolution. During those 10 years, the Down to the Countryside Movement in China brought secondary school graduates, the so-called “intellectual youths,” to the country to work as peasants in villages throughout China. All except a limited number of higher education institutes in China were closed. Instead of selecting students according to their academic achievements in the entrance examination, the few non-closed institutes selected students who had been working as farmers, workers, or soldiers for over three years and called them “worker, peasant, and soldier college students” (Gáokāo, 2009).

The Gáokāo officially resumed in 1977, but instead of being a national test, it was first designed and administered by the individual provinces. Its resumption was still a history-making event in modern China (Gáokāo, 2009). From 1978 on, it has been a national examination, uniformly designed by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China. Since then, millions of students across the country have taken this examination each year.

Before 2004, a single paper test for each subject of the Gáokāo was used nationwide on the same examination day. The test was and is still organized by examination and admissions offices of the department of education of each province, autonomous region, and directly-controlled municipality on behalf of the Ministry of Education. However, in 2004 for examination security reasons, the National Education Examination Authority (NEEA) was required to develop four forms of the exam for each subject. These different forms were used in different provinces. At the same time, nine provinces were allowed to develop their own matriculation tests. In 2005 and 2006, some more provinces were allowed to do so (Liu, 2010), and today, many major universities are allowed to develop their own matriculation tests.

No matter whether the candidates take a national, provincial, or university matriculation test, the Gáokāo is administered between June 7th and 9th, which used to be between July 7th and 9th before 2003 but was changed to June due to the hot weather in July (Gáokāo, 2009).

The Gáokāo is a multi-part examination, with some parts being mandatory and others optional. Chinese, mathematics, and English are the three mandatory subjects tested in the Gáokāo (Gáokāo, 2009). Physics, chemistry, geology, geography, political education, and history are the other subjects that applicants take depending on whether they want to study sciences or humanities in college (Gáokāo, 2009). However, for the 2010 Gáokāo, four out of six universities with the right to develop their own matriculation tests in Shanghai announced that only mathematics and English would be mandatory subjects. When questioned why Chinese was no longer included in these versions of the Gáokāo, one of the presidents of these four universities explained that the purpose of this reduction was to lighten the burden on the test takers (Ji & Xu, 2010). It is noteworthy that despite the dropping of some important academic subjects—even the Chinese language—English, in the form of the NMET and explained in the following section, continues to hold a secure position on the Gáokāo.

### The National Matriculation English Test (NMET)

The National Matriculation English Test (NMET) or Gáokāo Yingyǔ (Quǎngwù Pàitōng Gáokāo Yingyǔ Zhào—Yīngyǔ) is the English-language component of the National Higher Education Entrance Examination. The NMET is a norm-referenced standardized test whose major function is to select high school graduates for institutions of higher education (Cheng, 2008). The specific purpose of the NMET is to “make inferences about candidates” and their English language ability, which are “used in university admission decisions together with the scores from other university entrance tests” of a few subjects (Cheng, 2008, p. 19). The NMET’s historical development can be divided into two main phases: pre-standardized and standardized (Lu, 2008).

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2 Students may also take tests in other foreign languages, such as Japanese, Russian, or French, but English is by far the most common choice.
Pre-standardized Phase (1950-1988)

During the first stage (1950-1966) of the pre-standardized phase, the NMET mainly tested reading, English-to-Chinese translation, and Chinese-to-English translation. The ratio of subjective questions to objective-response questions was 80:20 (1950 nián, 2008).

The NMET was stopped for 10 years between 1966 and 1976 due to the Cultural Revolution, and it was not resumed until 1977. The format of the test changed greatly during the second stage (1977-1988) of its pre-standardized phase. The new NMET was composed of 16 completely different types of questions. The ratio between the subjective-response questions and objective-response questions was reversed from 80:20 to 20:80. Initially the NMET score was not counted into the total score of the Gáokào, but that changed in 1978 when it started being counted.

The Standardized Phase (1989-Present)

In its second standardized phase, the NMET underwent three different stages of development.

**MET (Matriculation English Test) Phase (1989-1994)**

The MET (Matriculation English Test) was started in Guangdong Province in 1985 and expanded to the whole country in 1989. The total possible score was 100 points. It had five different sections: phonetics (5%); multiple choice (15%); cloze test\(^1\) (25%), reading comprehension (40%), and writing (15%).

**NMET Phase (1995-2003)**

The National Matriculation English Test (NMET) was piloted in some provinces as early as 1991 and offered nationwide in 1995. This test had 150 points in total with five different sections: reading comprehension (50 points), situational conversation and word spelling (i.e., dictation) (20 points), multiple choice (25 points), cloze test\(^2\) (25 points), and writing (30 points). The ratio between subjective and objective-response questions was 55:95 (out of 150 total points). Listening was added to the test around the year 2000, but it was not counted into the total score until 2003.

**Second MET Phase (2004-Present)**

Starting in 2004, the Chinese Ministry of Education allowed nine provinces to make their own English tests for the Gáokào. By 2007, another nine provinces were given the same privilege. This decentralization reversed the earlier trend toward central control over the exam. Nowadays more provinces use their own test than use the national MET. The biggest difference between the national and provincial versions of the NMET is whether or not listening is counted in students’ overall test score.

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\(^1\)A cloze test consists of a passage with blanks that have been inserted for words that have been deleted, either randomly or systematically. Although relatively simple to construct, cloze tests have been shown to be valid and reliable integrative measures of learners’ overall language proficiency (Oller, 1973; Oller, 1976; Oller & Conrad, 1971).

To summarize, the National Higher Education Entrance Examination (NHEEE) is by far the most important entrance exam in China today. It is taken by millions of high school graduates each year and wields a strong influence on their future careers. No less important than the overall NHEEE is its English component, the National Matriculation English Test (NMET). It makes English language teaching and learning an essential part of secondary education in China today. The particular language skills it has tested over the course of its historical development have determined to a large degree the emphasis given to these skills in English classes throughout Chinese students’ secondary school years. In a study of teachers and students who were preparing for the Gáokào, Huang (2005) concluded that no knowledge was more important to them than what was going to be tested. When interviewed, both the teachers and the students admitted that they stopped regular English listening practice after the Gáokào Administration released the news that listening would not be tested that year.

The Graduate School Entrance English Exam (GSEE)

Like the NHEEE (or Gáokào), the Graduate School Entrance Examination (GSEE) is an entrance examination administered annually at the national level. The most important difference is that the GSEE is taken by undergraduate students hoping to enter graduate schools (Cheng, 2008). The GSEE has four components, one of which is the GSEE (Graduate School Entrance English Exam). The GSEE tests English, which is one of two compulsory GSEE subjects (the other is political science) required by the National Education Examination Authority (NNEA) of the Chinese Ministry of Education. The other two subjects tested in components of the GSEE are discipline-related and depend on students’ intended fields of study. They are developed by the universities or research institutes the applicants want to enter. The GSEE is administered in late January or early February each year by the NNEA.

The number of students taking the GSEE is steadily increasing (see Figure 2), and the challenge of getting into graduate school is becoming much greater than before. This increase is due to the increasing competition in the employment market and the fact that graduate-level study is viewed as a way to postpone job hunting in a challenging market or as a way to improve one’s chances of finding a job later (Shen, 2009).

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**Figure 2: Numbers of GSEE Test Takers (in 10 thousands) (Shen, 2009; Su, 2009)**
The current GSEE test format was designed in 2004 and first used in 2005 (Liu 2010). It contains three main sections: use of English (10%), reading comprehension (60%), and writing (30%).

Section one, use of English, focuses on control of formal elements of the language in context including a wide range of vocabulary, expressions, structures, and features of discourse relating to coherence and cohesion. Test takers are also required to do a cloze test with twenty multiple-choice items.

The second section is made up of three parts focusing on examinees’ ability to read written English. In part one, candidates are required to read four passages and complete twenty multiple-choice questions based on their understanding of these passages. In part two, candidates read an incomplete passage with five gaps and fill the gaps with five of the seven choices given. In part three, test takers are also required to read one passage and translate five underlined sections from English into Chinese.

The third section is made up of two parts. First, the test takers are asked to write a letter, a report, a memorandum, or an abstract of about 100 words based on the information provided. Second, candidates write an essay of between 160 and 200 words based on guidelines given either in English or Chinese.

Taking the various sections and subsections of the GSEE tests requires a total of 180 minutes (cloze test 15-20 minutes; reading 70-75 minutes; translation 20 minutes; filling the-gap 20 minutes; and writing 50 minutes).

Although the GSEE is taken by far fewer students each year (1,400,000 in 2010) than the number who take the NMET (over 10 million), the GSEE is still an important “gatekeeper” test. It plays a significant role in determining which students go on to graduate studies in China. The GSEE’s history of development, however, is much shorter than the NMET’s. In addition, the fact that the number of examinees is smaller makes it possible for test items and tasks to be more natural and authentic even though they are also more time-consuming to score.

The College English Test—Band Four (CET-4)

The College English Test—Band Four (CET-4) is the most important certificate, or school-leaving, English test in the Chinese university system. It has more test takers each year than any other certificate English test in China—over 10 million a year (2009 nián gāokǎo, 2009). Figure 3 depicts the growth in CET-4 takers over the years.

![Figure 3: Numbers of CET-4 Test Takers Between 1987 and 2002.](image)

![in 10 thousands](image)  (Yang, 2003)

The CET-4’s purpose is to examine Chinese college students’ English proficiency and ensure that they reach the required English levels specified in the National College English Teaching Syllabi. First offered in 1987, the test was extended to college students all over China in 1988 but was still optional: students could take the Band 4 examination created by each school. But slowly, some colleges started requiring all sophomores to take the CET-4 after they finished the required English courses. Over time, more and more colleges and universities required students to pass the CET-4 to get a graduation certificate or a bachelor’s degree. Starting in the mid-1990s, increasing numbers of companies, as well as the government, made the CET-4 certificate an important requirement for hiring graduates.

Nature of the College English Test

The College English Test is a national, large-scale, standardized test administered by education departments of every province, autonomous region, and directly-controlled municipality in China. It is administered biannually, in June and December/January. It is created under the direction of the National College English Testing Committee (NCETC) on behalf of the Higher Education Department of the Chinese Ministry of Education (CET, 2009). The test takers are undergraduates pursuing majors in every subject but English. (For English majors, there is a special test, the TEM, explained in the next section.) These students take the test when they complete their corresponding required English courses. The CET is actually a test battery with three sequential stages: the CET-4 (Band 4), the CET-6 (Band 6), and the CET Spoken English Test (CET-SET).

The term band as used in connection with these tests is unfamiliar to most educators outside of China, so some explanation may be helpful here. All Chinese college students are required to study English courses for two academic years, the first four semesters of
their college education. Each semester is counted as one band. Students take final exams for Bands 1, 2, and 3 each semester at their own universities, but they take the CET-4 as a national English achievement test at the end of their fourth semester, or band. After that, teaching and learning English for general purposes is stopped and switched to learning English for specific purposes (ESP) related to the students' academic background. Only those who have completed Band 5 and 6 English courses and have passed the CET-4 with a score at or above 425 may take the CET-6, which is optional and taken by far fewer students. For those reasons, it will not be discussed in any detail here.

CET-4 scores are reported within a range of 290 to 710. The test itself is made up of four parts: listening, reading, integrated skills, and writing. These components, along with their contents, item formats, times, and score weights, are explained in Table 1.

Each of these components of the CET-4 will now be explained in turn. For those interested in seeing copies of the entire CET-4 examination, electronic copies from recent years are available online at http://bbs.dict.cn/viewthread.php?tid=33764

**Part One: Listening Comprehension**

The listening section of the CET-4 assesses students' ability to understand main ideas, important facts, specific details, and implied meaning, as well as their ability to determine the communicative function of discourse, the speaker's point of view, and attitudes in oral conversations and passages. Passages are spoken in both standard American English and standard British English (Dàxià yìngyǔ jìjiā kǎoxí dàgāng, 2009).

The listening section of the CET-4 counts for 35% of the total score. Fifteen of these percentage points come from the comprehension of conversations, including eight short conversations and two long conversations. Each short conversation consists of one speaker turn followed by a multiple-choice question, while each long conversation has five to eight speaker turns followed by three or four multiple-choice questions. The other twenty percentage points come from three longer listening passages, followed by three or four multiple-choice questions each (for a total of 10 questions), and one compound dictation passage with 10 blanks. In seven of these blanks, students must write the single, exact word spoken in the passage, and in three blanks the missing information is a phrase or clause and can be filled in either word-for-word or in the students' own words. The speed of speech in the listening conversations and the passages is approximately 130 words per minute, and the whole section lasts for 35 minutes.

**Part Two: Reading Comprehension**

The reading comprehension section of the CET-4 assesses students' ability to acquire written information through reading. This section generates 35% of the total CET-4 score and is composed of two subsections: reading in depth and speed reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Formats</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening comprehension</td>
<td>Dialogues</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passages</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compound dictation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>Reading in depth</td>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discourse voc</td>
<td>Banked cloze</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming and scanning</td>
<td>Yes/No Ques.</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fill-in-blanks, complete sentences</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated test</td>
<td>Cloze or error correction</td>
<td>Multiple choice or error correction</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short answers or translation</td>
<td>Q &amp; A. or Chi. to Eng. trans</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Short essay</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reading in depth subsection (25%) is 25 minutes long and includes three short passages with 300-350 words apiece. Each passage is followed by items in different formats: multiple-choice, banked-cloze, and short answer. In the banked-cloze format, there are 10 blanks in the passage and students can select one word for each blank from...
a list of 15 words given in the word bank. In the short-answer format, students must complete a sentence or answer questions with no more than 10 words based on their own understanding of the passage.

The speed reading subsection (10%) includes both skimming and scanning. Students have 15 minutes to skim or scan one passage of around 900 words. The item formats used in this part are multiple-choice (seven items) and sentence completion or true/false (three items).

**Part Three: Integrated Test—Cloze**

In contrast with traditional, discrete-point tests, integrated tests do not examine each language skill or component separately. Rather, they test multiple skills and linguistic points all at once. Cloze tests are a widely used and empirically validated type of integrated test (Oller, 1973; Oller, 1976; Oller & Conrad, 1971). On the CET-4, cloze is used to assess students' general language comprehension and proficiency at the word, sentence, and paragraph levels. It contributes 10% to the total score and takes 15 minutes. The cloze passage is about 220 to 250 words long with 20 blanks and content that is familiar to students. For each numbered blank, students are to choose the correct word from a set of multiple-choice options. An alternative format to cloze, used some years, is error correction, which asks students to identify and correct 10 errors embedded in a passage of the same length.

**Part Four: Writing and Translation**

The writing and translation section assesses students' ability to write a short, expressive composition in English and to translate a printed Chinese-language passage into written English. It constitutes 20% (writing 15% and translation 5%) of the total CET-4 score and takes 35 minutes.

For the writing portion, students are asked to write a composition of no less than 120 words in 30 minutes based on information given to them, for instance a title or topic with an outline, a situation, a picture, or a graph.

For the translation task, students are asked to complete five English sentences by translating the part of each sentence given in Chinese into English in five minutes. In some years, an alternative format for the translation subsection involves writing short answers to questions based on one of the reading passages from part two.

**The College English Test—Spoken English Test (CET-SET)**

The College English Test—Spoken English Test (CET-SET) assesses the test-takers' competence in English oral communication. This test is given only to students who have passed the CET-4 or the CET-6 at a predetermined score level. For instance, according to the December 2009 CET-SET registration notification, only those who passed the CET-4 with a score of 550 or above or the CET-6 with a score of 520 or above (out of a total score of 710) in 2008 and 2009 could register for the CET-SET (Oral Exam Registration Notification, 2009).

The CET-SET is composed of three parts. Part one lasts for approximately five minutes and involves three or four examinees and two authorized CET-SET examiners who interact in a small-group, question-and-answer conversation. Part two consists of 90-second personal statements spoken by each examinee and then a 4.5-minute panel discussion. This part lasts about 10 minutes. In part three, the examinees ask more questions to further check the examinees' oral English proficiency for an additional five minutes.

The evaluation of test-takers' performance on the CET-SET is based on the following six criteria: (1) accuracy in pronunciation, intonation, and use of grammar and vocabulary; (2) complexity and scope of vocabulary and grammatical structures employed; (3) contribution made to group discussion individually; (4) consistency in extended and coherent discourse; (5) flexibility in handling different scenarios and topics; and (6) applicability of language used in the specific context (Da xue yu yu jiaoshi kou shi dagang, 2009).

**Effects of the College English Test**

To a large degree, the College English Test governs the other English tests as well as the teaching and learning of English in China. Washback is a term used to describe the effects of testing on teaching. In brief, "what is assessed becomes what is valued, which becomes what is taught" (McEwen, 1995, p. 42) or, in other words, what is examined becomes what to teach (Yang, 1992). Because of its importance, the CET-4 has brought much positive washback to the teaching and learning of English in China. Gu (2005) found in her empirical study of CET washback that most of the CET stakeholders thought highly of the test, especially its design, administration, marking, and the new measures adopted in recent years. They believed that the positive washback of the test was greater than the negative washback, and the negative washback was due mainly to the misuse of the test by users rather than the test itself. In 2008, Sun and Peng (2009) conducted a pilot study about the washback of the CET-4 on teaching and learning in China. Many teachers and students admitted that because of the test they treated teaching and learning more seriously and prepared for lessons more thoroughly.

Overall, most Chinese teachers agree that the design and the proportions of the various parts of content are appropriate and fair for students of different academic backgrounds (Mao, 2009).

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5 Or those who passed the CET-4 with a score of 90 or above or the CET-6 with a score of 75 or above (out of a total of 100 possible) in the years before the new score reporting system.
Wang (2005) believes that the CET has not only brought about fundamental changes in the quality of English teaching and learning in China but has also developed into a complete system. The CET-4 has matured as a "criterion-related norm-referenced test" with high reliability and validity. It would be difficult to find any scientific, large-scale and high-stakes English test other than the CET-4 that could reflect the actual English proficiency of college students and could be as operational as the CET-4.

The Test for English Majors (TEM-4 and TEM-8)

The Test for English Majors (TEM) is an English certificate test designed especially for Chinese university students pursuing an English major and was first administered in 1991. It is administered nationwide by the National Advisory Commission on Foreign Language Teaching in Higher Education. It aims to measure the English proficiency of university undergraduate English majors in accordance with the National College English Teaching Syllabus for English Majors (Yíngyǔ zhǔnè, 2009). The TEM has two versions: the TEM-Band 4 and TEM-Band 8. The TEM-4 is administered in May at the end of English majors' second (sophomore) year, and the TEM-8 is administered in March near the end of English major's fourth (senior) year.

The purposes of the Test for English Majors are (1) to assess the language performance of English majors and (2) to examine how well the college English teaching syllabus is working in order to promote reforms in English teaching and learning (Cheng, 2008). The TEM certificate issued by the NACFLT is valid for the examinee's lifetime. TEM-4 and TEM-8 scores are reported at three levels: 60-69=pass; 70-79=good, 80 and above=excellent. Starting in 2003, those who fail to pass the TEM the first time can have one more opportunity to take the test. Nevertheless, those who take the TEM for the second time and pass it can get a certificate labeled "pass" only, no matter how high their score.

Test for English Majors—Band 4

The TEM is a criterion-referenced test (Yíngyǔ zhǔnè, 2009). That is, students' performance is evaluated against the criteria stipulated by the teaching syllabus (Zou, 2003). The complete TEM-4 has 40% subjective-response questions and takes 120 minutes.

The TEM-4 is composed of six parts (see Table 2 for their times and weights): 1) writing, consisting of a composition/essay and note-writing, 2) listening dictation for which examinees listen four times to a 150-word passage spoken at a speed of 120 WPM and write it down, 3) listening comprehension which contains short, two- or three-sentence statements followed by 7-9 multiple-choice questions; longer, three-sentence dialogues followed by 7-9 multiple-choice questions; and several short VOA or BBC news broadcasts followed by 7-9 multiple-choice questions, 4) a multiple-choice cloze test which uses a passage of about 250 words with 15 blanks and four choices for each blank, 5) grammar and vocabulary for which there are 25 multiple-choice questions with about half testing grammar and half testing vocabulary, and 6) reading comprehension which involves reading in depth and skimming and scanning.

Test for English Majors—Band 8

The TEM-8 is made up of six parts as well (see Table 3): 1) listening comprehension which contains four sections: talk or mini-lecture, conversation or interview, news broadcast, and note-taking and gap-filling; 2) reading comprehension which involves reading for depth and skimming and scanning; 3) general knowledge about the culture and society of English-speaking countries, English literature, and English linguistics; 4) proofreading and error correction on a reading passage of about 200 words with 10 lines containing labeled errors which examinees correct by adding, deleting, or changing one word or phrase; 5) translation of two approximately 300-word passages, one in Chinese and the other in English, with about 150 underlined words to be translated from Chinese to English and English to Chinese; and 6) writing an argument or an expository essay of about 400 words. The total TEM-8 takes 185 minutes.
Table 3  
*Contents, Item Formats, and Weights of the Different Sections of the TEM-8*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening comprehension</td>
<td>Mini-lecture</td>
<td>Fill-in-blank</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conversation and interview</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News broadcast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note taking and gap filling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>Passages</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General knowledge</td>
<td>Passages</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proofreading and error</td>
<td>Passages</td>
<td>Error</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correction</td>
<td>Chinese to English</td>
<td>correction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to Chinese</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Passages</td>
<td>Chinese to</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to Chinese</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In its two forms, the Test for English Majors examines Chinese students' abilities in English at a fairly advanced level and in relatively authentic and valid ways. It can do this because the number of examinees (only English majors) each year is comparatively small. Nevertheless, the number of TEM-takers is still so large as to make the testing of English majors' speaking skills impractical. Despite earlier hopes in this regard, the speaking test planned for the TEM has been suspended because conditions are not yet conducive to holding a large-scale speaking test throughout China (*Yíngyǔ zhùnhuà, 2009*).

**Conclusion**

This article has reviewed the four most important English examinations in modern China. Two are entrance examinations (NMET and GSEE), and two are certificate or school-leaving examinations (CET and TEM). Table 4 summarizes and compares the four tests discussed in this article in terms of each test's audience, possible score, purpose,
length, cost, scheduling, number of test takers, scoring venue, and contents. All four of the major, college-level English tests reviewed in this article—especially the CET-4—have developed into super-large-scale standardized tests with their own processes, systems, and standards. This article has provided only a descriptive introduction to these tests. It leaves the following tasks to experts on English language testing in China: (1) providing more detailed information for each test introduced in this paper to people interested in English language teaching in China and (2) conducting more research on the measurement criteria, instruments, and procedures of these large-scale standardized tests in order to make the results of each test more accurate, objective, comprehensive and reflective of the true proficiency of students in actually using the English language (Jin, 2005).

A common shortcoming of all four tests is that none of them tests students’ speaking ability, except the CET-SET, which is given to a very small number of CET takers. Given the importance of washback from testing to teaching in China, this deficiency has serious repercussions. Despite the practical difficulties associated with testing students’ speaking abilities, this important skill should be tested in the future more than it currently is. China’s growing economy and the accompanying improvements in educational funding, facilities, and personnel should make this advancement in English testing possible.

Another potential area for improvement is test scoring, which is done both by machines and by human beings. Certain aspects of the scoring raise questions about reliability. While the objective-response questions are machine-scored, the subjective-response questions are graded by human teachers and are, therefore, subject to inter-rater and intra-rater reliability problems due to factors such as fatigue. Further, the types of educators who score these four major college-level English tests are not consistent. To illustrate, the NMET is graded by selected high school and college English teachers of each province who are gathered together in an enclosed place day after day for a period of about two weeks; the GSEE is graded by English teachers of each individual educational institution; and the TEM and the CET-4 are graded by selected college English teachers of each geographical region working persistently in an enclosed place for two weeks.

To summarize and conclude, the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) is the most important English entrance examination in China, and the College English Test—Band Four (CET-4) is the most influential certificate English test among the many other certificate English tests in China. Nevertheless, all four tests described in this article are important. English teaching and learning at Chinese high schools focus heavily on helping students get high scores on the NMET, prospective graduate students must do well on the GSEE to achieve their goals, and English courses and teachers at colleges and universities devote a lot of time and energy to preparing students to pass the CET (or TEM). The impact of these four tests throughout China is significant. Expatriate English language teachers and researchers in China will do well to pay attention to these tests’ natures and effects. Taking such factors into account will lead these educators to achieve greater success. This article is intended to constitute a first step in that direction.

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Yǔguān zài Zhōngguó zuìdào shèmén xiǎohū kǎishǐ yǐwèn xué? 问题在中国最早 什么时候开始有人学习? [When was the earliest time when Chinese learn English?] (2009). Retrieved December 20, 2009 from http://wenwen.soso.com/z/ q164858723.htm?ref=r=70768756&i=1&uId=0&ch=w.xg.lljy
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The site contains nearly 50 units, organized in the 10 sections listed under the menu. A complete listing of the units appears below. The units cover a broad range of teacher-preparation topics, divided into 10 major areas:

1. Introduction: Basic Concepts
   A. "The Least You Should Know" (the purposes and delimitations of this program and suggestions for follow-up TESOL courses, resources, and professional organizations).
   B. Differences between teaching English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL).
   C. Tutoring vs. teaching: How they are different.
   D. Dealing with cultural differences and culture shock (in your students and yourself).
   E. Working successfully within foreign educational and administrative systems.
2. Designing Language-teaching Programs, Courses, and Lessons
   A. Setting up and operating successful courses for adult English language learners (i.e., administrative concerns).
   B. Planning a curriculum that fits your students and meets their needs.
   C. Designing effective lessons for language learning and teaching (i.e., curriculum and lesson planning).
   D. Assessing your students’ language proficiency (for course design purposes and for determining student placement).

3. Developing Fundamental Teaching Skills
   A. Developing a successful teaching personality.
   B. Adjusting your spoken English to make it comprehensible and helpful to English language learners at various levels of proficiency.
   C. Managing classes of English language learners (encouraging participation, maintaining discipline, building a supportive sense of community, avoiding demeaning or negative behavior, setting up groups, dealing with multiple levels of proficiency in the same class).
   D. Correcting language learners’ errors productively, and developing their self-monitoring skills.

4. Understanding Key Principles Behind Successful Language Teaching
   A. Understanding basic principles of second language acquisition.
   B. Creating and using exercises for mechanical, meaningful, and communicative practice.
   C. Using communicative language teaching principles and information gap exercises.
   D. Encouraging cooperative and collaborative learning to increase student interaction.
   E. Creating activities that provide imitative, rehearsed, and extemporaneous practice.
   F. Developing an awareness of teaching styles and cross-cultural style differences.

5. Knowing Your Students: Learner Types, Styles, and Strategies
   A. Understanding, respecting, and appreciating adult ESL learners.
   B. Working successfully with young English language learners.
   C. Understanding your students’ language learning styles—including cross-cultural differences in learning styles—and then teaching them accordingly.
   D. Recognizing multiple intelligences and their implications for language teaching.
   E. Teaching your students to use language-learning strategies commonly employed by successful language learners.

6. Developing Language Skills
   A. Developing English language learners’ listening skills.
   B. Developing English language learners’ speaking skills.
   C. Developing English language learners’ reading skills.
D. Developing English language learners' writing skills.
E. Integrating multiple language skills in one class.
F. Teaching content-based language classes.

7. Teaching English Language Components
A. The least you should know about English grammar and how to teach it.
B. The least you should know about English pronunciation and how to teach it.
C. Planned and unplanned vocabulary teaching.
D. Vocabulary teaching and learning strategies that work well.
E. Understanding and teaching about culture.

8. Making Language Teaching and Learning Enjoyable and Memorable
A. Conducting effective and enjoyable conversation classes.
B. Using songs and chants to increase participation, recall, and enjoyment.
C. Using games, and other fun yet effective activities for English language teaching.
D. Using computers and Internet resources for English language teaching.
E. Using video for teaching English.

9. Testing English Language Skills
A. Widely used general proficiency tests (e.g., TOEFL, BEST, CET).
B. Developing valid and reliable local measures of student achievement.

10. Choosing, Creating, and Adapting Language Teaching Materials
A. Locating, evaluating, and selecting authentic, effective print/electronic teaching materials for language learners.
B. Collecting and creating your own language-teaching materials.
C. Successfully adapting existing materials for greater teaching enjoyment and success.

Each unit contains the following elements:

- Introductory scenario
- Objectives of the unit
- Explanation of "the least you should know" about this topic
- Comprehension and reflection questions
- Video example related to this topic
- Reflection and responses
- "Where to go to learn more" about this topic
  - Connections to other units in this program
  - Online and electronic resources
  - Print and paper-based resources