

WASHBACK OF ENGLISH EXAMINATION ON ENGLISH TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN CHINA

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Paper Advisor

WASHBACK OF ENGLISH EXAMINATION ON ENGLISH TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN CHINA

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Abstract

The term “washback” is commonly defined as the influence a test has on teaching and learning. In recent years, many experts have conducted research and studies on washback, hoping to find an approach to foster positive washback. China is a country heavily influenced by washback since the ancient times. It is often argued that the English examinations in China, which tend to be grammar-vocabulary oriented, have a negative washback effect on teaching and learning. In this paper, a brief review of literature on the theories and studies on washback was conducted, and the current English education policy and actual practice in schools was analyzed. Based on the findings of the literature review and analysis, a new English exam is designed, hoping to yield positive washback and improve the English communicative ability of Chinese students.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Significance and Purpose of the Research

The term “washback,” according to Huges, is defined as “the effect of testing on teaching and learning” (1989, p.1). Messick, after noting that washback can have either harmful or positive effects, describes it as “the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things that they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning” (1996, p 241).

The washback is very obvious and of great importance in China, which has been noticed by many experts at home and abroad. Eckstein and Noah (1993), after comparing secondary school exams in eight countries, made the following observation: “They (students in Mainland China) have had little incentive to study anything that will not be on the examination paper. There is no time in their classes to explore questions that are unlikely to come up in the tests. Classes are devoted to lectures and recitations, and homework consists of reviewing notes and textbook” (P.53). Two reasons, in the author’s opinion, contribute to this situation: first, China has a long history of test-driven teaching and learning. In ancient China, the National Imperial Examination, which is held once every three years, is the only way for grassroots people to enter the upper class. Hundreds of thousands of students studied for decades just for the Examination, but only three of them would be

the winners of the examination and be appointed as government officers. Therefore, the test driven value is deeply ingrained in the minds of Chinese people. Second, the current University Entrance Examination is like the Ancient Imperial Examination in nature. The examination is extremely important for Chinese students since it is the sole criterion to determining if the student is qualified or not to enter the university.

Considering the importance of tests in the minds of Chinese teachers and students, if Chinese people want to improve English teaching and learning in China, the English examination (especially the English examination in University Entrance Examination) is at a very critical point. Unfortunately, the current English examination in China is heavily grammar-centered, which has very serious negative washback on English teaching and learning in China. As a result, despite the advocacy of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) methodology of the government, the teaching and learning in Chinese schools are still grammar-centered. Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to review relative theories and studies about washback, analyze washback of English teaching and learning in China and put forward a new English examination form based on CLT methodology which is expected to have positive washback on English teaching and learning in China.

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be addressed is “What is the relationship between English Examination (especially the English Examination in University Entrance

Examination) and English teaching and learning in China? Or, in other words, what is the influence of English Examination on English teaching and learning in China?”

Delimitations of the Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Internet, over forty (40) days. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with Google, Advanced Google, ERIC and Academic Search Elite, and books and journals found in the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville as the primary sources. Key search topics include “washback”, “English testing”, and “English Exams in China”.

Method of Approach

First, a literature review of the theory and studies of washback will be conducted. Second, a review of Chinese English education policy will be conducted. Third, actual teaching and learning practice in Chinese schools and the English examinations in University Entrance Examination in past three years will be analyzed. Fourth, a new English examination form is designed to promote positive washback.

Definition of Terms

Washback or backwash. The term has many definitions according to various articles and books on language testing. One of the most common definitions refers the term as the influence of testing on teaching and learning (e.g. Alderson & Wall 1993; Cheng & Curtis 2004).

EFL. English as a Foreign Language

ASL. Arabic as a second language

UEE. University Entrance Examination, the biggest and most important test held every year in China.

CLT. Communicative Language Teaching, a teaching approach of second and foreign languages that emphasizes communication and interaction as both the means and the goal of learning a language.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

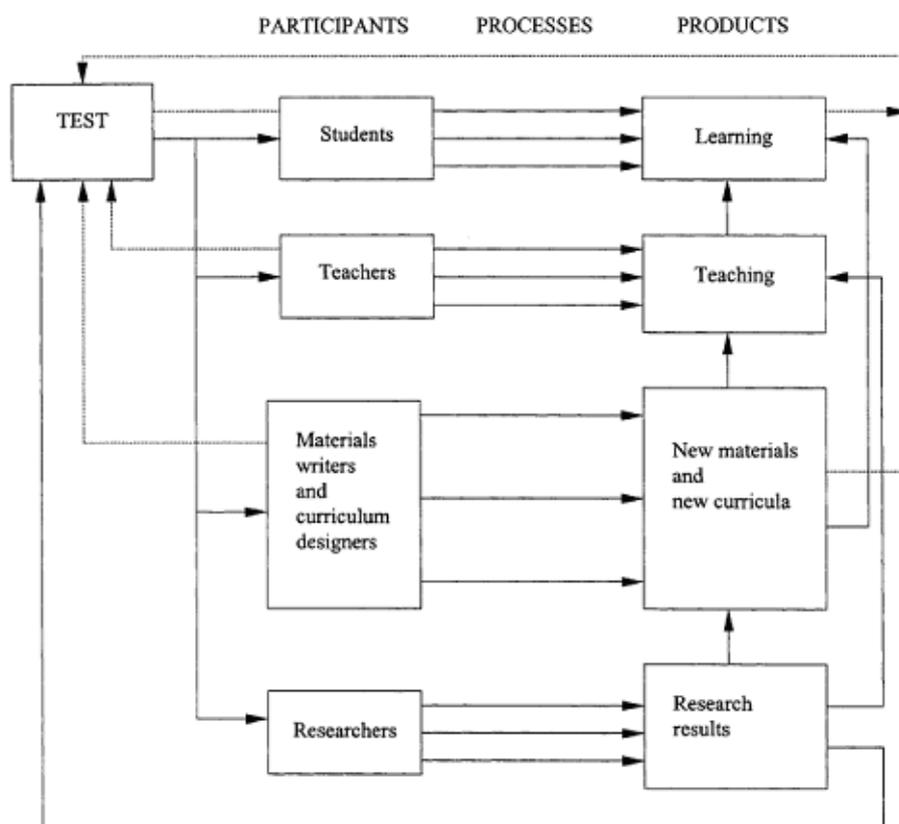
What is washback?

The term “washback” (can also be referred to as “backwash”) has many definitions according to various articles and books on language testing. One of the most common definitions refers the term as the influence of testing on teaching and learning (e.g. Alderson & Wall 1993; Cheng & Curtis 2004). Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt and Ferman defined washback as "the connection between testing and learning" (1996, p. 298). Messick referred to washback as ". . . the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do that promotes or inhibits language learning" (1996, p. 241). Other experts take a broad view in terms of the definition of washback. Cohen describes washback as “how assessment instruments affect educational practices and beliefs” (1994, P. 41). Bachman and Palmer discussed washback as a subset of a test’s impact on society, educational systems and individuals (1996, pp. 29-35). They further divided the test impact into two levels: the micro level (i.e., the effect of the test on individual students and teachers) and the macro level (the impact on society and its educational systems).

A Model of Washback

According to a framework suggested by Hughes: “In order to clarify our thinking about backwash, it is helpful, I believe, to distinguish between

participants, process and products in the teaching and learning, recognizing that all three may be affected by the nature of a test” (1993, p.2). In his framework, participants include language learners and teachers, administrators, materials developers and publishers. Process covers any actions taken by the participants who may contribute to the process of learning. Product refers to what is learned and the quality of learning. The following model by Bailey (1996) is a good illustration of Hughes’ framework:



Washback on Students and Teachers

Given the great importance of students and teachers in the washback model and the focus of this paper, it is worthwhile to separate the students and teachers from other stakeholders.

Students and Washback

According to Bachman and Palmer, students can be affected by (1) “the experience of taking and, in some cases, of preparing for the test; (2) the feedback they receive about their performance on the test; and (3) the decision that may be made about them on the basis of the test” (1996, p.31).

Five of Alderson and Wall’s restatements of the washback hypothesis directly address learner washback:

2. A test will influence learning.
5. A test will influence what learners learn.
6. A test will influence how learners learn.
8. A test will influence the rate and sequence of learning.
10. A test will influence the degree and depth of learning. (1993, pp.120-121)

Cheng reported on a study of language testing washback that she conducted at the time of a change in a major public examination: the Hong Kong Certificate of Education (HKCEE). Her data included questionnaire responses from 42 students. The student data revealed that they thought the HKCEE played “a 30% role in their learning” (1997, p.47), followed by the influence of future job, their parents’ concerns, and competition with their classmates. Thus the student perception is that the exam is the single greatest factor influencing their English process.

Teachers and washback

Compared with washback on students, the washback on teachers is more complicated. According to Alderson and Wall's washback hypothesis, the washback on teacher aspect is as follows:

1. A test will influence teaching.
3. A test will influence what teachers teach; and
4. A test will influence how teachers teach.
7. A test will influence the rate and sequence of teaching; and
9. A test will influence the degree and depth of teaching; and
11. A test will influence attitudes to the content, method, etc. of teaching and learning (1993, pp. 120-121).

In many studies conducted on the washback on teachers, one similar finding verifies the hypothesis 1 and 3, but disagrees with the other hypothesis.

According to Cheng's (1997) research on revised Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) that included observance of 15 lessons in six schools and interviews with both teachers and students, Cheng concluded that revised public exams "can to a large extent change the contents of teaching, but in the case of the revised HKCEE very little changed with regard to interaction patterns or the roles and functions of teachers and students" (1997, p.22).

The Sri Lankan impact study (Wall & Alderson, 1993), a landmark

study in the investigation of washback, also has a similar conclusion:

The examination had had considerable impact of English lessons and on the way teachers design their classroom tests, but it had had little to no impact on the methodology they used in the classroom or on the way they marked their pupil's test performance.

Positive and Negative Washback

According to Bailey, washback can be either positive or negative to the degree that it either encourages or inhibits the attainment of educational goals held by learners, educators or both (1996). Thus, washback is often evaluated as positive or negative according to how much it encourages or discourages appropriate forms of teaching or learning. Then the question for us is how we promote positive washback? According to Hughes, there are seven ways to achieve positive washback: test the ability whose development you want to encourage; sample widely and unpredictably; use direct testing; make testing criterion-referenced; base achievement test on objectives; ensure (that the) test is known and understood by students and teachers; when necessary, provide assistance to teachers (1989, P44-46).

1. Test the ability whose development you want to encourage

Make the test content focus on the actual language ability of students.

However, it is not easy work. Hughes notes that "there is a tendency to test what it is easiest to test rather than what it is most important to test" (1989, P44). What policymakers and teachers should do is to overcome this tendency and design tests which can test the abilities learners really need.

2. Sample widely and unpredictably

To avoid the content of a test becoming too predictable, the item types should be designed so that a wide range of tasks are utilized. A major feature of current EFL examination is that it tends to follow the same format every year.

3. Use direct testing

Hughes defines direct testing as “the testing of performance skills, with texts and tasks as authentic as possible” and says that “immediately we begin to test directly, we are removing an incentive for students to practice in the way that we want them to” (1989, P45).

4. Make testing criterion-referenced

Criterion-referenced tests are seen to exhibit beneficial washback due to their motivating factors. For example, rather than being measured against the performance of other test-takers, Hughes believes that it is better when candidates are clear about exactly what they have to achieve in order to pass a test (1989).

5. Base achievement test on objectives.

Hughes argues that achievement tests should be based on objectives, as opposed to “detailed teaching and textbook content” in order that teaching and learning can be evaluated against objectives” (1989, P46).

6. Ensure (that the) test is known and understood by students and teachers.

In order for beneficial washback to be fully realized, “the rationale for (a) test, its specifications, and sample items should be available to everyone concerned with preparation for the test” (Hughes 1989, P46).

7. When necessary, provide assistance to teachers.

If a new test is used, it is very important to make teachers fully understand the test. Hughes uses the example of a communicative language test replacing a more traditional grammatical and vocabulary format and notes that:

One important reason for introducing the new test may have been to encourage communicative language teaching, but if the teachers need guidance and possibly training, and these are not given, the test will not achieve its intended effect. It may simply cause chaos and disaffection (1989, P46).

Washback of “high stakes” Test

Shohamy et al. define a high-stakes test as one used in a context in which decisions about “admission, promotion, placement or graduation are directly dependent on test scores”, while low-stakes exams do not entail these significant decisions (1996, p.300).

The research conducted in Israel by Shohamy et al. is a good illustration of the difference of student attitudes towards high-stakes and low-stakes exams (1996). In terms of low-stakes Arabic as a second language (ASL) test, the sample comprised 62 student respondents from grades seven through nine. 86% of the students said there were no special activities devoted to test preparation and 72% said that no class time was devoted to the test. In contrast, of the 50 student respondents to the questionnaire about the high-stakes EFL test, 54% of the higher level students reported “intense preparation for the exam,” and 96% reported feeling “quite anxious about the test). 86% of the students believed the EFL test could affect “their overall matriculation score to a large extent.”

The result of the aforementioned research echoes one of Alderson's and Wall's washback hypothesis: "Tests that have important consequences will have washback; and conversely, test that do not have important consequence will have no washback" (1993). Considering the significance of high stake tests and the fact that high stake tests are very prevalent in China, the following parts of this paper will mainly focus on the high-stake tests.

Current English Teaching and Learning Situation in China

Government policy vs. actual practice in middle schools: the washback effect

With the introduction of advanced theories on English teaching and learning, the Ministry of Education of China, the most authoritative education unit in China, issued *English Language Curriculum Standards for Senior High School* and *English Language Curriculum Standards for Junior High School* in 2003. These two new Curriculum Standards explicitly admit the dissatisfaction of English teaching and learning results when using outdated traditional "grammar-translation" methodology, and advocate more communicative and practical methodology based on advanced theories.

According to *English Language Curriculum Standards for Junior High School*(2003), the goal of English teaching and learning in junior high schools is to help students to establish confidence, cultivate good learning habits, and develop the ability of self-study...obtain preliminary ability to use the language and set a solid foundation for future actual communication. It also regulates many important and advanced teaching methodologies. For example,

it encourages teachers to implement students-oriented principles; encourage students to participate in language practice and communication; reduce the lecturing time to less than 30% of the whole class time; actively develop spare-time activities, such as games, role playing and an English corner.

English Language Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2003)

continues to stress the great importance of cultivating students' actual English communicative ability, setting the goal of students in senior high schools as developing oral and written English communicative ability.

However, despite the great reform made in education policy, the actual English teaching and learning methodology still follows the traditional “grammar-translation” method. In a typical English class in China, teachers talk most of the time while students are busy taking notes; the teaching content and material is heavily focused on grammar and vocabulary practice, and English tests usually contain large proportion of multiple choice and often exclude speaking and listening items.

Then one may ask the question: Why is there such a large gap between education policy and actual practice in schools? The answer, in the author's opinion, is the prevailing washback effect. In other words, the actual practice in schools is not determined by these education policies, instead, there is one more powerful motivation—tests, particularly the English test in University Entrance Examination (UEE). UEE is the biggest and most important test held every year in China. A student is required to take tests in five or six subjects

and English is one of the three compulsory subjects (the other two are Chinese and mathematics) for all candidates. Only those candidates who obtain high scores in the UEE tests can enter prestigious universities, which is the dream of most Chinese students and even their whole family. Therefore, UEE is indeed a high-stake test in China.

Analysis of current English examination in University Entrance Examinations in China

Over the past decade, many educational experts have argued about conducting a reform on the UEE English examination, which they think is too grammar-and-vocabulary oriented. Though some reform has actually taken place, the examination, in the author's opinion, is still far from satisfactory. An analysis of the UEE English examinations of past three years is a good illustration that more reform is still needed.

The form of the 2005, 2006 and 2007 UEE English examinations remains exactly the same. The examinations are divided into 2 big sections: a section of multiple choices and a section of non-multiple choices. The section of multiple choices is further divided into 3 parts: part 1—Listening (20% of total score), part 2—Use of English language (30%), part 3—Reading comprehension (about 26%); the section of non-multiple choices is further divided into: part 1—Error correction (about 7%) and part 2—Writing (about 17%).

The disadvantages of current UEE English examinations, in the author's opinion, are as follows: first and most importantly, lack of a speaking

part, which is believed to be the cause of so called “mute English” in China; secondly, the examination is still too grammar-vocabulary centered. In the aforementioned parts of examinations, Use of English language and Error correction are directly designed to test the grammar-vocabulary ability of students. The scores on these two parts account for 37% of the total score of the examination.

CHAPTER 3

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Implications: Design of a new English examination

Considering the importance of washback in the English teaching and learning and the unsatisfactory result of the current English tests in China, the design of a new English exam is a very important and necessary step to improve the English ability of students in China.

Form of the new examination

A suggested new form of the examination can be found in the Appendix. To create this new form, the author includes some positive parts of the previous UEE Examinations, made adjustment on the layout of previous examinations and included new testing items developed by the author.

Explanation of the new examination

The new exam is divided into the following 5 big parts: Speaking, Listening, Language Application, Reading Comprehension and Writing. The total score for the new exam is 150 points, equal to the score on the previous exams. The score for each part is as follows: Speaking (40 points), Listening (30 points), Language Application (20 points), Reading Comprehension (30 points), and Writing (30 points). Unlike the previous exam, the new exam will be administered in two separate sessions: one session will be devoted to testing Speaking and the other session will focus on the remaining parts.

In the Speaking part, test-takers will be divided into pairs to do the test. There are mainly 4 parts in the test: (1) introduction to each other; (2)

answering questions; (3) creating a conversation based on the topic they selected from the approved list; (4) prepare and present a mini speech on a chosen topic. The Listening part mainly includes Dialogues, Passages and Longer Conversations. The Language Application part, in the form of multiple choice questions, is designed mainly to test students' grammar and vocabulary ability. For the Reading Comprehension part, students are asked to analyze 4 short articles and answer questions. The last part is Writing, in which normally two or three interesting and meaningful topics will be given to students and ask them to pick one and write a 200 word commentary.

Rationale of the new examination

The goal of the new exam

In order to improve the communicative ability of Chinese students and effectively implement the policy issued by Ministry of Education, it is important to develop exams that more accurately reflect the aforementioned aims. The review of the literature shows the UEE English exam has great washback on both teaching and learning, but unfortunately the washback of the current English exam is normally considered very negative, focusing too much on grammar and vocabulary.

In order to eliminate the negative washback and create positive washback, this new exam is designed to focus on the communicative ability of students rather than mastery of grammar and vocabulary. It is the author's opinion that by adopting this new exam, teachers and students will shift their emphasis to

truly embrace communicative learning and thus change the so called “mute English” in China.

The two main features of the New Exam

Add speaking test

The most obvious and important feature of the new exam is the addition of the Speaking test. The test will be conducted in pairs and the two test takers will interact with each other to demonstrate their communicative abilities in a simulated situation. There are two main reasons for adding Speaking test to the new exam. The first reason is theoretical. Many experts have argued about how to design a good communicative-language-test, and expressed similar statements as Canale & Swain (1980, P6) : “assessment instruments must be designed so as to address not only communicative competence but also communicative performance, i.e., the actual demonstration of this knowledge in real second language situations and for authentic communication purposes.” The Speaking test, compared with other tests, is the most direct way for testing communicative performance. The second reason is that the UEE English exam has great washback on both teachers and students and, since there is no speaking test in current English exam, both teachers and students spend very little time on speaking and the speaking ability of students is considered their weakest ability. Based on the above mentioned analysis, the addition of a speaking test to the new exam is very necessary and important. The author believes that a speaking test will have positive washback on both teachers and

students to enhance the English communicative ability of Chinese students.

Decrease the proportion of grammar and vocabulary in the exam

As the author mentioned above, the total score of questions that are directly related to grammar and vocabulary in the current UEE English exam accounts for 37% of the total score. In the new exam, the proportion of grammar and vocabulary is decreased, which only appears in the third part of the new exam, called “Language Application” with total score of 20 points, accounting for less than 13% of the total score. Gradually this 13% will be decreased to zero. The reason for still keeping this 13% currently is that, considering the current heavily grammar-and-vocabulary oriented exam, sudden removal of all grammar-vocabulary questions may result in confusion and unrest in both teachers and students. Therefore, the author believes that gradual reform and removal is more appropriate for teachers and students to accept and follow the new exam.

Conclusion

In recent years, “washback” has become a very hot topic among many linguistic and educational experts, and many of them admit that washback does exist and plays an importance role in language teaching and learning. The washback phenomenon is especially prevalent in China, a country which has a long history of test-driven teaching and learning. Therefore, to enhance the English ability of Chinese students, the design of a new test form that can yield positive washback is very necessary.

The new test designed by the author and presented in this paper provides an opportunity to change the old grammar-vocabulary-oriented test patterns and to help students promote their English communicative abilities, which is still subject to further verification. However, the design of a test alone is not enough to yield positive washback. According to the last two of the seven principles proposed by Huges (1989) and discussed in Chapter 2, besides tests themselves, close cooperation between policy makers, test makers, teachers and students is also important to ensure that the test is known and understood by students and teachers, and if it is necessary, educational authorities should provide assistance to teachers (1989, P44-46). With well-designed English tests and improved cooperation among all participants of English education, positive washback should be realized and Chinese students' English ability will be greatly improved.

Appendix New Examination (Candidates' Version)

(Total 150 points)

Part 1: Speaking (separately tested) (40 points)

The speaking test will be conducted in pairs.

(1) Introduce to each other (4-5 minutes)

(2) Ask test-taker choose one card which contains 3-4 questions (e.g. how do you get to school every day? What's your favorite subject? Why do you like it?)

(2) Pick a topic and start a conversation (e.g., in a shop, one student will be the buyer and the other will be the seller) (4-5minutes)

(3) Pick a topic and give your opinion about it (e.g., describe your hometown) (3 minutes for each)

Part 2: Listening (30 points)

A Dialogues

Directions In this section, you will hear ten short conversations between two speakers. At the end of each conversation, a question will be asked about what was said. The conversations and the questions will be spoken only once. After you hear a conversation and the question about it, read the four possible answers on your paper, and decide which one is the best answer to the question you have heard.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. A. Coke. | B. Coffee |
| C. Tea. | D. Water. |
| 2. A. At a restaurant | B. At a hotel. |
| C. At a concert. | D. At a theater |
| 3. A. relieved | B. Worried. |

C. confused.

D. Depressed.

4. A. The Browns.

B. The Browns's son.

C. The postman.

D. The neighbor.

5. A. 7:00

B. 7:10

C. 9:00

D. 9:10

(2) Passages

Directions: In this section, you will hear two short passages, and you will be asked three questions on each of the passages. The passages will be read twice but the questions will be spoken only once. When you hear a question, read the four possible answers in your paper and decide which one would be the best answer to the question you have heard.

Questions 15 through 17 are based on the following passage.

6. A. She caught a butterfly.

B. She set a butterfly free.

C. She saw a butterfly flying away.

D. She changed a butterfly into a fairy.

7. A. Letting her have any wish she would like.

B. Letting her go any where she would like.

C. Making her rich.

D. Making her popular in the neighborhood.

Questions 18 through 20 are based on the following passage.

8. A. Having soft drinks. B. Listening to the hospital radio.

C. Smoking in certain areas. D. Visiting patients in the morning

9. A. Having soft drinks. B. Listening to the hospital radio.

C. Smoking in certain areas. D. Visiting patients in the morning

C Longer Conversations

Directions: In this section, you will hear two longer conversations. The conversations will be read twice. After you hear each conversation, you are required to fill in the blanks with the information you have heard. Write your

answers On you answer sheet.

Blanks 17 through 20 are based on the following conversation.

Garden Restaurant Reservation Form	
Name:	Jessica <u>17</u>
Time:	9:00 p.m. <u>18</u>
Number of People:	Six
Phone Number:	<u>19</u>
Special Request:	<u>20</u> dishes

Blanks 21
through 24

are based on the following conversation.

What is Harrods, the biggest department store in the UK, famous for?	Its <u>21</u> and Egyptian Hall.
How do people feel when they are in the Egyptian Hall?	They feel they are <u>22</u> .
How does Harrods get most of its power?	By producing <u>23</u> itself.
How is the business during the January sales?	There is an increase in <u>24</u> .

Part 3: Language application

- Does this answer _____ sense to you? I can't understand it.
A. give B. cause C. mean D. make
- Kate had her bag _____ and lost all her money.
A. steal B. stole C. stealing D. stolen
- Shanghai is really a fascinating city and we've decided to stay for _____ two days.
A. another B. other C. the other D. other's
- With the help of high technology, more and more new substances _____ in recent years.
A. discovered B. have discovered C. had been discovered D. have

been discovered

5. At minus 130 °C, a living cell can be _____ for a thousand years.

- A. spared B. protected C. preserved D. developed

6. Since Tom _____ downloaded a virus into his computer, he can not open the file now.

- A. readily B. horribly C. accidentally D. irregularly

7. My grandfather is as _____ as a young man and hates sitting around doing nothing all day.

- A. enthusiastic B. energetic C. talkative D. sensitive

8. “ I don’t think it’s my _____ that the TV blew up. I just turned it on, that’s all.”

- A. error B. mistake C. fault D. duty

9. Kate: “Why you did not go to school yesterday?”

James: “My grandfather died yesterday.”

Kate: _____

- A. That is too bad. B. I am sorry to hear that. C. That explains a lot.

D. Unfortunately

10. Sarah: Kate, will you go to the party tomorrow?

Kate: _____, but I have to take care of my little brother

- A. I would like to B. Ok C. No problem D. No, thank you.

Part 4: Reading comprehension

Section A

That cold January night, I was growing sick of my life in San Francisco. There I was, walking home at one in the morning after a tiring practice at the theatre. With opening night only a week ago, I was still learning my lines. I was having trouble dealing with my part-time job at the bank and my acting at night at the same time. As I walked, I thought seriously about giving up both acting and San Francisco. City life had become too much for me.

As I walked down empty streets under tall buildings, I felt very small and

cold. I began running, both to keep warm and to keep away from any possible robbers (抢劫犯). Very few people were still out except a few sad-looking homeless people under blankets.

About a block from my apartment (公寓房间), I heard a sound behind me. I turned quickly, half expecting to see someone with a knife or a gun. The street was empty. All I saw was a shining streetlight. Still, the noise had made me nervous, so I started to run faster. Not until I reached my apartment building and unlocked the door did I realize what the noise had been. It had been my wallet falling to the sidewalk.

Suddenly I wasn't cold or tired anymore. I ran out of the door and back to where I'd heard the noise. Although I searched the sidewalk anxiously for fifteen minutes, my wallet was nowhere to be found.

Just as I was about to give up the search, I heard the garbage truck (垃圾车) pull up to the sidewalk next to me. When a voice called from the inside, "Alisa Camacho?" I thought I was dreaming. How could this man know my name? the door opened, and out jumped a small red-haired man with an amused look in his eye. "Is this what you're looking for?" he asked, holding up a small square shape.

It was nearly 3 A.M. by the time I got into bed. I wouldn't get much sleep that night, but I had gotten my wallet back. I also had gotten back some enjoyment of city life. I realized that the city couldn't be a bad place as long as people were willing to help each other.

1. How did the write feel when she was walking home after work?

- A. Cold and sick B. Fortunate and helpful
- C. Satisfied and cheerful D. Disappointed and helpless

2. From the first paragraph, we learn that the write was busy _____.

- A. solving her problem at the bank B. taking part in various city activities
- C. learning acting in a n evening school D. preparing for the first night show

3. In the fifth paragraph, why did the writer say she was dreaming?

A. Someone offered to take her back home. B. A red-haired man came to see her.

C. She heard someone call her name D. Her wallet was found in a garbage truck.

4. From the text, we can infer that the writer _____.

- A. would stop working at night
- B. would stay on in San Francisco
- C. would make friends with cleaners
- D. would give up her job at the bank.

Section B

Mail carriers will be delivering some good news and some bad news this week.

The bad news: Stamp prices are expected to rise 2 cents in May to 41 cents, the Postal Regulatory Commission announced yesterday. The good news: With the introduction of a “forever stamp,” it may be the last time Americans have to use annoying 2-or 3-cent stamps to make up postage differences.

Beginning in May, people would be able to purchase the stamps in booklets of 20 at the regular rate of a first-class stamp. As the name implies, “forever stamps” will keep their first-class mailing value forever, even when the postage rate goes up.

The new “forever stamp” is the United States Postal Service’(USPS) answer to the complaints about frequent rate increases. This May increase will be the fifth in a decade. Postal rates have risen because of inflation (通货膨胀), competition from online bill paying, and the rising costs of employee benefits, including healthcare, says Mark Saunders, a Spokesman for USPS.

The USPS expects some financial gain from sales of the “forever stamp”

and the savings from not printing as many 2-or 3-cent stamps. "It's not your grandfather's stamp," says Mr. Saunders. "It could be your great-grandchildren's stamp."

Other countries, including Canada, England, and Finland use similar stamps.

Don Schilling, who has collected stamps for 50 years, he's interested in the public's reaction. "This is an entirely new class of stamps," Mr. Schilling says. He adds that he'll buy the stamps because he will be able to use them for a long period of time, not because they could make him rich-the volume printed will be too large for collectors. "We won't be able to send our kids to college on these," he says, laughing.

The USPS board of governors has yet to accept the Postal Regulatory Commission's decision, but tends to follow its recommendations. No plans have been announced yet for the design of the stamps.

5. The main purpose of introducing a "forever stamp" is _____.

- A. to reduce the cost of printing 2-or 3-cent stamps
- B. to help save the consumers' cost on first-class mailing
- C. to respond to the complaints about rising postal rates
- D. to compete with online bill paying

6. Which of the following is true according to the passage?

- A. The investment in forever stamps will bring adequate reward.
- B. America will be the first country to issue forever stamps.
- C. The design of the "forever stamp" remains to be revealed.
- D. 2-or 3-cent stamps will no longer be printed in the future.

7. What can be concluded from the passage?

- A. With forever stamps, there will be no need to worry about rate changes.

- B. Postal workers will benefit most from the sales of forever stamps.
- C. The inflation has become a threat to the sales of first-class stamps.
- D. New interest will be aroused in collecting forever stamps.

Section C

What do you want to be when you grow up? A teacher? A doctor? How about an ice-Cream taster?

Yes, there really is a job where you can get paid to taste ice cream. Just ask John Harrison, an “Official Taste Tester” for the past 21 years. Testing helps manufacturers to be sure of a product’s quality. During his career Harrison has been responsible for approving large quantities of the sweet ice cream – as well as for developing over 75 flavors (味道).

Some people think that it would be easy to do this job; after all, you just have to like ice cream, right? No – there’s more to the job than that, says Harrison, who has a degree in chemistry. He points out that a dairy or food – science degree would be very useful to someone wanting a career in this “cool” field.

In a typical morning on the job, Harrison tastes and assesses 60 ice-cream samples. He lets the ice cream warm up to about 12 F. Harrison explains, “You get more flavor from warmer ice cream, which is why some kids like to stir it, creating ice-cream soup.”

While the ice cream warms up, Harrison looks over the samples and grades each one on its appearance. “Tasting begins with the eyes,” he explains. He checks to see if the ice cream is attractive and asks himself, “Does the product have the color expected from that flavor?” Next it’s time to taste!

Continuing to think up new ideas, try out new flavors, and test samples from so many kinds of ice cream each day keeps Harrison busy but happy – working at once cool job.

father inspired me a lot, and many teachers took the time to nurture my latent and the talents of other students in our school.

12. Yes. We've done such a poor job with music education because, as a society, we haven't maintained the kind of education that a true artist and musician needs. Young people haven't been able to equate romance and talent with music. For instance, most of the people who make it in the music industry today have to look good. How they sound is secondary. Sarah Vaughan, Bessie Smith, Ella Fitzgerald — those big, romantic queens of jazz music wouldn't make it in today's music industry, and that's a shame. We need to teach young people about the alternatives.

13. Around the world people make music that, if you listen carefully to it, sounds a little like the cadence of their language. I'd call it folk music. When I'm away from home, I make a point of listening to regional folk music, not what's on the radio.

14. The same music is on the radio all over the world, and the American sound is overwhelming. Even the pop music that's produced and created in foreign countries has that American beat, that underscore of funk. As a musician, I'm not interested in hearing recycled versions of the same genre over and over. Any music that doesn't have a development section just isn't interesting to me.

15. The music press has so much to introduce these days, and jazz is just a small fraction of it. Because some people are intimidated by jazz, they don't cover it unless it's a big name. New jazz musicians don't get much of a break. A lot of editors don't say anything about jazz these days unless it's Marsalis. That's a shame. What VH1 is doing with their Save the Music campaign is phenomenal. They're getting all these instruments out to needy kids. It's the kind of thing all

networks should be doing.

Part 5: Writing

Please choose one of the following two topics and write an article about 200 words.

1. How do you prefer your English classes to be taught? Only in English or both in English and Chinese?
2. Olympics and Me.

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