

TECHNIQUES IN TACKLING READING COMPREHENSION IN CET EXAM

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension in CET4/6 aims to test students' competence in detecting specific information, gist of the passage, inference of information, and discourse analysis. Therefore, students are required to master the basic knowledge of discourse analysis and reading skills. In this article, the author tries to probe into the basics of the reading comprehension in CET Exam, and put forward some insightful techniques in tackling challenges in this process in the tests.

KEYWORDS: CET4/6, techniques,

INTRODUCTION

The Syllabus of College English(Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education,2017) stipulates that the purpose of College English teaching lies in cultivating qualified English learners to be capable of reading, speaking, translating, writing, taking English as a vehicle to obtain necessary information and get prepared for further learning. Obviously, efficient reading is the primary quality an English learner should possess, and CET4/6 (College English Test, Band 4/6) is a professional platform to check applicants' reading qualification. Reading comprehension, as an important part in CET4/6, directly decides whether the applicants can pass the test successfully, while it can also be taken as one of the most difficult part (Lai, 2014). Without saying, applicants have exerted great efforts in practicing, reciting vocabulary or other so called hard work, they just seem to go nowhere and still come across frustrations after the test scores are released. In order to help students pass the exam, and enhance teaching efficiency, the author here intends to detect the basics of the reading comprehension in the CET4/6, and offer some techniques and steps to tackle the issue of "double efforts while low grades" phenomenon.

1. REQUIREMENTS OF THE READING COMPREHENSION IN CET4/6

Students are required to understand the reading part of intermediate level, to grasp the main idea and identify the detailed information and facts in the questions, to infer and deduce based on the text, to interpret the long difficult sentences while identifying the logics in the argumentation (College English Testing Committee, 2013). There are two long passages, and after each passage there will be five questions each about the gist, details, vocabulary, attitude, and inferences of the text.

2. PROBLEMS AMONG APPLICANTS

Vocabulary: Nearly half of the Chinese students will complain how hard it is to memorize words in the process of English learning. These busy ones may buy a vocabulary book and force themselves to memorize just barely based on the list of words without caring about the sentences and the multi-

meanings of the words. After buying and working hard on the book for nearly a week, such a boring process, they will desperately want to give up and feel it so awful to look at the vocabulary; what's worse, after two weeks, the words of rote learning have gone half away, and the third week, they absolutely throw the book away. The problem is that they do not care the collocation and usage of the words and no new information come in and consolidate the memorizing, so certainly, they will forget the words. They could not choose the correct definition to a word, because they just know one type of meanings of that words due to that they do not know how to infer. They are stuck with the habit of rote learning, and therefore they will get panic when they are confronted with the new words.

Reading skills: some students are puzzled when asked whether they know any skills in reading the passages, for they hold that: they just read through the passage without any purposes in mind, after which they will proceed to finish the answers to the questions.

Tricky choices: besides from the passages, the four choices are also a hard problem for the applicants. The items may be just the copied words and sentences from the text, expressions reorganized in a sentence, the seemingly right statement, two sentences look like the same meaning, or long but complicated expressions with new words again. The students are nearly at a loss facing the four items after the struggling with the long passage.

Discourse: part of the reason that some applicants fail to find the best choices lies in that they absolutely do not know where is probably the potential place for hiding the key answers due to their blindness of the discourse structure. Though they can detect that the answer lies in certain sentence, they just cannot analyze the sense group or the main structure of the difficult clauses.

3. BASICS OF THE READING COMPREHENSION

3.1 The sequence of the questions

Generally, the questions are presented in order of story development, to be clear: students can find the answers as they read the articles. While at the same time, the questions are put in the logical order, so the students absolutely can read and finish the comprehending questions in a logical and developmental sequence. Some students hesitate between two choices, and eventually they choose the wrong one, without noticing that the item actually belongs to the scale of the next questions behind.

3.2 Discourse

3.2.1 Passage structure

The types of texts are taken from western newspapers and some public Medias. And the types can be found in forms of exposition, argumentation, and narration, among which the first two types are the major ones. If students do not have a clue about these article structures, they will barely pick out the best answer. As to the typical text of exposition: the structure can be: main point, findings, details,

findings, details and conclusion; while as to an argumentation, the organization maybe like: issue, author's view, argument 1, supporting points, argument 2, and supporting points. Now that there are rules to follow, why not take advantage of this knowledge of discourse, and it will save a lot of time for other questions.

3.2.2 Paragraph structure

Paragraphs can be taken as a smaller discourse, with organization in themselves. The normal graphs will be consisting of three parts: that is, topic sentence, supporting sentences, and the concluding sentence. For example, if students have to find the correct answer to one question, they had better identify the topic sentence first, and then detect the detailed information in the supporting sentences. Because it is much safer for them to take a birds' eye of the whole paragraph and have a clear idea of the flow of the authors plan in writing this article, or else, they will take a risk in choosing the wrong item.

3.2.3 Cohesion

It is helpful for students to find out the inherent correlation in the passage in terms of reference to one subject through the whole paper with help of the logical words like: they, it, she, this, that, however, therefore, etc. In this way, students will predict what the author is going to argue and disclose. Along the way of continuously updating and checking all sorts of assumptions, the students will find it easier to pick out the odd one out in the four choices provided.

4. STRATEGIES

4.1 Vocabulary

It comes to the first issue to most students and they always complain they are stuck with the new words in the passages, which distract them to focus on the new coming sentences and it frustrates them a lot. As a result, they get panic and the more new words, the more terrible they feel, which will directly deprive them of the confidence to comprehend the texts.

The students should enlarge their amount of words greatly and strategically. Since they are determined to learn the words, they need to know what the words are on the scale of test according to the Syllabus. They are supposed to refer to the word list attached in Requirements of the CET4/6. At the same time, teachers should pass them some word learning strategies in analyzing the words in the way of collocation, affixes, inference, reading, and promoting them to look up the words in different sentences, and this is critically important! In this way, they will form the habit of learning words in contexts and form their reading sense whenever come across new sentences and discourses. They will learn to guess and predict the meaning of the words, knowing that a word can be allocated with all sorts of meaning in various collocations.

4.2 Discourse analysis

Normally a student with a sense of discourse will find it easier to tackle questions in the CET4/6 because they are clear about where are the questions from and they can spot the key words instantly along the reading process: main idea and the attitude of the author will mainly be hidden in the beginning or ending of the article; details will be sure if you read the topic sentence ahead; certain hard words can be inferred from the subject of that paragraph because of cohesion. The clever students will read on until they find other key words appears while at the same time they cautiously take notice of the logical words, because they can smell the hidden meaning between the lines.

4.3 Reading habits

Since discourse can be broken into parts like sentences, phrases or words. In the process of reading, we need to kick off the bad habit of low efficiency practice of reading word by word. It is better to read in meaningful groups, which can be also helpful in understanding the long and difficulty sentences, aside from which, it is a good way to quickening up reading.

Keep track of the movement of your eyeball in the process of reading the passages with a pen. Many students respond that they do not have any idea about what they are reading though they are “looking at the text”. Actually, they are not reading seriously, they are just receiving the words without thinking. Taking notes and ticking the key words can help one to analyze and think insightfully with the author.

Silent reading and murmuring. Wise students know the difference between these two kinds of readings. If you spare time on reading with making noises, you are distracting yourself actually, because you have to spare some cognition on working out the sounds, while silent reading can force you to focus on the comprehending questions in a simpler way.

4.4 Horizon broadening

One reason that the students find the reading comprehension so hard is that they are unfamiliar with the topics and some of the cultural points in the reading text. When a person is surrounded with a strange and unexpected topic, he/she is easily getting upset. So beside of calming down, students need to be fully prepared themselves with different topics and cultures in the world; gradually, they will be armed with themselves and they will not easily get panic when come across various topics and new researches.

5. BELIEFS

Those above are about the specific techniques in coping with difficulties in tests, another part which also counts a lot is their psychological state. Some applicants easily get nervous when they look at the words and they will be at a loss when come across any trivial unexpected challenges, and they cannot concentrate, and as a result, will meet waterloo in choosing the best answers.

6. CONCLUSION

In the process of practicing CET exercise, students need to know the requirements from the CET Syllabus, the rules of the articles itself and the useful techniques in detecting the correct answers. It is a process of trial and errors, and they need to have confidence in that they will master the techniques as long as they can reflect upon the mistakes and synthesize the structures of each type of reading materials. Besides, they need to read a lot to strengthen their language sense, the habit of reading and predicting through the process. Only in these ways, can the applicants transformed into a qualified College English learner with capability of tracing and sorting out information from readings smoothly and efficiently.

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