



A Comparative Analysis of CET, IELTS and TOFEL for English Acquisition

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ABSTRACT. English is the most widely distributed language in the world. With more and more international cultural exchanges, there are a huge number of people who learn English as a second language. English has always been the most popular second language in China. International language tests such as IELTS and TOEFL are becoming more common in China as more Chinese students go abroad for undergraduate or graduate studies. Compared with the two international English proficiency tests, CET-4 and CET-6 are basic English proficiency tests in China. This type of test primarily examines the student's basic vocabulary quantity to comprehend the situation and the grammar knowledge of the actual application. While IELTS focuses more on the assessment of logical thinking and language expression skills, reading and speaking tests are the most difficult assessment tasks. TOEFL attaches more importance to the students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills combined with the use of English level, and the difficulty of each part is evenly distributed, strong academically.

Keywords: TOEFL, IELTS, CET-4, CET-6, Second-langugae Acquisition

1 INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the rapid development of information technology has closely linked all countries in the world. People have more opportunities to experience cultural integration and exchange. China has developed rapidly in recent years, the education system has gradually improved. Then, more attention has been paid to English teaching. However, the test is the necessary link in the complete teaching system. In previous studies on standardized English tests, there are some international standardized English tests, such as IELTS and TOEFL. Many countries have standardized English tests to measure students' language ability. For example, Chinese college students often face CET-4 and CET-6.

First, IELTS is one of the famous international Standardized English proficiency tests, mainly for students who want to apply to study in Commonwealth countries. IELTS includes listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills in English. The examination adopts a combination of written and oral examinations, and the oral examination is in the form of face-to-face. In addition, the IELTS listening test accent includes various types of English pronunciation from various countries, which also reflects the

international character of the IELTS. Each section of the language skills will be given a corresponding score of 9 points. There are a lot of international and national studies on IELTS. For instance, the National Institute of Education of Singapore (NIE) in April 2009 conducted a study using IELTS as an indicator of written proficiency, and quantitative research on its practice teachers. They present and analyze the data of the writing section of IELTS and measure the writing level of the graduated teachers with IELTS writing scores. In the article, they argue that the IELTS test measures "the language ability of those who want to learn or work in an environment where English is the language of communication" [1].

Moreover, the TOEFL test is the primary English language proficiency test for international students applying to North American universities and can be used to determine whether students must receive additional English language training before entering a degree program. It includes English listening, reading, writing, and oral English. The internet-based test (IBT) is computer-based and replaces CBT and PBT. The score of the four parts of TOEFL ranges from 0 to 30, with the final total score of 120. The whole test would typically last 3.5 to 5 hours. The main goal of the TOEFL is to promote meaningful communication and communication fluent rather than accuracy or rote memorization by simulating real academic tasks [2]. Jon Smart wrote about the writing section of the TOEFL IBT, discussing the use of TOEFL writing in college admissions decisions and its potential use as a course planning tool. He believes that the dual task writing test of TOEFL requires candidates to integrate reading, listening, and writing skills together. It could provide more effective academic language ability assessments, and lead to positive reactions in English language learning environments [3].

Some articles in China make some comparative studies on TOEFL. Ma Jie published a comparative analysis report on TOEFL and CET-4 and CET-6 in China. From the perspective of testing methods, IBT adopts network testing, which not only greatly realizes the authenticity of language scenes, but also improves the interactivity of testing [4]. In addition, the TOEFL score will give a detailed score for each item, with a slight description of the reason for the deduction. This will also enable candidates to identify weaknesses and practice them more quickly.

However, China's national English proficiency tests are CET-4 and CET-6. Chinese university graduates can get extra job opportunities with qualifying test scores. Students who are not English majors are required to take CET-4. It is also a prerequisite for obtaining a bachelor's degree. CET test includes reading, writing, and listening. It has a separate speaking exam, held twice a year, and only students with a CET-4 score above 550 or a CET-6 score above 485 are eligible to take the test. There are many types of research on college English by domestic scholars, mainly analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of college English reform and how to improve college English reasonably. For example, Lulu Chen discusses the problems with CET-4 and CET-6, as well as the significance and future challenges of the National English Proficiency Test. She believes that the establishment of the reformed National English proficiency Test system is more in line with learning rules and social needs and will ultimately have an immeasurable impact on foreign language assessment and English teaching in China in the future [5].

Given the widespread use of English tests in north American college admissions decisions, the market for college education around the world has expanded to help students prepare for exams. As more students pursue higher education at English-taught universities, many academic English programs and courses that help students prepare for standardized English tests are driven by students [3]. More specifically, some educational institutions will specialize in teaching students how to get high scores on these international language tests. Students are being taught test techniques that teachers at these institutions have acquired from previous tests. Therefore, under the profit-driven mechanism, a diversified training industry has emerged. The tendency of utilitarianism in English learning is becoming more and more serious. It also defeats the goal of internationally standardized, communication-oriented language tests like the TOEFL [3].

Therefore, due to the influence of exam-oriented education and market orientation, mute English and deaf English are becoming more and more popular among Chinese students. For example, many Chinese students who get high scores in IELTS or TOEFL are unable to understand lectures given by university professors. Compared with overseas students, Chinese college students who pass CET-4 and CET-6 score higher in rote memorization, such as reading and listening. To conclude, the previous examination research is based on the specific examination, few put a variety of standardized tests together analysis, especially the international standardized examination and national examination research. Consequently, we will use data to prove this point of view in the following articles.

2 The Comparative Analysis of CET, IELTS and TOFEL

2.1 Detailed comparative analysis of listening

Listening is an important skill for the second language (L2) learners and has received a great deal of attention in L2 assessment literature, but it is the least studied skill in L2 assessment literature. The IELTS listening test means that candidates must focus on three language skills at the same time: listening, reading, and writing, which is very demanding in terms of cognitive processing [6]. The listening test lasts about 30 minutes and 10 minutes to complete the answer sheet. There are a total of 40 questions with four sections, and six common questions including sunstone compilation, short-answer question, table complication, multiple choice, numbered parts, and matching.

Section one is generally used to fill in the blanks of two simple dialogues, mainly investigating the spelling of medium and low difficulty words, such as some basic nouns, as well as synonym substitution. Section two will have some multiple-choice questions and the content will be dialogues. Aryadoust analyzed the differences in sections of the IELTS listening test and that he thought there is no significant correlation between candidates' performance in listening test scores and subsequent academic performance. For example, multiple-choice questions may encourage people to make lucky guesses, especially in students who have been exposed to test-taking strategies and are less able. However, I do not agree with this though I think the exist-

ence of multiple-choice questions avoids the scores of many examinees' lucky guesses compared with single choice questions. Section three is the most difficult part for examinees because it involves a lot of specialized vocabulary. Section four is in the form of a speech, so the interval between the pauses is very short, candidates usually do not have time to examine the question. As the point shows, some short answer questions are biased towards people with higher ability, possibly because these candidates have a higher ability to use what they understand [6]. Therefore, section4 is often the link to open the level of candidates.

In addition, many scholars generally believe that the better listening comprehension needs more vocabulary. So, Phung & Ha studied the vocabulary standards for the IELTS listening test. Research shows that candidates who need to master vocabulary knowledge of 5000-word families plus PN, MW, TC, and AC are more likely to achieve an acceptable score on the IELTS listening test [7].

However, most of the content in the TOEFL listening test is more academic, such as the topic of art, life science, natural science, social science, etc. Thus, TOEFL requires more vocabulary than IELTS, about 7000-8000 words. TOEFL listening is divided into 2 sections and 2 parts. Each section has 3 listening parts and 34 questions. Each part has about 20 minutes of playback time, and the rest is about 10 minutes of answer time. There are several different types of multiple-choice questions in the TOEFL listening parts, such as true or false questions or structure questions. TOEFL differs from IELTS in that it randomly selects candidates for the additional listening section. If there is an additional test, the test time will increase by 30 minutes. The additional test includes a conversation and two lectures, which will take a total of one and a half hours for the test. Otherwise, the listening test only takes one hour.

For examinees, the frequency of words in listening may be more relevant than the actual number of words. When there are more content words in the stimulus, the examinee may find it easier to establish a conversational context [8].

Consequently, infrequent vocabulary is an important factor in the difficulty of the TOEFL listening test. In addition, the biggest difference between TOEFL and IELTS is that THE IELTS is a written test and the TOEFL is a computer test. The picture pops up on the screen at key points, and the options are not displayed until you have read the question. Therefore, TOEFL listening candidates need to record keywords in the process, because in addition to listening questions all listening questions only play once. In this case, Ginther studied the influence of the combination of visual questions and listening In the TOEFL listening test on examinees. He proposed that visualization exists for three purposes :(1) supplementing verbal information with visual information, (2) setting the scene for verbal communication, and (3) reminding examinees of the change of speakers in the conversation. When the information contained in visual stimuli is complementary to the auditory stimuli, the presence of visual stimuli boosts performance. Subjects performed better when visual and audio were combined in the three different types of TOEFL listening comprehension (dialogue/short conversation, academic discussion, and mini conversation). The reason for this was that visual effects had the strongest effect on the performance of less-skilled subjects, meaning that visual effects made the task easier [8].

Chinese experts have reformed the listening test of THE CET-4 and CET-6, eliminated short dialogues and short dictation and added three short news paragraphs. The score of the listening test for CET-4 and CET-6 accounts for 35% of the whole test paper. The length of the test is 25 minutes, and the content of the test is more closely related to real life [5]. Furthermore, CET-4 and CET-6 will find British or American experts to read these topics in the listening part. Meanwhile, they will also invite some Chinese people who have pure pronunciation to do the recording. Whereas the voices used on the TOEFL are professional speakers, the articulation of their voices, the degree to which their pronunciation represents standard American English, and their ability to present appropriate vocal features [8].

As a result, the professionalism of IELTS and TOEFL in listening is much higher than that of CET-4 and CET-6. And TOEFL listening because of the options, so the need for candidates to have a stronger ability to understand and logic, its difficulty is much higher than IELTS.

2.2 The Aspect of English Speaking Test

Oral presentation skills are seen on the one hand as an important graduate skill, on the other hand, as a critical aspect of academic preparation, such as the United States Common Core Standards, or the Australian High School Curriculum Standards, and increasingly into student assessment [10].

The IELTS speaking test is a face-to-face test between a candidate and an examiner. The test is divided into three parts. Part 1: Self-introduction and short Q&A (4-5 minutes); Part 2: Personal Statement (3-4 minutes); Part 3: Two-way discussion (4-5 minutes). Seedhouse has studied the central role of topics in the IELTS Speaking Test (IST). In his opinion, the topic as the script is the written statement of the examiners on the topic before the interaction, while the topic as action is how the examinees develop the topic during the interaction, which has an important impact on their scores [11]. For the IELTS speaking test, candidates are required to: (a) understand the question being asked; (b) Provide answers to questions; (c) Identification of the themes inherent in the question; (d) Expand on the themes inherent in the question. Examiners score points based on four criteria: fluency and coherence, 25%; Vocabulary resources 25%; Grammatical range and accuracy 25%; Pronunciation 25%. There is no content output without topics, so topics play a crucial role in the IELTS speaking test.

The speaking test consists of six questions and lasts about 20 minutes. The first two questions ask you to prepare within 15 seconds of hearing/seeing the question and answer within 45 seconds immediately thereafter. For questions 3 and 4, you will be given 45 seconds to read a passage, after which the reading will not be displayed. You will listen to a recording of the passage for more than one minute. Then answer the questions according to the reading and listening materials. Candidates have 30 seconds to prepare and 60 seconds to answer. In Questions 5 and 6, you will listen to a variety of listening materials for one minute and then answer the questions according to the listening materials. Candidates have 20 seconds to prepare and 60 seconds to

answer. So, reading and listening are also very important in TOEFL speaking, which is a relatively comprehensive test of speaking ability.

CET-4 and CET-6 Speaking test is not mandatory, that is, there are no scores but only grades. The computer-based exam consists of three parts. The first part is a conversation between the examinee and the examiner, in the form of question and answer. It takes about 5 minutes. The second part consists of 1.5 minutes of individual presentations and 4.5 minutes of group discussion. It takes about 10 minutes. In the third part, the examiner will ask questions again to further determine the candidate's oral communication ability. The time is about 5 minutes.

However, the optional speaking test makes the subjective output skills assessment incomplete in this standardized English test. Speaking as an important language skill is not reviewed at all when it is not counted in grades.

To conclude, TOEFL speaks to the computer, and IELTS speaks to the examiner. In terms of content, IELTS focuses on talking and describing the same thing, while TOEFL measures the ability to orally retell what you have read or heard. Both have their characteristics and are relatively perfect oral English ability assessment systems.

2.3 The Aspect of Reading Acquisition

The IELTS reading test lasts 60 minutes and requires you to read three passages. There are eight main types of questions: judgment, induction, paragraph matching, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, graph, and matching. Different from TOEFL, the IELTS reading does not give the passage corresponding to the question. You need to locate the passage corresponding to the keywords in the question. IELTS reading test makers prefer to choose very specific questions, which are detailed and focused on business, social science, and basic science, so the overall difficulty of IELTS reading is high.

On the other hand, the TOEFL reading test lasts one hour and requires three essays (an average of 700-800 words per essay). One advantage over the IELTS is that the TOEFL reading question will mark the passage to which the question corresponds. That is, it will limit the scope of the question and reduce the pressure on the candidate to locate the text. The test is divided into 10 types and different types of questions test students' skills differently. Questions in the basic comprehension category emphasize students' ability in synonym substitution, summarization, scanning, and grammar. For reasoning questions, it is more to test students' ability to grasp the structure of the passage and the ability to draw inferences. Summary questions emphasize the summary of the passage and the investigation of specific knowledge points. Summary questions have the highest difficulty, and basic understanding questions have the lowest difficulty, which also accounts for a relatively high number of questions.

Moreover, CET-4 and CET-6 reading tests include four readings, one long reading, and three careful readings. The test topic types are mainly vocabulary reading, long reading, and short reading, aiming to test students' multi-level reading comprehension ability. The reading comprehension test lasts 40 minutes and is worth 35% of the total score, with long reading worth 10% and careful reading worth 25%. Long reading adopts long articles, about 1000 words in CET-4 and 1200 words in CET-6 [5].

To be general, there are few analyses on the types of standardized language test reading questions. However, according to the above analysis, the overall examination system of CET-4 and CET-6 is still lacking in international English tests. IELTS reading is characterized by the need to read the full text and take the initiative to sort out the logic to improve efficiency and accuracy. On the contrary, the TOEFL reading question structure generally follows a pattern. Finally, IELTS and TOEFL articles cover a wide range of subjects, including natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences. TOEFL essay prototypes are mostly selected from textbooks used by American undergraduate students to achieve the best effect of the mock test.

2.4 The Aspect of Writing Ability

The IELTS writing lasts 60 minutes and is divided into two writing tasks. You need to write at least 150 words for the first task and 250 words for the second. IELTS essay is the type of picture writing, according to the different charts, can be divided into 7 categories. There are seven types of essays: flow chart, map problem, pie chart, curve chart, mixed chart, bar chart, and table chart. The IELTS essay is an opinion essay. We can classify the essay according to its logic and topic. There are six types of essays: pros and cons, discusses, pros and cons, causes and effects of the problem, explanations and solutions to the problem, and a comparison between the two viewpoints.

However, the TOEFL writing test also includes two questions, the comprehensive writing section, and the independent writing section, which should be completed in about 50 minutes. In the comprehensive writing section, you must read an academic essay for about 3 minutes. The essay will then be removed, at which point you will have to listen to a lecture that lasts about one and a half minutes. In the end, you have 20 minutes to summarize the main points in the listening material and see the previous reading material. Candidates are required to explain the main points of the questions and are not allowed to express them freely. In the Independent writing section, you are asked to state, explain, and support your view of a question based on your knowledge and experience. In this part of the candidates' subjective answers, are not subject to the strict restrictions of the subject.

CET-4 and CET-6 writing tests students' English writing ability, which accounts for 15 percent of the total score. CET-4 and CET-6 take 25 minutes and 30 minutes respectively. Both CET-4 and CET-6 are very practical. The writing test generally selects the subject matter that the examinee is familiar with, many are current affairs or hot topics in life, the examinee should write according to the relevant information and prompt provided in the topic. After the reform, the writing requirements of CET-4 and CET-6 are to be completed within half an hour after the beginning of the test. After half an hour, the answer sheet will be taken back first, and then other questions will be answered.

Furthermore, CET-4 and CET-6 also have a translation test. Students are usually required to translate Chinese information into English and write it out, which tests the ability of English expression. Translation questions count for 15% of the total score and are 30 minutes long.

Therefore, the writing section of TOEFL is more literary and comprehensive. The IELTS writing section is more descriptive and logical. The overall difficulty of international standardized English tests is greater than that of Chinese native Standardized English tests. CET-4 and CET-6 still focus more on the rigor of written expression and the unique translation questions reflect the exam-oriented characteristics of Standardized English tests in China.

To conclude, a standardized language test can measure a person's second language acquisition level to some extent, but it is not comprehensive and there are many gaps. First of all, the standardized test has the characteristics of the standardized proposition, standardized answer, standardized score, and standardized test [12]. This universal "standardization" is not only suitable for most people and easy to quantify the learning level but also inevitably has the problem of rigid scoring, which cannot adapt to the individual diversity of all examinees, making the standardized test not comprehensive and unreliable in detecting the language level. Secondly, in the process of scoring subjective questions, the scoring will inevitably be affected by the examiner's personal ability or even personal situation, which will lead to the deviation between the scoring and the examinee's real language level, affecting the effectiveness of standardized test on language learning level detection. Finally, there is a close relationship between examination and study. Examinations can check the grades of study, but they also have a negative effect on the study and influence the direction of study. Standardized tests make passing a language the primary goal for many students. In addition, many students do not learn a second language purely to improve their personal language skills. To pass standardized tests, most students will learn and use test techniques to achieve high scores on standardized tests. The existence of such opportunistic behavior will inevitably affect the effectiveness of standardized tests in language level detection.

Finally, standardized tests remain the most authoritative and effective way to assess language proficiency for all its problems and flaws. The following suggestions are proposed based on previous literature and analysis, :1. The setting of question banks should be abolished in all kinds of examinations. 2. Improve the proportion of output questions and subjective questions in personal language skills tests; 3. Reduce eccentricity and improve the rationality of the test set; 4. Unify the test difficulty and evaluation standards in different regions and improve the effectiveness of standardized tests in testing language proficiency.

3 CONCLUSION

Standardized Tests of English have always been a popular topic, especially in China, where English education is widespread. Many Chinese students take IELTS and TOEFL to apply for further study in overseas universities. Many college students prefer to take CET-4 and CET-6, the standardized English tests peculiar to China, to find jobs efficiently. The article analyzes and compares the emphases and weaknesses of those three standardized English tests. It is mainly analyzed by four parts of English ability: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To be more specific, TOEFL

listening is the most difficult among the three tests, with higher vocabulary requirements, more knowledge reserves, and more professionalism. IELTS speaking is a face-to-face test of divergent thinking, logic, topic breadth, and the ability to work under pressure. The TOEFL speaking test measures both reading and listening skills. CET-4 and CET-6 are flexible oral tests for students who have high requirements for themselves. Accordingly, CET will be easier than IELTS and TOEFL. While TOEFL reading gives you a range of answers, IELTS reading requires you to read quickly and sort out the content and logic in a short period. Therefore, the IELTS reading is often considered more difficult than the TOEFL reading. While CET-4 and CET-6 reading tests basic comprehension and medium vocabulary. Additionally, IELTS writing consists of two writing tasks. In the first task, the student is asked to write an objective description of the topic. The second task requires students to write more words on a specific topic than the first task. Similarly, TOEFL writing is also divided into two tasks: comprehensive writing and independent writing. The first task is required to answer objectively, and the other one is needed to answer subjectively. Finally, the writing tasks of CET-4 and CET-6 are much easier than those two international standard English tests. It mainly evaluates students' basic written English skills, such as syntactic fluency, clear expression of meaning, and perfect grammatical structure, which are all basic tests without academic requirements. According to the above analysis, TOEFL has an average difficulty level for the four English proficiency tests, all of which are professional. IELTS is more difficult in reading and speaking, especially speaking is the most difficult part for Chinese students.

In general, each test has its focal point, learners can get good results with increasing vocabulary and knowledge and reserve a calm attitude to deal. The results of the comparative analysis above are helpful for the improvement of the English teaching structure in China and the test selection of students to measure their English proficiency.

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