

The Research Report on the Change of CET-4 Examination Policy

Xiangying Cao, Hui Li

Foreign Languages Department, Nanchang Institute of Technology, Nanchang, China

Keywords: CET-4; Changes of Examination Policy; Research Report

Abstract: Through a survey of the changes in the CET-4 policy for more than 30 years, the paper draws a brief history of the four-level reform of the College English and the three stages of the development of the CET-4 policy, namely, the four-level test policy germination stage and the four-level test policy specification development stage and examination policy connotation development stage.

1. Introduction

The College English Test (CET) in China was implemented in September 1987, the scale of the examination has been expanding during the development. From the first time in 1987, more than 100,000 people took the CET-4 test. It has developed to the examination scale of more than 9 million candidates for the CET-4 exams per semester. The CET-4 has formed a complete system from propositions, examination questions, examination implementation, scoring to publication of results, which has better adapted to the needs of higher education and teaching reform and institutional reform, and has also adapted to higher socio-economic development. The need for quality talent training has been widely recognized by the society. However, in the stable development of more than 30 years, the CET-4 examination policy has also experienced some problems and has undergone many reforms. The original intention of the implementation of the CET-4 is to train students to have strong reading ability, some listening and speaking ability and preliminary literacy skills, so as to test the English proficiency of candidates and promote the improvement of college English teaching to make the talent training of colleges and universities adapt to the needs of reform and opening up.

2. A Brief history of CET-4 reform

Table 1 Brief history of CET 4's reform

Time	main content
1986	First test of the CET-4
1987	The CET-4 is shifted to twice a year, and scheduled for June and December respectively.
1990	The test paper is composed of objective questions and essay questions.
1999	Add an oral exam question to the CET-4 test
2005	Change the percentage system to a total score of 710 with no pass line; change from issuing certificate to score report
2006.1	Listening ratio changed from 20% to 35%
2006.12	Only open to college students, no longer to social candidates
2008	First launch on the machine form
2010	First replace the "AB" volume with "multiple sets of test papers"
2012	First use the "multi-question and multi-volume" form
2013	Cancel the cloze, increase the translation of short sentences, and extend the test time from 120 minutes to 130 minutes.
2015	CET-4 listening adds short news, cancels short conversations and short dictation
2016	Starting from November, you can apply for the CET-4 oral test if you have already applied the written test (not required), and you don't need to reach a pass mark.

The College English Test (CET) is a large-scale standardized test conducted by the Ministry of

Education. It aims to objectively and accurately measure the actual English ability of college students and serve college English.

Since the 1980s, the CET-4 tests have been in practice for more than 30 years. In order to adapt to the society's needs of talent cultivation, they have undergone different reforms at different stages and have played an important role in different stages. (as shown in Table 1)

3. The 1985-2005 CET-4 examination policy germination

3.1 1985-1987—from Preparation for the Exam to Trials in Colleges across the Country

In 1984, the Ministry of Education held an English teaching seminar at China University of Petroleum (East China). The school was conducting a foreign language proficiency test. Participants visited the exam and discussed whether the foreign language proficiency test could be extended to the whole country. This proposal was supported by more than 90 colleges and universities. At that time, the English Proficiency Test of the East China Petroleum Institute was only for teachers and students on campus. The CET-4 originated from the English proficiency test at the school. In 1986, the first College English CET-4 was officially held. The State Education Commission (85) Higher Education Document No. 004, "Notice on Printing and Distributing the "Syllabus for College English Teaching" (for the Undergraduate Course of Science and Engineering)" states: "The National Education Commission has unified standards for students who have completed the four-level teaching. Exam." In 1985, the CET-4 became a part of the College English Syllabus.^[1]

3.2 1987-1999—The Establishment of the Examination Committee to the Development of a New Syllabus

In the fall of 1987, the Ministry of Education began a unified standard examination for the fourth level. At the same time, the graduates should also explain the students' level of English at the basic stage and the professional reading stage as a reference value for the employer.^[1] In 1993, the four-level National College English Examination Committee was formally established. On May 2, 1996, the former State Education Commission issued the "Notice on Printing and Printing the Basic Requirements for the Teaching of English Majors in the Reading Stage of the University" to strengthen the teaching of the professional reading stage, so that students can continue to learn English after completing the basic stage.^[2] In 1999, the Ministry of Education issued a new "College English Teaching Syllabus", which put forward stricter requirements on the comprehensive level of English and improved the proportion of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In May 1999, the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education issued Document No. 53 of 1999, and conducted pilot work on college English oral examinations in some institutions.^[3] The enthusiasm of students to learn English has been fully improved, the level of foreign language teaching has been greatly improved, and the adjustment of national policies has also mobilized the enthusiasm of English teachers. In the early stage of the reform, there were many defects in the content and type of the four-level examination. This reform has greatly promoted the investment of English teaching in colleges and universities, and students pay more attention to English learning.

3.3 1999-2005—increased from the reference number of people to deal with and prevent leaking questions

The CET-4 tests open to all college and university students in China. All college students in the mainland can apply for the CET-4. In September 1987, more than 100,000 national candidates participated in the first CET-4 examination, and this number in 2002 developed to 4.48 million. (Figure). On April 6, 2001, the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education issued the "Document on the Notice of Printing and Distributing the Minutes of the 8th National College English Test Band 4 and 6 Examinations". Attached to the full text of the "Annual Summary of the Eighth National College English Test Band Four and Six Tests." The importance of the National College English Teaching and College English Test Band 4 is mentioned in the Minutes. The CET-4

has been widely recognized by the society, and the number of students enrolled each year has increased year by year.^[3] Circular of the Higher Education Department on September 4, 2001 [2001] No. 148, "Notice on Printing and Distributing the Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting and the First Working Meeting of the Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education of the Ministry of Education, 2001-2005" The notice mentioned that in order to improve students' foreign language practice ability, the Examining Committee will further reform and improve the CET-4 examination.^[4]

As the number of referees increases year by year, many drawbacks are gradually exposed during the examination. At the beginning of the CET-4 examination, the main questions are mainly objective questions. Many students answer the questions in the form of "Guessing Meng", and the answers are easy to leak. On December 29, 2003, the Ministry of Education issued the Document No. 10 [2003] of the Higher Education Office [2003], "The Circular of the General Office of the Ministry of Education on the September 20, 2003, College English Tests for Grade IV and Grade 6 Examinations" ^[5]. The document handles and informs the confidentiality of the CET-4 test questions on September 20th. It is recommended to strengthen the examination work and fully understand the importance of confidentiality of the test. On December 30, 2003, the Ministry of Education issued a circular letter from the Ministry of Education [2003] No. 507 "Notice on the investigation of the answer to the questions on the purchase of test questions for the CET-4 in the Ministry of Education", which was pointed out in 2003. Zhejiang University of Technology found that candidates had the answer to cheating. Exam questions may be leaked, and it is required to strengthen the management of the CET-4 examinations in all regions and test sites ,and investigate the leader's responsibility of units with similar problems.^[6] In 2004, the Hubei Provincial Department of Education issued the Notice of the Education Office of the People's Republic of China [2004] No. 4, "Notice of the Provincial Department of Education on Forwarding the Circular of the Ministry of Education on the Loss of the Examination of the Grade IV Examination of the College English in September 2003", the schools were required to take practical and effective measures in combination with the actual situation and conscientiously implement them.^[3] In order to ensure the test measurement level, the test paper strictly controlled the proposition, prediction, test item analysis, and the construction of the test bank; in order to ensure the fairness and fairness of the results, the adjustment composition, normalization processing results, automatic scoring, and equivalent processing were adopted, such as IRT measures; in order to ensure the scientific aspect of the report and the interpretation of the score, examination system is strictly managed, ensuring the fairness and rigor of the test.

4. The Policy Development of CET-4 Examination from 2005-2013

4.1 Scoring System Reform and Report Method from 2005-2010

On March 18, 2005, the Ministry of Education issued the "Highway Office [2005] No. 1 Document—Notice of the General Office of the Ministry of Education on Printing and Distributing the National College English Test Band Four and Six Examinations (Trial)", the Ministry of Education is in the notice A press conference was held before the release. It is very rare to hold a press conference for teaching exams. This change is mainly reflected in the examination form, examination content and scoring system. It is the biggest change since the implementation of the 4th and 6th grade examinations (as shown in Table 2).

Table 2 Reform in 2005

	Question types	score ratio	
		before reform	after reform
Listening comprehension	Multiple choice	20%	35%
Reading comprehension	Fill in the blank / select	40%	35%
Comprehensive test	Subjective questions	0%	15%
Writing test	Objective questions	15%	15%

Data Source:<http://www.cet.edu.cn>^[7]

The reform is mainly to adjust the total score of 100 points into a score system of 710 points. The students get the report of their scores and the scores of each part of the individual scores instead of the previous test certificates. This reform has changed the traditional phenomenon of “60 million years old”. The scores on the results report will show the scores of each question. The reform highlights the importance of each question type. Students cannot ignore this and should develop in an all-round way, but the reform regulations are in school. Candidates who have completed the College English Level 6 and scored 425 on the Level 4 exam are eligible to take the Level 6 exam. Although the reform has eliminated the passing score, students can convert the passing line by themselves. Therefore, the score reform is for the fourth and sixth grades. The reform of the examination policy has not played a substantial role.

4.2 Changing from “One-question and multi-volumes” to “Multi-question and multi-volumes” from 2010 to 2013

With the development of science and technology, test fraud has become more and more common. In the first half of 2009, the proportion of candidates using special answers in the National College English CET-4 was as high as 4.40%, about 20,940 people, indicating that the problem of special answers (similarities) in China is getting more and more serious. . In 2010, China launched a comprehensive “One-question and multi-volumes”, and began to implement “Multi-questions and multi-volumes” in the second half of 2012. Specifically, there are multiple sets of questions for each examination room. Except for the same amount of questions, the questions for each set of test papers are different. [8] The composition in the first half of 2013 was also included in the category of “multiple questions and multiple volumes”. With the deepening of the reform of "one problem and multiple volumes", the phenomenon of examination violations has been significantly reduced.

5. The Connotation Development of CET-4 Policies in 2013-2017

5.1 Reform part of the test question types in 2013-2016

In order to improve students’ ability to use language comprehensively, the National College English CET-4 Committee partially adjusted the structure and test types of the CET-4 examination papers in December 2013. New requirements are put forward from the aspects of student discourse analysis ability, language basic knowledge, and intercultural communication ability (as shown in table 3).

Table 3 CET-4 item description and score ratio description

Structure	Scores
Composition	15%
Listening	35%
Translation	15%
Reading Comprehension	35%

(Data Source: <http://www.233.com/cet4/jingyan/Skills/20160318/15252811.html>)

After the reform, listening and dictating helps student’s master vocabulary, phrases and language knowledge. In the process of discourse analysis, students learn to master the article as a whole, master logical analysis, and quickly extract information. These reforms show that the English education community in China is paying more and more attention to the practical application of English and the intercultural communication ability of students.

5.2 New speaking test requirements in 2016-2017

From 2016 onwards, in order to implement the oral reform, the National College English CET-Speaking Test (CET-SET) will be set at the four-level examination level, namely the “National College English CET-SE4” (CET-SET4).

The Office of the National College English Test Band 4 issued the “Notice of Registration for the National College English CET-4 in the second half of 2016”. The qualifications for the examination have changed significantly—“ the National College English Level 4 from June 2012 and after

(including online test) testing scores of 425 points and above” became “four levels only accept candidates who completed the college English four-level written test in December 2016 .” This means that starting from the second half of 2016, there will be no limit on the score for applying for the Level 4 oral test. Prior to the official regulations, the 425 points and above are eligible for the Level 4 Speaking Test. There is no limit on the score now. You can register for the oral exam after you have signed up for the written test. Starting from the second half of 2016, the transcript will also indicate the results of this oral test and written test. If you do not take the oral exam, there will be no oral results on the transcript. This reform puts the spoken language on the agenda.

6. Summary

The purpose of the reform of the CET-4 system is to comply with the requirements of the times. The main goal of the reform is to alleviate the pressure of students' English learning, promote the improvement of students' comprehensive English ability, and solve the phenomenon of “dumb English” and “Xunzi English”. The main measures are to focus on the test of students' comprehensive English application ability, especially the listening and speaking ability, comprehensively reform the score system, replace the certificate with the transcript, and do not have a passing line to reflect the students' English proficiency ability more objectively and intuitively. The national unified online assessment ensures the quality of the assessment, guarantees the fairness and fairness of the examination, and reflects the authority and science of the examination. Promote and improve the CET-4 examination system, and play the role of the CET-4 in college English teaching, improve the comprehensive ability of college students, and cultivate high-level talents needed by the society.

Acknowledgement

The study was supported by the 13th Five-Year Plan for Education Science in Jiangxi Province in 2018: The Research on the Policy Changes of English CET-4 from the Perspective of Multi-streams (18YB275)

References

- [1] Notice of the Ministry of Education on Printing and Distributing the “College English Syllabus” (for the undergraduate course of science and engineering in higher education institutions) [(85) Ministry of Education higher education paper No. 004], February 9, 1985.
- [2] Document of the Notice of the Higher Education Department on Printing and Distributing the Minutes of the Eighth National College English Test Band 4 and 6 Examinations, 1996, No. 56, No. 56.
- [3] Lu Ziwen. Foreign Language Policy Research [M]. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2014.
- [4] Letter from the Higher Education Department, "Notice on Printing and Distributing the Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting and the First Working Meeting of the Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education of the Ministry of Education, 2001-2005" [2001] No. 148], September 4, 2001
- [5] The High Office of the Ministry of Education, Circular of the General Office of the Ministry of Education on the September 20, 2003, College English Tests for the Fourth and Sixth Grade Examinations, [2003] Document No. 10, December 29, 2003.
- [6] Ministry of Education Ministry of Education and Education “Notice of the Ministry of Education of the Ministry of Higher Education on the investigation of the answer to the questions on the purchase of test questions for the College English Test Band 4 and 6” [2003] No. 507 telegram, December 30, 2003.

[7] <http://www.cet.edu.cn>

[8] <http://edu.sina.com.cn/cet/2012-12-22/2052366789.shtml>

[9] <http://www.233.com/cet4/jingyan/Skills/20160318/15252811.html>