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# Strategies in TOEFL Reading Comprehension for Chinese Students

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# Strategies in TOEFL Reading Comprehension for Chinese Students

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In Partial Fulfillment
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Xiwen Li
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Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

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ABSTRACT

With China's development, an increasing number of students choose to further their studies abroad. However, many Chinese students do not know how to prepare for the TOEFL test by themselves.Thus, there are three sections in my literature review, which are the introduction of TOEFL, TOEFL Reading Comprehension Strategies for Native Chinese Speakers, and TOEFL test preparation for Chinese students.After that, this project includes original materials so that beginning level students can get a preliminary understanding of the TOEFL reading comprehension tests. The material is deliberately based on Chinese culture, which makes it relevant and easier for beginners to understand. This project can improve students' motivation to study for the TOEFL. There are four units in this project, and three of them introduce types of TOEFL reading questions. Each of the units contains one reading passage and several questions. The last unit is grammar-based and it presents the adjective clause system. The materials can be used by students who want to improve their English proficiency abilities while increasing their motivation for learning English. Furthermore, students can increase their confidence by being better prepared for the TOEFL.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the development of the Chinese economy, more and more students have decided to further their studies abroad (Jang, 2012). In order to do this in English-speaking countries, many Chinese students must take a language proficiency test such as The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The TOEFL is accepted by most English-speaking schools in the world, including more than 11,500 universities and institutions across over 160 countries (Jang, 2012). Because the Test of English as a Foreign Language Exam (TOEFL) is widely accepted as an English proficiency test in the United States, it also plays a vital role in the application process of Chinese students to schools in the United States. Many Chinese students who wish to study in the  United States are either required to or choose to, take the TOEFL test in order to demonstrate their proficiency in the English language. By 2012, China reached number one in the total number of TOEFL test takers in the world (Dai, 2016). The TOEFL is not only expensive for most students, but also difficult for those who want to get a high score. As a result, there are many TOEFL training institutes in China that help students to get high scores on the TOEFL. While many students who participate in these programs improve their TOEFL scores, the programs often focus on test-taking strategies and do not necessarily support students in improving their actual English reading, writing, and speaking ability (Yu, 2012). The goal of this field project is to offer comprehension strategies, rather than test-taking strategies, that Chinese students can use to improve their ability to read and understand academic English when preparing for the TOEFL reading test.

**Statement of the Problem**

During the 1950s, the number of non-native students in the United States increased, and there was a need for a language test to assess the ability of these students to meet their various degree requirements while studying in English. As a result, the first TOEFL test was launched by the National Council on the Testing of English as a Foreign Language, established in 1961 (Gamlam, 2016). The TOEFL is the premier English-language test for study in English-speaking countries, and it is also often required for work and immigration purposes. The TOEFL test includes four parts: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

In its current form, the TOEFL is a norm-referenced test that includes four parts that assess the ability of the test-taker to read, listen, speak, and write in English. The TOEFL is important to non-native English speakers, who wish to study in English-speaking countries, as it is widely accepted around the world as a test of language proficiency. For example, 80% of Canadian universities, 90% of American universities, and 100% of the universities in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand require international students to complete the TOEFL (Mei, 2016). The TOEFL is the most preferred English-language test in France and Germany and is required by all student immigration visas. In addition, many top universities in mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia require the TOEFL, in addition to the GRE, for admission to graduate programs (Mei, 2016).

The average TOEFL score for Chinese students is 79, which is far lower than the average score worldwide, which is 93 (Cho & Bridgeman, 2012). The average TOEFL score of Chinese testers in both reading and writing is 21, and the scores in listening and speaking are also lower than the global average in these two sections (Cho & Bridgeman, 2012). This result reflects that most Chinese test takers lack the ability to use English proficiently even though they have an

adequate vocabulary, and understand English grammar rules but are not adaptable enough to apply them to the TOEFL test.

     Before exploring reading comprehension among native Chinese speakers, it is essential to understand reading comprehension among second language learners in general.  The results of this meta-analysis demonstrate that grammar and vocabulary knowledge was significantly related to $L_2$ comprehension.  Decoding, phonological awareness, orthographic knowledge, and morphological knowledge were also correlated with $L_2$ reading comprehension but with more moderate results.  Working memory, metacognition, and $L_1$ reading comprehension were also correlated, in a significant but only moderate way, $L_2$ reading comprehension (Fajri, 2019). Native Chinese speakers do several everyday things that have a negative impact on their ability to read in English, most of them believing being able to read fluently out loud was linked to better reading comprehension (Jiang et al., 2012). As for how to improve reading efficiency for Chinese students, Cohen and Upton (2006) state that there is a specific set of skills that TOEFL test-takers must acquire in order to do well on the reading comprehension section of the exam.

     For most Chinese international students, the best block for them to improve their reading comprehension is to find an efficient method resulting in the new strategies generated by synthesizing and summarizing information that exists in TOEFL reading and listening materials (Yu et al., 2017). Besides previous research only focusing on how students prepare for the TOEFL, there are few studies investigating the influence of this kind of general preparation on developing single language skill proficiency, such as materials, preparation strategies, and activities that students use in China (Yu, 2012). However, there is very little known about the relationship between TOEFL preparation and scores.

According to Jeon and Yamashita (2014), grammar and vocabulary knowledge have the most significant positive impact on reading comprehension in English among Chinese students. According to Cohen and Upton (2006), this is important because Chinese students taking the TOEFL must be able to understand what they read at the sentence level, the paragraph level, and at the passage level in order to understand how different parts of a text relate to the meaning of the larger text as a whole. Chinese TOEFL takers must also be able to problem-solve unknown vocabulary and use a range of problem-solving strategies independently and flexibly (Cohen & Upton, 2006).  Related to vocabulary knowledge, Jiang et al. (2012) claim that it is essential for native Chinese speakers to learn to think about English words as a progression of sounds, that can be put together in meaningful parts, rather than a picture like a Chinese character.  Related to grammar, there are also opportunities for Chinese students learning English to have opportunities to read out loud so they can learn to hear the structure of the English language. Reading out loud can lead to improved oral reading fluency, which can then lead to improved reading comprehension (Jiang et al., 2012).  This field project addresses these areas.

To conclude, because native Chinese speakers must learn an alphabetic system in order to read English (compared to the logographic system in Chinese), the obstacles that prevent Chinese test takers from achieving higher TOEFL reading comprehension scores are lacking motivation and the inability to use vocabulary flexibly. Moreover, because of the grammar-translation method adopted by most Chinese English classrooms, Chinese students are unable to use grammar in a flexible manner. In addition, students still learn with outdated material and strategies. TOEFL educators should be aware of using suitable materials and appropriate teaching methods.

**Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this field project is to create a guidebook to help Chinese students independently study for the TOEFL to improve their reading comprehension. The guidebook includes sections on question types of TOEFL reading comprehension and grammar. In the question types section, the guidebook first helps students learn more about the TOEFL reading test. Then, the guidebook helps students learn specific questions with ten different types, such as vocabulary, reference, factual information, negative factual information, sentence simplification, rhetorical purpose, inference, inset text, prose summary, and fill-in-the-tale. In the project, these ten questions have been included into three main categories, which are basic comprehension, making inferences, and reading to learn. Each main category includes one original passage so that students can get a general idea of the types of questions asked in TOEFL reading. The last part of this section includes practicing reading out loud so that Chinese students can learn to hear how the adjective clause system works, and this technique can be used to understand long and difficult sentences in the TOEFL reading comprehension test. The guidebook then shows basic knowledge of the adjective clause system and strategies for determining the right or wrong of the given sentences, correcting the wrong sentences, and combining target sentences into one sentence by using the adjective clause system. The end goal of this guidebook is to help Chinese students who are studying for the TOEFL to improve their scores by improving their English language reading comprehension.

**Theoretical Framework**

Krashen's second language acquisition theory includes five main hypotheses (Krashen,1981). The first hypothesis describes two systems: the acquired system describes language developed through meaningful and authentic communication in a new language, and

the learned system describes formal language learning about a language's form and structure. The second hypothesis, the *Natural Order Hypothesis,* describes how language learners follow a predictable pattern of grammar learning in a new language. The *Monitor Hypothesis* is the third hypothesis and explains how conscious language learning and grammar learning play only a limited role in authentic language learning. Krashen's fourth hypothesis is the *Input Hypothesis*, and describes the role of l+1, known as comprehensible input. The final hypothesis, the *Affective Filter Hypothesis,* describes how motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, and personality traits impact language learning.

The Input Hypothesis is the most relevant to the present research problem and was used as a theoretical frame for this field project. The Input Hypothesis is important because it suggests that students learn by being exposed to language with a structure that is one level above their current level of competence, and not through rote grammar or vocabulary practice. Related to this, the input hypothesis suggests that communicative fluency is acquired through authentic language use (Krashen,1981). This is important to understand when reviewing the research on test preparation courses, which often prioritize test-taking strategies rather than authentic language acquisition.

## Researcher Positionality

As an international student who comes from China, the topic of this field project is essential to me as a student and as a novice researcher. When I was an undergraduate in China, my major was business English which is closely related to the coursework of other English majors in China. Because I am interested in speaking English and am in the process of learning to speak English, I decided to further my study in the United States. Since I passed all the English tests in China with ease, I thought the TOEFL examination would be very easy for me.

However, the TOEFL was more difficult than I anticipated and became an obstacle for me when I was applying to universities in the United States. Through this process, I became passionate about the topic of learning English as a native Chinese speaker. After graduating, I plan to become a TOEFL teacher for native Chinese speakers.  Because of my personal experience with the TOEFL, and my experience as an international student in the United States, I believe I will be a strong teacher for native Chinese students.

## Significance of the Project

This field project may be of interest to Chinese students studying for the reading section of the TOEFL.  It may also be of interest to teachers of Chinese students who are studying for the TOEFL, and researchers in the field of language acquisition.  It may hold significance for Chinese students studying for the reading section of the TOEFL because the TOEFL is widely accepted by many English-speaking universities.  The reading section is a critical element that is used to demonstrate proficiency in English and is essential to many institutions of higher education in the English-speaking world, with many universities in the Unite States requiring a minimum score for the reading section.  In addition, this field project may also be of interest to teachers of Chinese students studying for the TOEFL because it will investigate various TOEFL teaching methods and materials. Finally, this field project may also hold significance for researchers in the field of language acquisition because it uses the input hypothesis as a theoretical frame.

## Definition of Terms

**ESL:** English as a Second Language is an abbreviation for English as a Foreign Language. The process of teaching English to students who do not speak English as their first language but live in a country where English is widely spoken  (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

**Grammar translation method:** The grammar translation method is a foreign language teaching method derived from the classical method of teaching Greek and Latin. Grammar-translation classes teach students grammatical rules, which they then apply by translating sentences between the target and native languages (Anthony, 1963).

**i+1:** It refers to the language or conversations that contain structures that are beyond our current language level (Krashen, 1981).

**TOEFL:** Test of English as a Foreign Language (ETS, 2007)

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The claim of this literature review is that it is essential for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers to understand the needs of native Chinese speakers preparing for the online Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) test. The sections of this chapter review and summarize the research that supports this claim. The first section of this literature review discusses the history of TOEFL and the reason why this language test is essential for ESL speakers. The second section highlights the importance of TOEFL reading comprehension strategies for native Chinese speakers. The final section reviews essential test preparation strategies that ESL teachers can use in order to help their native-Chinese-speaking students to prepare for the TOEFL test. Side by Side reasoning is used to connect these pieces of reason because the literature includes different authors. A visual representation of the logic equation is as follows: $R_1, R_2, R_3 \therefore C$ (Machi & McEvoy, 2012, p. 97).

**Introduction to the TOEFL**

This section introduces the TOEFL test and demonstrates why it is crucial. This first includes a summary of the history of the TOEFL and the crucial changes and revisions that have been made to the test since the 1960s. Firstly, this section also includes a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the TOEFL as described by Banerjee (2003). Secondly, the section talks about a summary of scholarship by Stricker (2004), who investigated the construct validity of the computer-based TOEFL test. Thirdly, related with Stricker (2004), the relationship of TOEFL scores with academic performance, as described by Cho and Bridgeman (2012). In the last part of this section introduce recent changes to TOEFL by Kelly (2021). The

literature in this first section is essential because it describes the TOEFL and illustrates why the TOEFL is a meaningful and vital language test.

According to Cheng et al. (2014), during the 1950s, the number of non-native students in the United States increased, and there was a need for a language test to assess the ability of these students to meet their various degree requirements while studying in English. As a result, the first TOEFL test was launched by the National Council on the Testing of English as a Foreign Language, established in 1961. Several revisions followed.  For example, in 1970, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) became the leading provider of the TOEFL test.  ETS changed the TOEFL test by expanding it to include reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and written expression. Over time, it became clear that the written expression portion of the TOEFL did not fully assess students' writing skills according to the standards required for the academic papers written in university and college-level classes. Therefore, in July 1986, the ETS introduced a second revision, this time to the Test of Written English (TWE), requiring test takers to construct a well-developed essay within a 30-minute time frame.  A third revision came in 1981, as a result of interest in the application of the communicative theory to language testing.  This new computer-based TOEFL test included a communicative writing task. A second computer-based test system was released in 2005.

Cheng et al. (2014) demonstrate that the TOEFL is a norm-referenced test that includes four parts that assess the ability of the test-taker to read, listen, speak, and write in English. The TOEFL is important to non-native English speakers, who wish to study in English-speaking countries, as it is widely accepted around the world as a test of language proficiency.  For example, 80% of Canadian universities, 90% of American universities, and 100% of the universities in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand require international students to

complete the TOEFL. The TOEFL is the most preferred English-language test in France and Germany and is required by all student immigration visas.  In addition, many top universities in mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia require the TOEFL, in addition to the GRE, for admission to graduate programs (Mei, 2016).

Banerjee (2003) describes the sections of the TOEFL in more detail and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the test.  According to Banerjee:

- The listening portion of the TOEFL has two parts, which are only presented once and must be completed in 15-25 minutes. The first section consists of one or two conversations. The second part is a mini-lecture. After listening to the conversation/s and lecture, the test-taker completes a series of multiple-choice questions.

- The purpose of the structure section of the TOEFL is to identify whether test-takers can recognize the grammar of standard written English and evaluate its different structural feathers. In this section, test takers have 15-20 minutes to answer 20-25 questions.

- The reading section of the TOEFL includes approximately 45 questions which must be completed within 70-90 minutes.  The questions are based on four or five passages that vary in topic. The aim of this part is to evaluate students' knowledge of specific vocabulary and comprehension.

- In the writing portion of the TOEFL, students need to write an essay on the target topic within 30 minutes. To gain a higher score, the test-taker must write an academic essay that defends a position and develops the main ideas by presenting evidence to support their claim.

In addition to describing the contents of the TOEFL, Banerjee also describes the strengths and weaknesses of the TOEFL.

According to Banerjee (2003), there are several disadvantages to the TOEFL. For example, in the listening section, test takers only see and hear questions after listening to the text. Because of this, the listening section evaluates a student's ability to remember what they have heard, as well as their listening proficiency. For this reason, many students find it easier to answer questions about the brief conversations they hear, but more challenging to answer questions about the longer mini-lecture. Because it is possible for a student to understand what they have heard but not remember what they heard, Banerjee suggests that this part of the TOEFL may be somewhat unreliable as a measure of listening proficiency. Banerjee also suggests that because test takers are not allowed to choose the topic that they like, the results of the TOEFL writing section may not sufficiently explore the students' written language ability. A final disadvantage of the computer-based TOEFL is that it requires students to be familiar with using computers. While the computer-based TOEFL does make the test more accessible, students who are not familiar with computers may receive lower scores due to unfamiliarity with the testing modality and anxiety related to computer-based testing.

Despite these disadvantages, a study conducted by Stricker (2004) supports the construct validity of the computer-based TOEFL test, which is very similar to the paper TOEFL test. Summarizing older studies of the construct validity of the paper TOEFL, Stricker describes the difference in performance between English native speakers and non-native speakers. The author replicated the model of older studies by conducting two studies. Stricker (2004) argues that the purpose of the first study was to "assess the comparative level of performance and variation in performance of native speakers of English and ESL speakers on the computer-based TOEFL(p.10)" among a sample of 6,334 ESL speakers and 168 native English speakers. Besides, Stricker (2004) comes up with the purpose of the second study was to "evaluate the

relationships between performance on the computer-based TOEFL and the GRE General Test for native speakers of English and ESL speakers (p.10)" among a sample of 3,489 ESL speakers and 168 native English speakers, both drawn from the participants of the first study. Striker's results replicated the findings of previous research and illustrated the construct validity of the computer-based TOEFL tests.

As for the relationship between students' TOEFL scores and academic performance, Cho and Bridgeman (2012) believe that the general pattern shown in the expectancy graphs indicated that students with higher TOEFL iBT scores tended to earn higher GPAs and that the TOEFL iBT provided information about non-native English-speaking students' future academic performance that was not provided by other admissions tests. According to the experiment of Cho and Bridgeman(2012), "results indicated that the percentage of students receiving a bottom 25% GPA was considerably smaller for students with relatively high TOEFL scores. (p.18)" As Schrader (as cited in Cho & Bridgeman, 2012) mentioned that taking into account the warning that predictive validity expressed in terms of correlation is difficult to interpret and that even a small correlation can indicate a meaningful relationship, the probability of the relationship between TOEFL iBT and GPA was also investigated. Cho and Bridgeman(2012), therefore, conclude even minor correlations or seemingly insignificant amounts of variance explained may indicate the existence of a meaningful relationship between two variables. The findings suggest that TOEFL iBT scores predict students' academic performance, as measured by GPA.

In the last part of this section, Kelly (2021) updates recent changes in the TOEFL test, there are three of four parts have been changed, just as Kelly (2021) describes "The Reading section has fewer questions per passage (now 10, from 12-14); The Listening section has one or two fewer lectures; The Speaking section now has four questions instead of six: Questions 1 and

were removed, and the remaining questions were renumbered 1 to 4" (p.5). Compared to the old version, the new version has clear objectives and therefore reduces the pressure on students to prepare for the exam Kelly (2021) .

In summary, this section introduces the TOEFL test and demonstrates its importance as an internationally accepted and research-based language assessment. This section provided a history of the TOEFL that included a summary of significant changes and revisions made to the test since it became popular in the 1960s (Cheng et al., 2014). This section also included a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the TOEFL (Banerjee, 2003), and a summary of research related to the construct validity of the computer-based TOEFL test (Stricker, 2004). Moreover, this section also demonstrates the relationship between TOEFL scores and academic performance (Cho & Bridgeman, 2012). Last but not least, according to Kelly (2021), the TOEFL test was updated in 2019, including three of four parts. From my perspective, the analysis from Banerjee (2003) that is the advantages and disadvantages of the TOEFL test is applicable to this section. Due to the importance of the TOEFL, and considering its strengths and weaknesses, it is crucial to understand the specific strategies that may support native Chinese speakers to pass this important exam. The following sections summarize the literature on reading comprehension strategies and test preparation strategies that have been found to be effective among native Chinese-speaking students. This scholarship lays the foundation for the development of the field project.

### TOEFL Reading Comprehension Strategies for Native Chinese Speakers

Because the TOEFL is such an important and widely accepted language test, many researchers have conducted studies on the test. This section focuses on the TOEFL research that demonstrates that specific reading comprehension strategies may be used to support native

Chinese speakers studying for the TOEFL. The first part of this section describes reading comprehension among the second language (L$_2$) learners in general (Jeon & Yamashita, 2014). Following that, research by Jiang, Sawaki, and Sabatini (2012) examines the relationship between word reading, fluency, and comprehension among native Chinese speakers in particular. The next part of this section examines the relationship between repeating reading and increasing vocabulary among Chinese learners (Han & Chen, 2010). Finally, this section summarizes the work of Cohen and Upton (2006), who discuss reading comprehension among native Chinese speakers and identify the skills needed to demonstrate reading comprehension on the TOEFL. This is important because, taken together, these studies discuss reading comprehension in detail, as well as the teaching methods and the challenges relevant to native Chinese speakers. This is directly related to the claim of this literature review that it is essential for ESL teachers to understand the needs of native Chinese speakers preparing for the TOEFL test.

Before exploring reading comprehension among native Chinese speakers, it is vital to understand reading comprehension among second language (L$_2$) learners in general. In a meta-analysis by Jeon and Yamashita (2014), the authors found that researchers investigate some topics more than others when researching reading comprehension. The most well-researched topics include decoding, vocabulary knowledge, grammar, and first language(L$_1$) reading comprehension. In addition, there are six other topics that are researched less often but are still crucial for understanding reading comprehension among L$_2$ learners. These include phonological awareness, orthographic knowledge, L$_2$ morphological knowledge, listening comprehension, working memory, and metacognition (Jeon &Ymamashita, 2014). The findings of this study and the reason why these findings are essential are as follows.

**Most Comprehension-Related Research Topics, According to Jeon and Yamashita (2014)**

- Decoding: When decoding, readers transform written symbols (letters) into sounds and then into meaningful words. Decoding is essential because the ability to decode strongly predicts a student's reading ability, regardless of age.

- Vocabulary knowledge: Vocabulary knowledge is defined as multidimensional and complex knowledge of the various meanings of words. It is essential because it promotes reading comprehension.

- Grammar: Grammar describes the structure of language, and understanding grammar enables students to analyze and understand what they are reading.

- Comprehension: Comprehension is described as a higher-order language thinking process that allows the reader to make sense of the symbols that make up a piece of writing. Comprehension often engages cross linguistic-transfer, and it is essential because it is the end goal of reading - to understand.

**Less Well-Researched Topics Related to Comprehension**

- Phonological awareness: Phonological awareness is the ability to identify, blend, segment, and manipulate sounds. Phonological awareness is critical because it begins to develop before orthographic knowledge, and is essential to the task of decoding.

- Orthographic knowledge: Orthographic knowledge includes both the basic knowledge of sound-symbol relationships and the complex knowledge of irregular spelling patterns. Orthographic, or spelling knowledge is essential because it is a strong predictor of comprehension among higher-level readers and helps students to improve their reading comprehension.

- Morphological knowledge: Morphological knowledge is the understanding of the meaning of word parts such as root words, affixes, and the derivation of multisyllabic words, and it is essential because it can help readers to problem-solve new words by using what they know about the meaning of other words with the same parts.

- Listening comprehension: Listening comprehension is defined as a predictor and companion variable of reading comprehension.

- Working memory: Working memory is crucial because without it acts like a bridge between new information and knowledge stored long-term in the brain.

- Metacognition: Metacognitive knowledge describes a student's awareness, knowledge, and beliefs about the cognitive or affective experience that accompanies a cognitive task. Metacognition is important because it helps readers to be aware of their own ability to problem-solve and understand new words, new language structures, and unfamiliar content in both oral and written form.

Jeon and Yamashita (2014) conducted a meta-analysis of the research on the topics listed in order to determine which elements have the most significant impact on comprehension.

According to the meta-analysis conducted by Jeon and Yamashita (2014), grammar and vocabulary knowledge are significantly related to $L_2$ comprehension. Decoding, phonological awareness, orthographic knowledge, and morphological knowledge were also significantly correlated with $L_2$ reading comprehension, but with more moderate results. Working memory, metacognition, and $L_1$ reading comprehension were also correlated, in a sensible way, with $L_2$ reading comprehension. Overall, Jeon and Yamashita (2014) note that "$L_2$ reading comprehension is essentially determined by $L_2$ language ability, but the underlying influences on language ability vary depending on how close the $L_2$ is to the $L_1$ (p.178-189)." This is important

for ESL teachers of native Chinese speakers to know because English and Chinese have many significant differences and are not closely related. Native Chinese speakers may therefore require additional time and support in order to develop high levels of listening and reading comprehension in English.

Related to this, a study by Jiang et al. (2012) examined the relationship between "word reading efficiency, text reading fluency, and reading comprehension among native Chinese speakers preparing for the TOEFL" (p. 323). The authors define word reading efficiency as the most crucial factor that influences $L_1$ reading improvement and achievement. They describe text reading fluency as reading with expression, and comprehension as having four parts: rate, accuracy, efficiency, and prosody. Because native Chinese speakers must learn an alphabetic system in order to read English (compared to the logographic system in Chinese), the authors were interested in the influence of word reading and text reading on reading comprehension. The results of this study demonstrate that native Chinese speakers do several common things that have a negative impact on their ability to read in English (Jiang et al., 2012). For example, it is common among native Chinese speakers to try to read English words as if they are reading characters, attempting to remember "the sound as a more or less arbitrary link between orthography and meaning. This holistic word recognition strategy costs time, which may explain why Chinese EFL students read significantly more slowly in English" (Jiang et al., 2012, p.323). The other significant finding was that being able to read fluently and out loud was linked to better reading comprehension.

These two findings are essential for ESL teachers who are preparing native Chinese speakers to take the TOEFL. When working with these students, teachers can do two things. First, they can teach native Chinese speakers to think about alphabetic words as a progression of

sounds, rather than a picture like a Chinese character. Over time, this will make it faster and easier for Chinese-speaking students to read and understand words in English. This is important because the TOEFL is a timed test that requires reading and comprehending at a relatively quick speed. Second, ESL teachers of Chinese speakers can provide opportunities for their students to read out loud.  Improving their oral reading fluency will also improve their reading comprehension. "Second language classroom teachers are often reluctant to require their students to read aloud" (Jiang et al., 2012, p. 344-345), but because oral reading can improve reading comprehension, "It is reasonable to integrate text reading into the EFL classroom assessment and instruction for high-intermediate EFL learners and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) students" (Jiang et al., 2012, p. 344-345).  The results of this study are essential for ESL teachers preparing native Chinese speakers for the TOEFL because of the two essential strategies that students can use to improve their reading comprehension in addition to their TOEFL score.

Related to Jiang et al.(2012), Han and Chen (2010) mentioned that reading and vocabulary are inextricably linked. In fact, reading ability depends on vocabulary knowledge. According to Han and Chen (2010), as a procedure that involves reading the exact text several times, repeated reading has received extensive attention in first-language reading research, with highly converging evidence of its efficacy for reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. Chomsky (as cited in Han & Chen, 2010) demonstrated that the procedure improved the fluency of slow and halting readers and gave them more confidence, motivation, and willingness to read new material independently. Since Han and Chen (2010) believe reading fluency can be developed through repeated reading for language acquisition, they propose three categorical findings that stand out for their conceptual relevance to the current study. First, assisted repeated reading, or reading while listening to a model, improves fluency more than unassisted reading.

Second, repeated reading with feedback improves fluency and comprehension more than reading without feedback. Third, repeated reading without a fixed number of reading times improves fluency and comprehension more than fixed reading times. The results of this study are significant for Chinese English learners because of the gap between their cognitive and linguistic abilities, non-native speakers are frequently discouraged from reading materials that match their linguistic ability. This chasm can be easily bridged with repeated reading, as demonstrated by Han and Chen (2010).

Cohen and Upton (2006) also discuss the development of English reading comprehension among native Chinese speakers and explore the skills needed to demonstrate reading comprehension on the TOEFL. According to Cohen and Upton (2006), there is a specific set of skills that TOEFL test-takers must acquire in order to do well on the reading comprehension section of the exam. These skills include:

- Understanding at the sentence level, at the paragraph level, and at the passage level.
- The ability to use inference to make meaning when there is unknown vocabulary.
- Being mindful of cohesion and coherence issues when attempting to understand part of a text in relation to a larger text
- Good memory for long texts
- Learning from one set of questions, in order to answer the next set of questions.
- A range of problem-solving strategies can be used independently and flexibly (p.110-111)

This is important because Cohen and Upton (2006) review of the literature demonstrates that the list of most common strategies used by TOEFL test takers when completing the reading comprehension section is much smaller and somewhat different than the skills listed. According

to Cohan and Upton (2006), for example, the most common strategies used in the reading comprehension section of the TOEFL include:

- Whereas the instructions ask students to read the passage before answering the questions, students have reported either reading the questions first or reading just part of the article and then looking for the corresponding questions.

- Whereas advised to read all alternatives before choosing one, students stop reading the alternatives as soon as they have found one that they decide is correct.

- Students use a strategy of matching material from the passage with the material in the item stem and in the alternatives and prefer this surface-structure reading of the test items to one that calls for more in-depth reading and inferencing.

- Students rely on their prior knowledge of the topic and on their general vocabulary (p. 16)

ESL teachers of native Chinese speakers can use the findings from Cohen and Upton (2006) to help students prepare for the TOEFL reading comprehension test or to use it for students who want to improve their reading skills.

In summary, this section focused on the research on reading comprehension strategies that can be used to support native Chinese speakers studying for the TOEFL. The first part of this section gave a general explanation of reading comprehension among L2 learners (Jeon & Yamashita, 2014). Then, research by Jiang et al. (2012) summarized and used to demonstrate the relationship between word reading, fluency, and comprehension among native Chinese speakers. Moreover, a study by Han and Chen (2010) illustrated that repeated reading has a positive impact on Chinese speakers in increasing vocabulary. Finally, this section discussed reading comprehension among native Chinese speakers (Cohen & Upton, 2006). Taken together, these

studies help to justify the claim of this literature review that it is essential for ESL teachers to understand the needs of native Chinese speakers preparing for the TOEFL test.

## TOEFL Test Preparation: Chinese Students

Since the number of Chinese students applying to colleges and universities in the United States has grown, the number of Chinese students taking the TOEFL is also increasing. Many researchers have conducted studies on  TOEFL test preparation strategies. This section focuses on the TOEFL research that demonstrates how to prepare for TOEFL independently. The first part of this section is the test preparation phenomenon in China (Ma, 2017). The second part of this section is the TOEFL test takers' preparation behaviors in China (Chen,  2020). After that, a study articulates the influence of intensive preparations on grades that improved specific language skills or language proficiency (Yu, 2012). Following that, research by Yu et al. (2017) illustrates TOEFL preparation strategies, including a study that illustrates the experience of thousands of TOEFL test takers in China and the various test preparation activities that they used. Lastly, Liu (2014) explores the relationship between TOEFL preparations and performance. This is important because, taken together, these studies examine current preparation strategies for Chinese students.

In China, test preparation is a historically rooted and educationally accepted phenomenon, which has paved the way for test preparation for English language tests in particular to become a resounding business success (Ma, 2017). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, test preparation for English language tests became industrialized in China as part of the larger English language training industry (Wang, as cited in Ma, 2017). According to Ma (2017), there are two main reasons contributing to this factor: China's reform and opening up has led to an increase in demand for English and higher score requirement of English language tests in

China, which lead Chinese students to consider seriously into their future success. Most Chinese students achieve success by taking test preparation courses; however, the research on this phenomenon is surprisingly limited. Thus, Ma (2017) studies this phenomenon in three parts: the nature of the test preparation practices, the perceived effects of the test preparation practices, and the value of the test preparation practices. In the part of nature of the test preparation practices, the participants receive three themes:

- Test familiarization. Because students aim to achieve higher scores on the TOEFL test, the first and foremost thing for them is to know about what they are going to be tested. This includes an awareness of the sections, structures, format, and score criteria.

- English skill improvement. Most students and teachers believe that practicing is one of the skills to improve their scores. Besides, for the teachers in test preparation centers, most of them believe that grammar would be helpful in reading and writing sections, and that pronunciation can be helpful for the listening and speaking sections.

- Stress management. It is a common phenomenon that students would be found very stressed before the TOEFL test. To encourage students, teachers would share their own experiences when they first took the TOEFL test. (p.106-p.114)

In the part about perceived effects, Ma (2017) mentioned that it can be improving students' TOEFL test scores after test preparation courses, especially the two-week intensive type of test preparation. However, whether students can improve their English proficiency, Ma (2017) argued that "any potential increase in test scores should parallel improvement in English skills, and it was 'unrealistic' to raise English skills to a higher level within a short period of time" (p.119). Regarding the value of the test preparation practices, Ma (2017) mentioned that students valued the structured and dependable instruction that they trusted: the efficiency of familiarizing

the test and improving English skills, and the motivation to strive throughout the stressful test preparation experience. The timeline is closely related to how students perceived the value of test preparation courses and engagement in learning communities allows peers and teachers to motivate students. For instances, learning communities provide a venue for extending in-class instruction, which may be limited by time constraints; students value the information sharing and interactions with peers and teachers that occur when they participate in such learning communities (Ma, 2017).

Related to Ma (2017),  Chen (2020) points out that TOEFL test preparation has traditionally been done through "coaching," with test takers enrolling in test preparation courses where trainers coach them on test-relevant learning materials and test-taking skills. TOEFL test preparation courses are frequently found to have limited effects on total TOEFL score gains in studies. Except TOEFL test preparation strategies that Ma (2017) mentioned above, there are two new strategies demonstrated by Chen (2020):

- Practice TPO materials. Candidates can take TPO on a computer with an internet connection and receive scores and feedback from ETS TOEFL raters on all four subskills measured on the test within 24 hours. TPO's authentic test items allow the user to see what types of real questions are used in the test. TPO is commonly used as a test simulation, providing test takers with the experience of taking the real TOEFL iBT.
- Practice with Ji-jing items. It refers to a test taker's recall of true TOEFL iBT test questions. ETS previously had a small TOEFL test-item bank and frequently reused the entire set of previous test questions in the upcoming TOEFL iBT exam. The collective recalls of test questions from thousands of TOEFL test takers formed a bank of true

TOEFL items - the TOEFL Ji-jing test candidates who studied Ji-jing encountered the

same test items on the TOEFL exams, artificially boosting their test scores (p.35-45)

Moreover, Chen (2020) also mentioned five more strategies by studying 13 language learners

and 21 test-specific strategies, which are speeding listening, dictation, Shadow speaking, and Get

feedback for speaking and writing samples. To illustrate, according to Chen (2020), "The

detailed descriptions of how these new strategies were implemented by repeaters revealed some

new test preparation behaviors regarding the TOEFL iBT repeaters" (p.54).

Yu et al. (2017) addressed the new strategies generated by synthesizing and summarizing

information that exists in TOEFL reading and listening materials. Yu et al.(2017) did this by

studying the frequency of use of various preparation materials, activities, and the expectation of

preparation courses and the element of courses. Besides, the authors also investigate the

relationship between preparation courses and TOEFL scores. Accordingly, Yu et al.(2017)

discuss several questions, such as how Chinese students prepare for their TOEFL test, what the

difference is between students who attended preparation courses and students who do not prepare

for the test, what is useful preparation for students and teachers, and what is the relationship

between preparation and actual test performance. Conducted in China, this study included 1,500

Chinese test takers and 23 teachers who were preparing for the TOEFL iBT speaking tasks (Yu

et al., 2017) . The findings of this study are as follows.

First of all, the recommendations for Chinese TOEFL teachers and test takers are

a) students should speak as procedurally as possible, b) students need to learn how to manage

their time, c) when students take the test, they should speak loudly, bravely, and even slowly if

necessary, and d) when students cannot come up with the meaning of specific words, it is better

for them to imitate the pronunciation. Secondly, both teachers and students believe test preparation brings a positive effect on test performance. Thirdly, as for the materials that they used, though there are a number of materials that are published every year, most students and teachers prefer to use official documents such as the TOEFL Practice Online (TPO). Yu et al. (2017) imply the limitations of this study. Firstly, only one-third of the volunteers were willing to share their preparation experience. Secondly, the participants of this study were only from four cities in China. Thirdly, the investigation of this study was only from students' and teachers' perspectives instead of school administrators.

Similar to the findings of Yu et al.(2017), Yu (2012) addressed previous research only focusing on how students prepare for the TOEFL. There are few studies investigating the influence of this kind of general preparation on developing single language skill proficiency. Yu (2012) studied the importance of this test from test takers. The author also examines materials, preparation strategies, and activities that students use in China. This study included 1,300 TOEFL test takers. The findings of this study demonstrate that this strategy contributes to the continued effectiveness of the TOEFL speaking tasks, further enhancing our teaching practice of exam preparation programs, and the extent to which these programs provide the opportunity for improving oral English ability to understand. Yu (2012) implies that those findings bring a positive effect on both test developers and test takers. This is also related to the work of Liu (2014).

Liu (2014) addressed that even though many researchers reveal the relationship between preparation strategies and test grades like GRE and SAT, there is very little known about the relationship between TOEFL preparations and the scores. Liu (2019) did this by studying how TOEFL preparation strategies affect the scores. Conducted in China, this study included students

who are college level. The findings of this study demonstrate that specific strategies bring a positive effect on specific areas. For instance, writing preparation strategies can influence writing skills. Listening preparation can improve students' listening scores instead of reading comprehension grades. But for speaking preparation, it not only can develop students' spoken English but also their listening scores as well. Liu (2014) concludes that there are several limitations of this study: first of all, data collected from College English Test Band 4 (CET4) test-takers instead of TOEFL official sources. Secondly, this study lacks information that can impact TOEFL scores about coaching school students. Thirdly, this study is short of the support of project-level investigation data.

In summary, this section has explored studies of TOEFL preparation strategies for Chinese students. This includes Ma (2017) who illustrates the phenomenon in China from historical perspective, then presents several strategies used by many test preparation centers. Secondly, related to Ma (2017), Chen (2020) updated some new TOEFL preparation strategies from the research. Thirdly, research by Yu et al. (2017) illustrates the new strategies generated by synthesizing and summarizing information which exists in TOEFL reading and listening materials. Fourthly, Yu (2012) articulates the influence of intensive preparations on grades that improved in specific language skill or language proficiency. Lastly, Liu (2014) claims how TOEFL preparation strategies affect the scores. Taken together, this body of research justifies TOEFL preparation strategies as a critical element for the success of TOEFL test takers.

**Summary**

In this chapter, the literature review focuses on TOEFL reading comprehension strategies for Chinese test takers from several different aspects. The aspects explored include an overview of the TOEFL, reading comprehension strategies for native Chinese speakers, and TOEFL

preparation strategies for Chinese students. Moreover, all aspects have been illustrated from various perspectives such as educators, students, current materials, teaching methods.

In the first section, Banerjee (2003) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the TOEFL test. Stricker (2004) agreed with some aspects that Banerjee (2003) mentioned and also investigated the construct validity of the computer-based TOEFL test. Following that, Cho and Bridgeman (2012) describe the relationship between TOEFL scores with students' academic performance in the university. This section ends up with Kelly (2021) by pointing out some TOEFL updates, an explanation of why the TOEFL test is vital to international students, and some effects that updating could bring.

In the second section, the first part of it describes reading comprehension among the second language( $L_2$ ) learners in general (Jeon & Yamashita, 2014). Following that, research by Jiang, Sawaki, and Sabatini (2012) examines the relationship between word reading, fluency, and comprehension among native Chinese speakers in particular. The next part of this section examines the relationship between repeating reading and increasing vocabulary among Chinese learners (Han & Chen, 2010). Finally, this section summarizes the work of Cohen and Upton (2006), who discuss reading comprehension among native Chinese speakers and identify the skills needed to demonstrate reading comprehension on the TOEFL.

In the last section, it talks about the TOEFL test preparation for Chinese students. The second part of this section is the TOEFL test takers' preparation behaviors in China(Chen, 2020). After that, a study that articulates the influence of intensive preparations on grades that improved specific language skills or language proficiency (Yu, 2012). Following that, research by Yu et al. (2017) illustrates TOEFL preparation strategies for Chinese students, including a study that illustrates the experience of thousands of TOEFL test takers in China, including

various test preparation activities and materials that they used. Lastly, Liu(2014) claims the relationship between TOEFL preparations and performance.

In sum, this literature review has explored research addressing the needs and experiences of international students who want to further their studies by studying abroad, or those who want to improve their English language skills, especially during the pandemic. The obstacles for Chinese TOEFL test takers are not only because of the rigidity of grammar and vocabulary teaching and learning, but also the lack of updated materials that closely relate to the TOEFL test itself. The body of scholarship that justifies this claim includes: (a) the history of TOEFL and the reason why this language test is essential for ESL speakers, (b) an investigation of TOEFL reading comprehension strategies, and (c) various learning strategies for Chinese students to prepare for the TOEFL. With my field project, I propose strategies to help Chinese students pass the reading comprehension section of the TOEFL.

CHAPTER III

THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

**Brief Description of the Project**

This field project aims to help Chinese TOEFL learners who want to study abroad to learn TOEFL reading comprehension by themselves. To help students to pass the TOEFL reading examination, this project focuses on improving students' reading comprehension ability by introducing types of TOEFL reading test. Suitable study materials are part of exam success. As the core source of language courses, a guide to learning material not only can help teachers cultivate students' language proficiency, but also can stimulate students' imagination and motivate students to improve their enthusiasm for language learning. Although numerous materials are available to assist students in studying independently for the TOEFL reading test, some focus solely on the test rather than on improving students' reading skills. In contrast, others focus on improving students' reading skills with little mention of the TOEFL test itself. Therefore, this field project aims to develop students' reading comprehension to meet academic requirements.
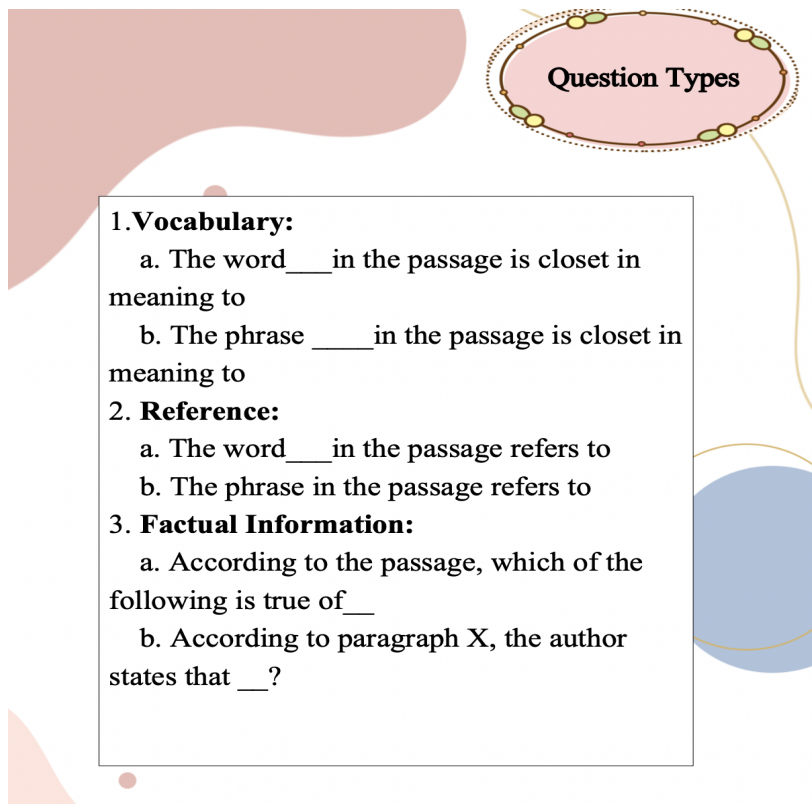
This project is intended to assist self-study students in understanding and passing the TOEFL reading test, so it includes all of the tests that students will face when taking the TOEFL reading test. Since this project is suitable for beginning-level students, it is based on the investigation and analysis of existing TOEFL teaching materials. In other words, it absorbs the advantages of existing teaching materials, but it is modified to make it more suitable for primary TOEFL learners to use for self-study.

The project contains an introduction before you read, three units that introduce types of TOEFL reading comprehension questions, which are basic comprehension questions, inference

questions, and reading-to-learn questions. After that is the grammar unit. In this part, I chose the

adjective clause system to illustrate because it is easier for beginning-level students compared

with other grammar knowledge.

The main purpose of the introduction is to illustrate this book's target population and

goals.

The second part of this field project includes four sections, three of which are based on

TOEFL reading question types. First of all, basic comprehension questions: vocabulary,

references, factual information, negative factual information, and sentence simplification.

Vocabulary questions ask students to understand the meaning of words in the reading passage,

and then they must choose a similar word from the list. The purpose of this part is to test

students' vocabulary. Reference questions ask students to understand the relationship between

words and passages. So, this part also tests students' vocabulary. Factual information questions

and negative factual information questions are pretty similar, the key is to find the right spot in

the passage in which the answer to the question can be found within a short time period. As for

the sentence simplification questions, it asks students to choose the sentence that best restates the

main point of the original sentence in the passage. Figure 1 illustrates basic comprehension

questions.

**Figure 1**

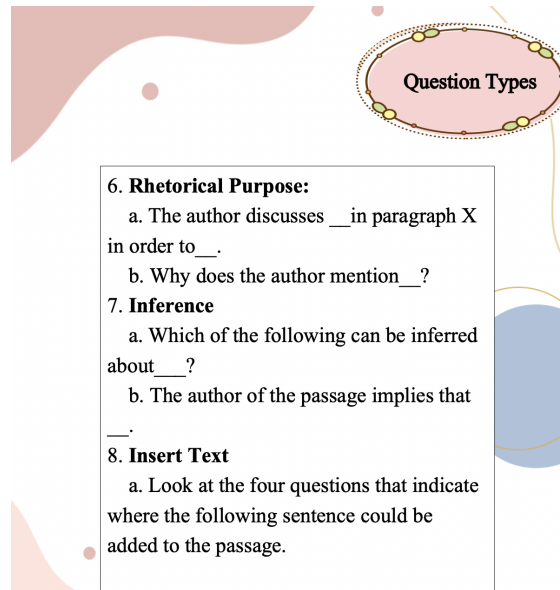*Unit 1 Basic Comprehension Questions*

Question Types

1.**Vocabulary:**
   a. The word____in the passage is closet in meaning to
   b. The phrase _____in the passage is closet in meaning to
2. **Reference:**
   a. The word____in the passage refers to
   b. The phrase in the passage refers to
3. **Factual Information:**
   a. According to the passage, which of the following is true of__
   b. According to paragraph X, the author states that __?

*Note.* This screenshot from page 7 in "Strategies for TOEFL Reading Comprehension for Chinese Students" shows sample question types.

Secondly, there are three sections in Unit 2: Rhetorical Purpose Questions, Inference Questions, and Insert Text Questions. Inference questions require students to understand why and how the author uses a piece of specific information in the passage, so they must determine how one sentence or paragraph relates to another. The inference questions ask students to understand an argument or idea strongly suggested but not explicitly mentioned in the passage. Since the answers to these questions are not directly given in the passage, students should find

out the logical implications of the author's words, as well as the surface meaning of these words. Figure 2 illustrates inference questions. The insert text questions ask students to determine where the best place for a given sentence would be in the passage. As a result, students must comprehend the passage's logical flow and concentrate on any grammatical connections between sentences.

**Figure 2**

Unit 2 *Inference questions*



*Note.* This screenshot from page 17 in "Strategies for TOEFL Reading Comprehension for Chinese Students" shows sample question types.

Thirdly, there are two parts of reading to learn questions which are prose summary and fill in the table. Therefore, after studying this section, students can understand the overall theme of the passage and distinguish important ideas from minor ones. Fill-in-the-table questions require students to identify and organize significant ideas and essential supporting information from the passage. Figure 3 illustrates reading to learn questions.

**Figure 3**

Unit 3  *reading to learn questions*



Question Types

> 9. **Prose Summary**
>     An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the best answer.
> An introductory sentence
>
> 10. **Fill in a Table**
>     Complete the table below to summarize information about X discussed in the passage. Match the appropriate statements to the categories with which they are associated. TWO of the answer choices will NOT be used.

*Note.* This screenshot from page 25 in Strategies for TOEFL Reading Comprehension for Chinese Students shows sample question types.
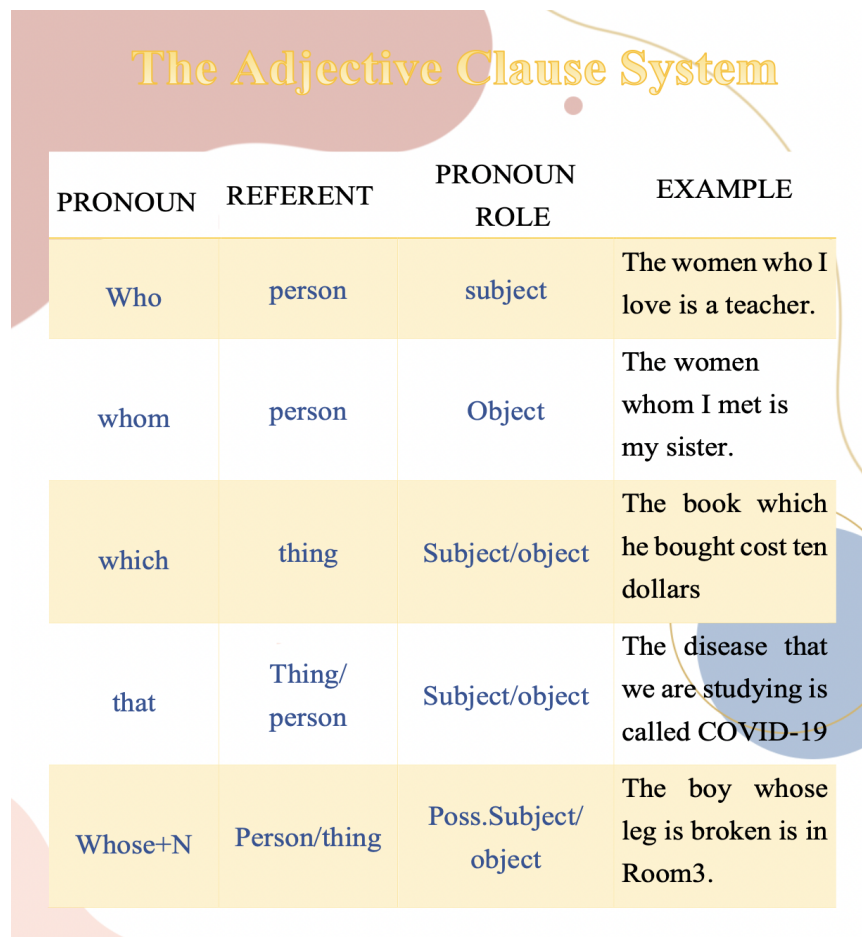
The last part is grammar. In this section, I chose to introduce the adjective clause system. Because the TOEFL reading test assesses students' overall language abilities, students should

improve their vocabulary and grammar skills to improve their reading speed and level. For beginner-level students, the adjective clause system is suitable for students to familiarize themselves with the grammar system that is required by the TOEFL reading comprehension test. I started this section by giving students a format which vividly presents what the adjective clause system looks like. Figure 4 illustrates the grammar part.
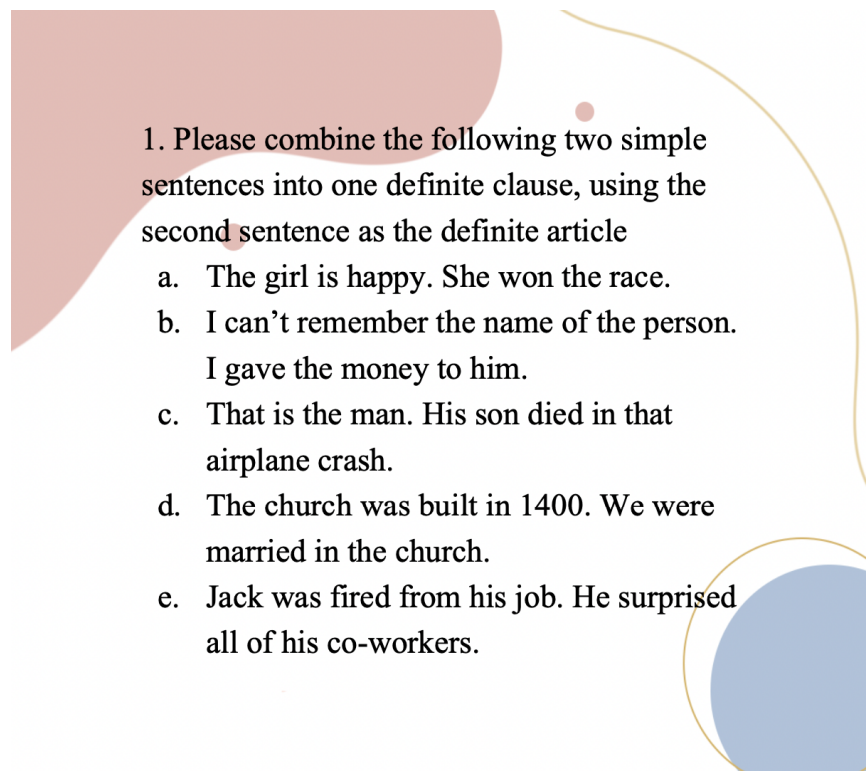
**Figure 4**

Unit 4  *Grammar*

## The Adjective Clause System

| PRONOUN | REFERENT | PRONOUN ROLE | EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Who | person | subject | The women who I love is a teacher. |
| whom | person | Object | The women whom I met is my sister. |
| which | thing | Subject/object | The book which he bought cost ten dollars |
| that | Thing/ person | Subject/object | The disease that we are studying is called COVID-19 |
| Whose+N | Person/thing | Poss.Subject/ object | The boy whose leg is broken is in Room3. |

*Note.* This screenshot from page 35 in "Strategies for TOEFL Reading Comprehension for Chinese Students" shows sample question types.

After introducing the basic concept of the adjective clause system, the next portion of this field project gives two types of practice for students to enhance their memory. The first type of question is that students need to combine two independent sentences into one sentence by using suitable pronoun. Figure 5 illustrates the combination of two sentences into one sentence.

**Figure 5**

*Sentence Combination*

1. Please combine the following two simple sentences into one definite clause, using the second sentence as the definite article
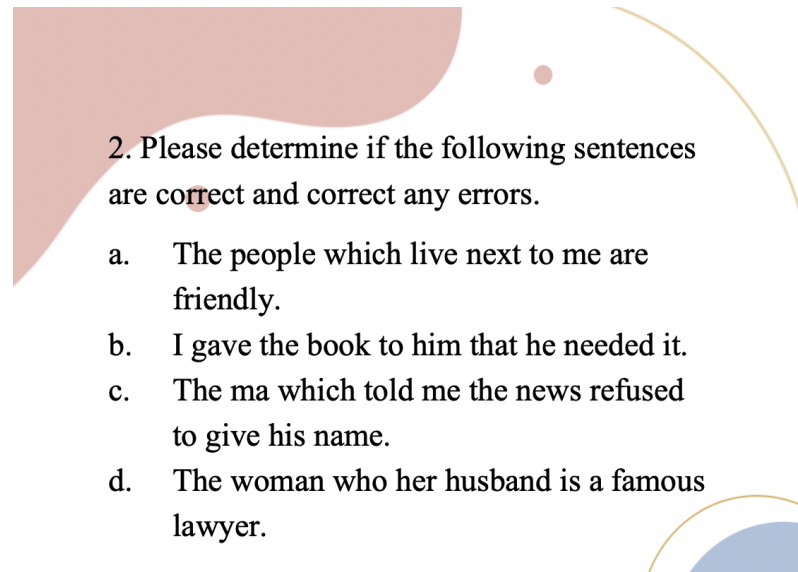   a. The girl is happy. She won the race.
   b. I can't remember the name of the person. I gave the money to him.
   c. That is the man. His son died in that airplane crash.
   d. The church was built in 1400. We were married in the church.
   e. Jack was fired from his job. He surprised all of his co-workers.

*Note.* This screenshot from page 36 in Strategies for TOEFL Reading Comprehension for Chinese Students shows sample question types.

Following this, students need to identify and correct sentence errors. Figure 6 illustrates this error identification section.

**Figure 5**

*Is the following sentence correct or not?*



2. Please determine if the following sentences are correct and correct any errors.

a.   The people which live next to me are friendly.
b.   I gave the book to him that he needed it.
c.   The ma which told me the news refused to give his name.
d.   The woman who her husband is a famous lawyer.

*Note.* This screenshot from page 38 in "Strategies for TOEFL Reading Comprehension for Chinese Students" shows sample question types.

In conclusion, all the question types that are illustrated in unit one, two and three are based on the actual TOEFL reading test. In order to help students at the beginning level to better understand TOEFL reading comprehension question types, all the passages in the project are based on Chinese culture, which is easier for students to read. Above that, this project not only can help students to pass the TOEFL reading test, but also can motivate them improving their English reading ability.

## Development of the Project

Based on the experience of participating in the TOEFL test, I decided to create this field project because I know what students need, especially for those who want to prepare for the TOEFL test independently. When I was preparing for the TOEFL test, I found out that most

published material only put their focus on one side. For instance, they may pay more attention to the topic of TOEFL reading instead of analyzing different types of questions. Honestly speaking, it is important for students to learn various passages with different areas because on the real TOEFL test, students need to read several passages. However, for beginning-level students, complicated passages may diminish student enthusiasm. I remember the first time I read the TOEFL reading comprehension passage, it was  a physics-themed article about how the gravity of the moon affects the Earth. As an art major, it was truly difficult for me to understand this article at that time. Not only did I struggle with vocabulary, the content was beyond my understanding. Therefore, in my field project, I decided to write some articles that related to Chinese culture (such as mahjong, tea culture, and social phenomenon associated with Chinese young adults). I also found out that some published material may take care of the topic of passage, but they split their passage with actual TOEFL reading comprehension questions. I changed my first learning material because the passage in there was difficult for me to understand. I switched to a simpler version but the type of questions were different from the actual test. At the very beginning, I was satisfied and thought changing material was a wise choice that I made. After I decided to learn a higher level, I found that my previous efforts were almost in vain because I had to readjust to the new type of questions. Thus, in my field project, I pay more attention to introducing types of questions to students. Moreover, in each passage above, I designed one major category so that students have enough energy to understand.

The last part of the field project is grammar. According to Ma (2017), grammar is the foundation of improving language skills. In the material that I used to prepare for the TOEFL, it was full of dogmatic rules and the grammar translation method. In that case, I found that understanding grammar rules is one thing, but using grammar in writing and reading is another

thing entirely. It seems that  grammar use has been separated from the grammar rules. From my experience, and as found in my literature review, it is also a problem in Chinese English classes. Therefore, in my field project, I first present the grammar rules by giving examples. Compared with words, the benefits of using grammar format are showing grammar in a vivid way. Secondly, I gave students some types of questions to practice what they have learned from the format. This method can strengthen students' memory of grammar that they learned before.

## The Project

The project can be found in its entirety in the Appendix.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusions**

With the increasing number of non-native students in the United States increased during the 1950s, there was a need for a language test to assess these students' ability to meet their various degree requirements while studying in English. As a result, the first TOEFL test was launched by the National Council on the Testing of English as a Foreign Language, established in 1961 (Gamlam, 2016). The TOEFL is a norm-referenced test that includes four parts that assess the test-taker's ability to read, listen, speak, and write in English. The TOEFL is necessary for non-native English speakers who want to study in English-speaking countries because it is widely accepted as a test of language proficiency around the world (Mei, 2016). According to ETS, the average TOEFL score for Chinese students is 79, which is significantly lower than the global average of 93. Chinese testers' average TOEFL score in reading and writing is 21, and their scores in listening and speaking are also lower than the global average in these two sections (Cho & Bridgeman,2012). This result indicates that the majority of Chinese test takers lack the ability to use English proficiently, despite having a sufficient vocabulary and understanding of English grammar rules, but are not adaptable enough to apply them to the TOEFL test. There are many reasons that could be responsible for this problem. Firstly, it is essential to understand reading comprehension among second language learners in general. The results of this meta-analysis demonstrate that grammar and vocabulary knowledge was significantly related to $L_2$ comprehension. Working memory, metacognition, and $L_1$ reading comprehension were also correlated, in a significant but only moderate way, with $L_2$ reading comprehension (Fajri, 2019). Native Chinese speakers do several everyday things that have a negative impact on their

ability to read in English, such as most of them believing that being able to read fluently and out loud was linked to better reading comprehension. (Jiang et a., 2012). Thus, native Chinese speakers must learn an alphabetic system in order to read English (compared to the logographic system in Chinese). The obstacles that prevent Chinese test takers from achieving higher TOEFL reading comprehension scores are lacking motivation and the ability to use vocabulary flexibly. Secondly, for most Chinese international students, the best block for them to improve their reading comprehension is to find an efficient method resulting in the new strategies generated by synthesizing and summarizing information that exists in TOEFL reading and listening materials. (Yu et al., 2017). Besides previous research only focusing on how students prepare for the TOEFL, there are few studies investigating the influence of this kind of general preparation on developing single language skill proficiency, such as materials, preparation strategies, and activities that students use in China. (Yu, 2012). However, there is very little known about the relationship between TOEFL preparation and the scores. Thirdly, the way most Chinese students learn English grammar is by using the grammar-translation method. That is, teachers or text-book translate the grammar into Chinese. It is also an opportunity for Chinese students learning English to have opportunities to read out loud so they can learn to hear the structure of the English language. Reading out loud can lead to improved oral reading fluency, which can then lead to improved reading comprehension (Jiang et al., 2012).

The purpose of this field project is to create a guidebook to help Chinese students studying for the TOEFL to improve their reading comprehension. The guidebook will include sections on question types of TOEFL reading comprehension and grammar. In the question types section, the guidebook will first help students to learn more about what to take on the TOEFL reading test. Following that, the guidebook will then give a format that shows basic knowledge

of the adjective clause system and strategies for determining the right or wrong of the given sentences, correcting the wrong sentences, and combining target sentences into one sentence by using the adjective clause system. The end goal of this guidebook is to help Chinese students who are studying for the TOEFL to improve their scores by improving their English language reading comprehension.

This field project may be of interest to Chinese students preparing for the TOEFL reading section. It may also be of interest to teachers of Chinese students preparing for the TOEFL, as well as language acquisition researchers. Because the TOEFL is widely accepted by many English-speaking universities, it may be significant for Chinese students studying for the TOEFL reading section. The reading section is a critical component used to demonstrate English proficiency and is required by many English-speaking institutions of higher education, with many universities in the United States requiring a minimum score for the reading section. Furthermore, because it reveals various TOEFL teaching methods and materials, this field project may be of interest to teachers of Chinese students taking the TOEFL. Finally, because it employs the input hypothesis as a theoretical framework, this field project may be of interest to language acquisition researchers.

## Recommendations

This project designed for Chinese students who need to pass TOEFL test or want to improve their English reading ability. Before students use this project, here are some suggestions should be taking into consideration. First of all, the English proficiency of students should be beginning level up to intermediate. Secondly, this project designed for students to learn TOEFL

reading comprehension test independently, so students need to master more than vocabulary before they use this project. The TOEFL test question types are very different from the Chinese common English test, so students also need to switch their minds of preparing TOEFL test.

Thirdly, the reason why I choose the adjective clause system as my grammar part is because it is much easier for students at beginner level to understand. However, it not means that other grammar knowledge, such as tenses, are not important to learn.

In conclusion, this project provides students a method to prepare TOEFL reading test independently. Beyond this, students need to improve their vocabulary and other grammatical knowledge at the same time so that they can enter into higher level as soon as possible.

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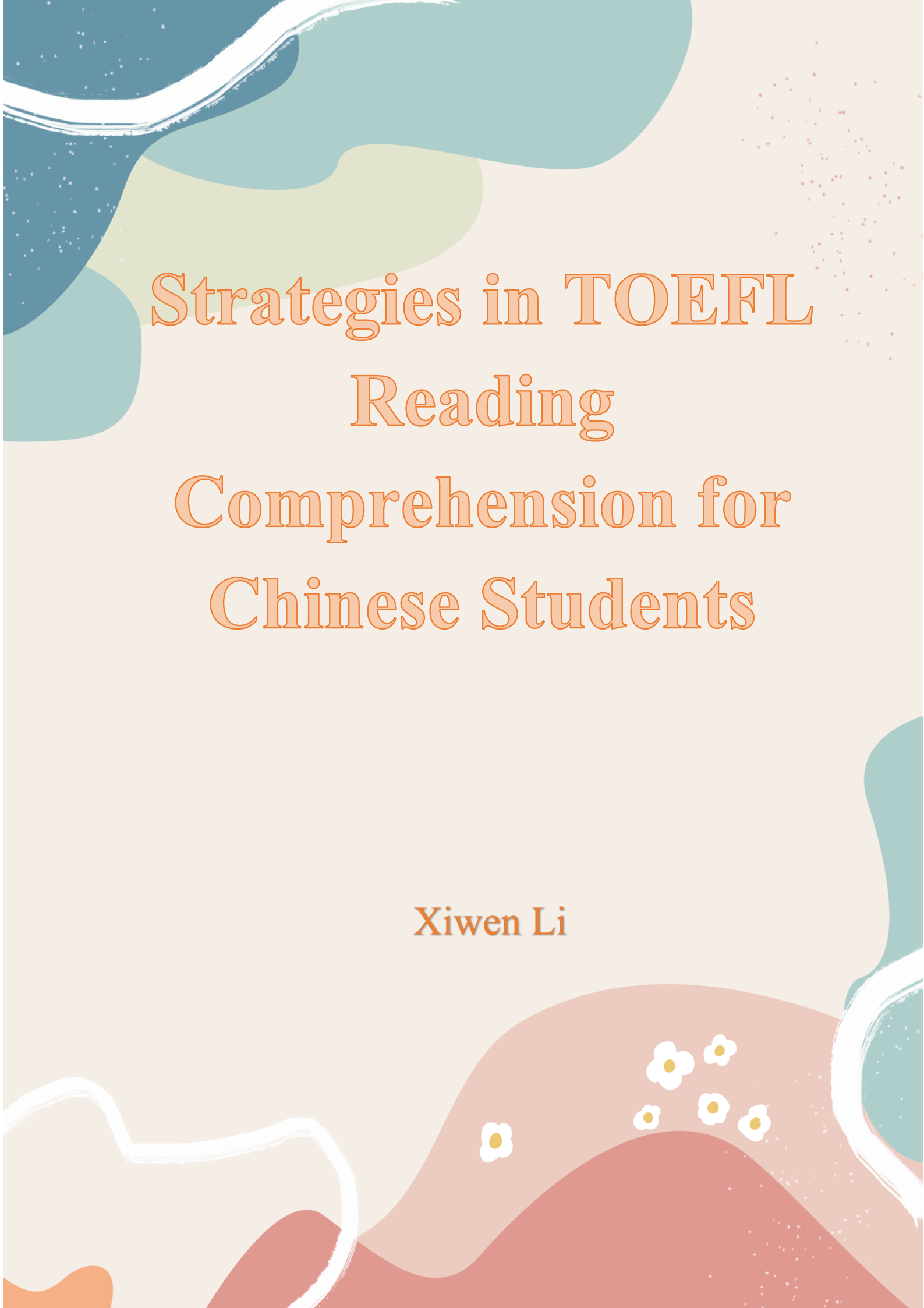
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APPENDIX


**Strategies in TOEFL Reading Comprehension for Chinese Students**

# Strategies in TOEFL Reading Comprehension for Chinese Students

Xiwen Li

# CONTENTS

# Introduction

## About this Book

This book is created for students who want to take the TEOFL test as a beginner. This book presents targeted grammar structures. This has been designed as a test-based and content-rich grammar book. Students will learn how to prepare for the TOEFL reading test through different topics.

## Goals and Objectives

By learning these four units, students will be able to understand the way TOEFL reading questions are asked and become more familiar with basic grammar.

# Intended Audience

This material is designed for people who want to prepare for the TOEFL reading test by themselves.

# Before you Read

In the TOEFL reading comprehension test, the types of question are divided into three major categories with ten different topics.

The first part is "Basic comprehension" which includes five units: vocabulary, reference, factual information, negative factual information, and sentence simplification.

The second part is "Making inferences" which contains the rhetorical purpose, inference, and insert text.

The last one is "Reading to Learn" which processes prose summary and fill in a table.

For more information about these ten different types of questions, you can see the fowling chat.

# Basic Comprehension Questions

1. Vocabulary: This type of question asks students to identify the meaning of words and phrases in reading passages.
2. Reference: This type of question asks students to find the referential connection between words in a reading passage.
3. Factual Information: This type of question test students to find detailed information that exists in the passage.
4. Negative Factual Information: This type of question tests students to find information that NOT is mentioned in the passage.
5. Sentence Simplification: This type of question requires students to choose sentences with the best paraphrasing.

## Inference Questions

6. Inference questions: This type of question requires students to find an idea which is not stated explicitly in the passage.

7. Rhetorical Purpose Questions: This type of question asks students the intention of the author.

8. Insert Text Questions: This type of question asks students to pick the best place for a sentence in a sample passage.

## Reading to Learn Questions

9. Prose Summary: This type of questions asks students to complete a summary chart by using major ideas that from passage.

10. Fill in a Table: This type of question asks students to find and organize the major ideas of a passage into a table.

*5*

# UNIT 1

Basic Comprehension Questions

# Basic Comprehension

1.**Vocabulary:**

a. The word___in the passage is closet in meaning to

b. The phrase ____in the passage is closest in meaning to

2. **Reference:**

a. The word___in the passage refers to

b. The phrase in the passage refers to

3. **Factual Information:**

a. According to the passage, which of the following is true of__?

b. According to paragraph X, the author states __.

4. **Negative Factual Information**

   a. According to the passage, which of the following is NOT true?

   b. The author's description of ___ mentions all of the following EXCEPT

5. **Sentence Simplification:**

   a. Which of the following best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence?

## Extending the Teen Years

Several decades ago, people were considered as young adults when they were sixteen, meaning people could make virtual decisions about their life at this age. In other words, kids were no longer kids. They got jobs, found a place to live, and got married. At the end of the last century, Chinese people usually married at twenty-four years old and retired from work between fifty and sixty years old. However, for now, the average age for getting married is about thirty years old. As a result, many important decisions have been made later than before.

Regarding this phenomenon, most people from the last generation cannot help but ask questions like these, "Are young adults still dependent on their parents?" "Are young people trying to prolong their teen years to thirty or other ages?" or "Is this just one example of immaturity?" As a matter of fact, most young adults in China continue living with their parents after graduating from college or even after beginning a career. Indeed, they enjoy the comfortable lives that they had before, such as being well taken care of by their mother, no need to worry about housework, especially those who happen to be the single child in their family. To illustrate, they want to be able

to pay off their mortgage and enjoy their life at the same time.

People are indeed living longer than before, so they want to postpone big decisions until later age, but it is not enough to explain the trend. China is facing an aging population problem, and the government may decide to postpone people's retirement age in the future. Thus, most young adults see senior citizens retire later, and the working years have increased. It seems reasonable that since the young generation will take care of their parents and raise their children for many years, they do not wish to jump into this stage of life.

1. The word <mark>virtual</mark> in the passage is closest in meaning to

    A. Extreme

    B. Various

    C. Important

    D. Radical

2. In the second phrase, "Regarding this phenomenon" refers to

A. Young people get retire late than last generation

B. People are willing to be independent when they graduate from college.

C. Young adults want to live a better life.

D. People make big decision later than before.

3. According to the passage, which of the following is true?

A. In the past, people were only seen as adults when they were married.

B. In fact, most young generation in China still live with their parents when they graduate from college.

C. It is very easy for Chinese young generation to buy a house.

D. Most senior citizens in China decide to retire earlier than before.

4. According to the passage, which of the following is NOT true?

A. China is facing an aging population problem now.

B. The working years have increased because the age of retirement has been postponed.

C. At the end of last century, the average age of getting married in China was twenty-four years old.

D. Most young adults in China decide to move out when they find jobs.

5.Which of the following best expresses the essential information in the first highlighted sentence?

A. The reason young people delay marriage is because they prefer to enjoy their youth.

B. Young people don't want to get married early because they want to retire early

C. Young people don't want to get married early because they don't have a job.

D. Young people do not want to get married early because the cost of living is too high.

# UNIT 2

Making Inferences

6. **Rhetorical Purpose:**

a. The author discusses __in paragraph X in order to__.

b. Why does the author mention__?

7. **Inference**

a. Which of the following can be inferred about___?

b. The author of the passage implies that __.

8. **Insert Text**

a. Look at the four questions that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage.

## Ancient China Games

Many of the ancient Chinese games are still played today. Many of the fundamental elements of games, such as rules and uniforms, were first used in ancient China. The games served an essential purpose in society. Some were played for fun and fitness, while others were played to make stronger warriors and leaders.

The first group of games, primarily for fun, was those like the high jump, hiding, and

==hunting.== In this type of game, the most representative one is sandbag throwing made of rags sewn into fully closed 5-10 cm bags filled with fine sand, beans, or rice, more like Cornhole in most western countries. The rule of this game is at least people stand in a circle or a line, and the person standing at each end is responsible for throwing sandbags; meanwhile, people standing between these two people need to hide the sandbags to avoid being hit.

Hunting could be enjoyed by people who throw the sandbag, which needs strength and accuracy. In case lose their points, others need to hide the sandbag, which requires power to jump higher or flexibility to avoid it. This game is still trendy among Chinese children

today because it not only exercises their bodies and enriches their leisure time but also exercises their spirit of cooperation and strengthens their friendship.

Another well-known group of games is the jumping band, which dates back 300 years to the Ming Dynasty. Jumping rubber bands necessitates using both feet to jump and run to complete the entire body in various prescribed movements. The main action is jumping, which is interspersed with more than a dozen basic movements like picking, straddling, touching, kicking, tripping, winding, pan, stepping, topping, turning, and so on, as well as fancy movements derived from the essential activities and catchy popular children's songs.

As a result, it strengthens children's bodies and improves their coordination.

If the games described above are to enhance physical fitness, identify the following group of games for improving mental wellness. Mahjong evolved from the ancient Chinese Boxi, which has existed for thousands of years. According to legend, the original creator was a monk who invented mahjong to alleviate the monotony of monastic life. Today, mahjong has spread not only across the sea but also to Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and even as far as Europe and the United States, making it unstoppable. As a result, it has spread throughout Europe and Southeast Asia and is even more prevalent in Japan. Mahjong players must be attentive

while playing the game. **A** Seeing six directions, listening in all directions, guarding the other, mobile and adaptable. **B** I'll win tomorrow if you win today. **C** There will be many times when the game will end if the staff is fixed and persistent **D**

These games were a part of ancient Chinese culture. They kept people happy and healthy. Though their rule was created several hundred years ago, they are still used today.

6. Why does author mentions "the games served an essential purpose in society"?

A. To make the passage interesting to read

B. To describe what is important in modern society.

C. To emphasize the function of games.

D. To illustrate why people like play games.

7.The author of the passage implies that
    A. Mahjong is a dangerous for children.
    B. Jumping band can excise brain power.
    C. Mahjong can strength people's physical.
      power.
    D. Mahjong is a puzzle game.

8. Look at the three squares [■] that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage.

    *If you want to win, you must use both skill and luck.*

    Where would this sentence best fit?

Answer Key

        6. A.     7. D     8. B

# UNIT 3

Reading to Learn

### 9. **Prose Summary**

An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the best answer.

An introductory sentence

### 10. **Fill in a Table**

Complete the table below to summarize information about X discussed in the passage. Match the appropriate statements to the categories with which they are associated. TWO of the answer choices will NOT be used.

# How to Plant Tea

Tea is a drink prized by many cultures. It has a long history. China was the first to discover and cultivate tea trees, and the history of other tea-producing countries around the world on tea cultivation and use is directly or indirectly transmitted from China. Our ancestors' use of tea evolved from medicinal to consumption to drinking. Since primitive societies began to collect and use tea, attempt to cultivate tea trees, agriculture, handicrafts, and the development of the commodity economy, the
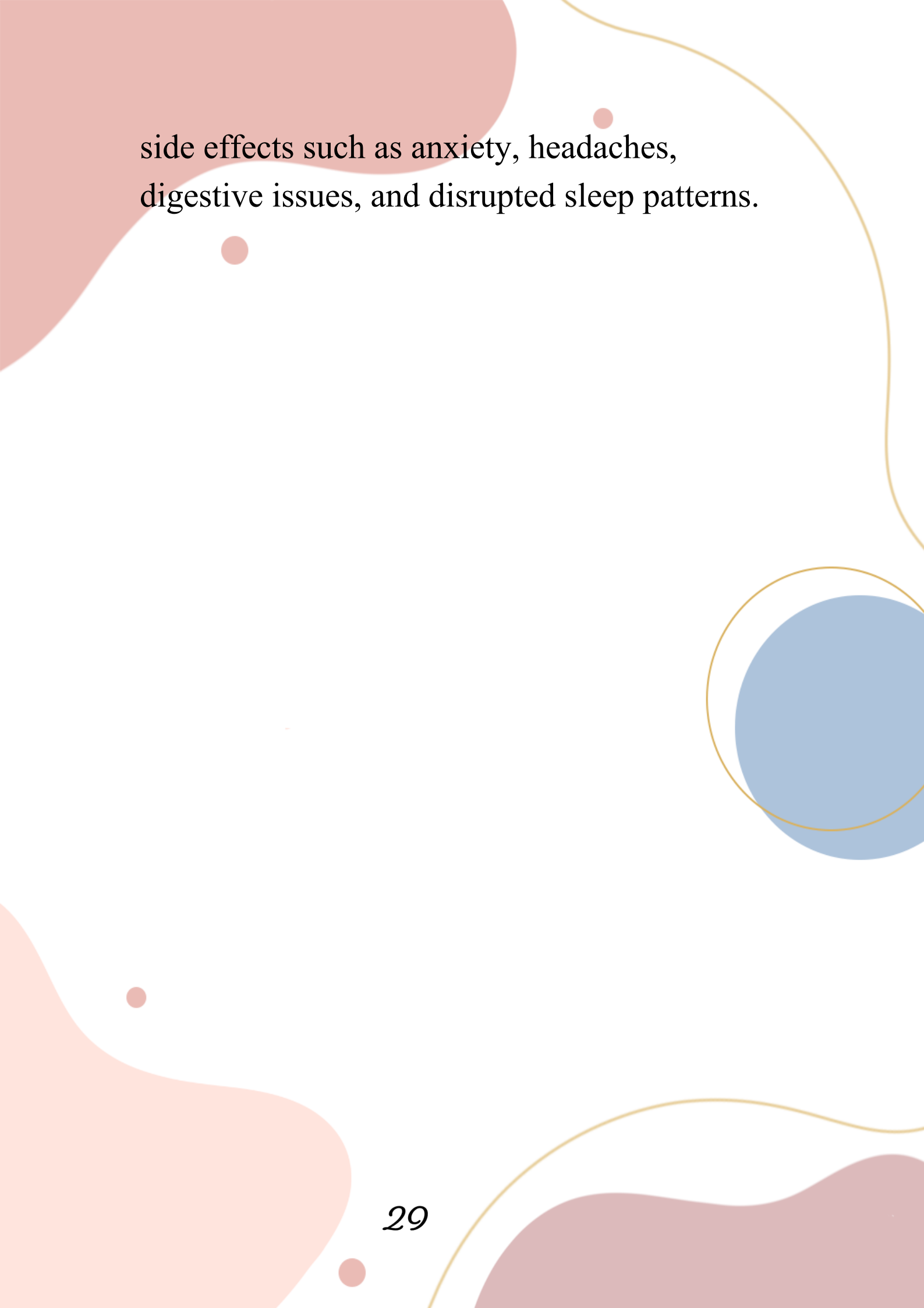
demand for tea has increased, and tea cultivation has been able to develop rapidly and spread outward. Thus, it used to be grown in the southern part of China and northern India. Now it is grown all over the world.

First of all, tea trees take about four years to begin producing good tea leaves. In the wild, tea trees typically grow between 5 and 15 meters tall. They are usually kept to a height of 2 meters or less when cultivated. Because of its small size, the plant grows new leaves frequently. Picking tea leaves lasts from March to November. Secondly, tea bushes like puddles of water. It should ideally rain at night. This enables the plant to drink and prepare for the sun the following day. The days are long and warm with plenty of sunlight. The sun and water provide the plant with what it requires to continue growing new leaves. Lastly, the best tea leaves are hand-picked. The top two leaves, which are the most

delicate, are usually picked. Because the bush is small, it is simple to pick the leaves from all sides. The tea is transported to the next stage of the process in baskets.



Drinking tea can bring many health benefits. For instance, drinking tea can lower the risk of chronic disease and reduce inflammation, boost your immune system, fight inflammation, and even protect yourself from cancer and heart disease. Though moderate consumption is beneficial for most people, excessive consumption can result in negative

side effects such as anxiety, headaches, digestive issues, and disrupted sleep patterns.

9. Directions: An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the THREE answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage. Some answer choices do not belong in the summary because they express ideas that are not in the passage or are minor ideas in the passage.

There are a few considerations to growing idea.

A.    Four-year-old tea plants are kept small to produce lots of hand-picked leaves.
B.    Rain should fall at night instead of the day to feed the plant.
C.    The tea is carried in baskets to the next stage of the process.

D.    The tea plant produces the most leaves from March to November in warm, wet climates.
E.    Tea bushes like a lot of water and sunshine.
F.    The two top leaves are very delicate and must be picked by hand.

10. Directions: Complete the table below to summarize information about the positive and negative effects of drinking tea. Match the appropriate statements to the types of effects with which they are associated. TWO of the answer choices will NOT be used.

| Positive Effects | Negative Effects |
|---|---|
|  |  |

a. lowers the risk of chronic disease

b. boosts your immune system

c. fight inflammation

d. anxiety

e. anxiety

f. happiness

g. sadness.

9. D E F

10.

| Positive Effects | Negative Effects |
|---|---|
| ABC | DE |

# UNIT 4

## Grammar

**Question**

Why would students who prepare for the TOEFL also need to learn grammar?

Even though there are no grammar questions on the TOEFL, you will be tested on your own grammar skills during the reading comprehension responses, so make sure you understand English grammar before test day.

# The Adjective Clause System

| PRONOUN | REFERENT | PRONOUN ROLE | EXAMPLE |
|---------|----------|--------------|---------|
| Who | person | subject | The woman who I love is a teacher. |
| whom | person | Object | The woman whom I met is my sister. |
| which | thing | Subject/object | The book which he bought cost ten dollars. |
| that | Thing/ person | Subject/object | The disease that we are studying is called COVID-19. |
| Whose+N | Person/thing | Poss.Subject/ object | The boy whose leg is broken is in Room 3. |

1. Please combine the following two simple sentences into one definite clause, using the second sentence as the definite article
   a. The girl is happy. She won the race.
   b. I can't remember the name of the person. I gave the money to him.
   c. That is the man. His son died in that airplane crash.
   d. The church was built in 1400. We were married in the church.
   e. Jack was fired from his job. He surprised all of his co-workers.

Answer Sheet

a. The girl who won the race is happy.

b. I can't remember the name of the person to whom I gave the money.

c. That is the man whose son died in that airplane crash.

d. The church where we were married was built in 1400.

2. Please determine if the following sentences are correct and correct any errors.

a.    The people which live next to me are friendly.
b.    I gave the book to him that he needed it.
c.    The ma which told me the news refused to give his name.
d.    The woman who her husband is a famous lawyer.

Answer Sheet

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

a. The people which live next to me are friendly. ✖

The people who live next to me are friendly.

b. I gave the book to him that he needed it. ✖
I gave the book to him that he needed.

c. The man which told me the news refused to give his name. ✖

The man who told me the news refused to give me his name.

d. I met a woman who her husband is a famous lawyer. ✖

I met a woman whose husband is a famous lawyer.