

An Empirical Study on Washback Effects of the Internet-Based College English Test Band 4 in China

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Abstract

Based on Bailey's washback model, in respect of participants, process and products, the present empirical study was conducted to find the actual washback effects of the internet-based College English Test Band 4 (IB CET-4). The methods adopted are questionnaires, class observation, interview and the analysis of both the CET-4 teaching and testing syllabus. Through analysis, it is found that the IB CET-4 helps to establish the new computer and internet-based teaching model, to cultivate students' autonomous learning abilities, to improve students' ability for screen reading and keyboard writing as well as to urge colleges and universities to provide financial support to college English teaching and learning by constructing more internet language labs. However, overemphasizing practical ability, such as listening and speaking, leads to students' lack of spelling and grammatical knowledge.

Keywords: washback, IB CET-4, college English teaching and learning

1. Introduction

1.1 An Empirical Study on Washback Effects of the IB CET-4

It is a commonplace phenomenon in education that testing influences teaching and learning (Anderson & Wall, 1993). This is referred to as washback in the language testing theory. Washback is often associated with "high-stakes" tests, for their results usually make a decisive effect on the lives of a huge number of individuals (Shohamy et al., 1996). The National College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) in China is such a "high-stakes" test. The present research is to explore the washback effects of the latest innovative form of CET-4—Internet-based CET-4 (IB CET-4) to provide feedbacks to test constructors and to offer implications to improve college English teaching and learning. The present study addresses itself to providing feedback to test constructors to inform them of the actual washback of the IB CET-4 and whether it is in accordance with their intentions. The research questions to be addressed are as follows:

- 1) What is the actual washback of the IB CET-4?
- 2) What are the matches and mismatches between the test constructors' intentions and the actual washback of the IB CET-4?

1.2 Background and the Expected Washback Effects of the IB CET-4

The National College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) is a criterion-related norm-referenced test (Yang & Weir, 1998). It has been carried out in Chinese colleges and universities since 1987, which aims to assess the fulfillment of The college English Teaching Syllabus in College English (CE) teaching and learning, measure objectively and accurately the English proficiency of non-English majors at the tertiary level in China, and provide feedback, exposing the strength and weakness to improve teachers' teaching and students' learning. The CET-4 is one of the well-acknowledged "high-stakes" tests in China, because many educational authorities

regard the test result as an index of the overall quality of CE teaching and learning. Besides, a good CET-4 mark has become a prerequisite in successfully obtaining employment for university graduates.

In order to increase its validity and achieve more beneficial washback, CET-4 is constantly under reform. The first innovation was undertaken in 1996 in response to broad criticism among educators at all levels that CET relies too heavily on multiple-choice items. The second innovation was undertaken in 2007, followed by some radical changes to the CET-4 content and format, the scoring system and the score reporting method. The third innovation is the practice of IB CET-4. The new form of CET-4 was first on trial in 2008. By Jun. 21st, 2009, the IB CET-4 (still on trial) has been extended to more than 100 universities and colleges. Apart from the change of the test form, which switched from PBT (Paper-based Test) to IBT (Internet-based Test), the IB CET-4 increased the weighting of the parts concerning listening from 35% to 70%.

In order to better introduce and extend the IB CET-4, the main members and officials in the project published a variety of public papers to elaborate their intentions, major principles and expected washback of the test design.

With the quick development of modern IT industry, language educators have focused on the multi-literacy that is essential for global communication across different cultures via different mediums (Zhu, 2008). Language communication is far more than the integrated activities of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also involves the activity of sending and receiving aural and visual information no matter by e-mail, fax, or contract, agreement as well as the interactive ability of discussion, interview, debate and negotiation via such modern technology. Hu (2008) agreed that cultivating college students' multi-literacy concerns the national interests, which should be raised to the national strategic level. That means, in today's information and globalization background, language communication needs technology and strategy other than language ability. Students are supposed to be skillful to send, receive, and search for information on the internet and know how to offer advice, to make comments and to solve the conflicts in communication, using expressing strategy, understanding strategy and cooperation principle.

The college English teaching and learning should realize the turning point of globalization and the new era modern IT innovation and take the chance to enhance the new teaching and learning model based on the internet (Jin, 2005). Modern IT industry is an indispensable part of college English teaching and learning. The financial support should be given to ensure the position of college English education. That is the strategic significance of developing the IB CET-4 (Wang, 2009).

Zhang (2008a) claimed that the project of college English teaching innovation conducted by the Education Ministry is designed to integrate language teaching with the modern information technology. That is, with the aid of modern information technology, classroom-teaching activities are going to be integrated with the internet learning activities; in-class learning is going to be integrated with before and after class learning; the teacher's teaching is going to be integrated with students' autonomous learning. Such a teaching model emphasizes the interaction between the teacher and students, students and students. The teaching content concerns not only language competence, but also communicative strategy, cultural knowledge and across-cultural communicative ability (Zhang, 2008b).

The overall objective of the project of developing the IB CET-4 is to "set up a testing system with a view to offering test-takers a computer-based test in a proper place at a proper time, which can test learners' listening competence, as well as their reading, writing and translating competence to see whether they have sustainable English learning ability" (Zhang, 2009).

Yan (2009) also mentioned the significance of the IB CET-4. First, information technology can convert the single listening test into an audiovisual test, which guarantees the authenticity of testing. Second, the IB CET-4 combines the testing of listening, speaking, and writing into a unitary test item, which improves the validity of testing learners' integrated ability of using a language. Finally, she asserted that the strategic significance of the IB CET-4 is to promote the implementation of the College English Curriculum Requirement (CECR), to impulse the innovation of college English teaching and learning, and to encourage the new teaching and learning model based on internet.

When it comes to the change of CET from paper-based version to internet-based version, Cai (2009) pointed out that it is an intentional action to take advantage of the baton of CET-4. The purpose is to fasten the innovation of college English teaching and learning to change the classroom-based teaching model into classroom plus internet-based teaching model, which attaches more importance to autonomous learning.

The above scholars pointed out the background, strategic significance, practical necessity and main principles of developing the IB CET. All of them made it quite clear that the innovation of CET is part of the innovation of CE

teaching and learning. The Ministry of Education meant to encourage and influence CE teaching and learning to follow up a more efficient, more competitive, and more sustainable model. The anticipated washback of the IB CET-4 can be summarized as follows:

First, college English teaching and learning continue to concentrate more on learners' communicative competence, especially listening and speaking ability so that students can communicate effectively in their work and life with both oral and written English in the future.

Second, the teacher-centered, classroom-based teaching mode is to give way to students-centered, classroom and internet-based one.

Third, the teacher-dependent, in-class learning based learning mode is to give place to teacher-guided, autonomous learning based one.

Finally, learners' multi-literacy, sustainable learning ability and cross-cultural communicative ability are expected to be cultivated in the process of college English teaching and learning.

1.3 Theoretical Frameworks for Washback Studies

It is easy to have a basic notion of washback. But how washback works is far more complicated than it seems to be. In order to make it clear, researchers have made in-depth inquiries into washback working mechanisms to form a good theoretical foundations for the later studies.

1.3.1 Alderson and Wall's Washback Hypotheses

As for the influence of testing on teaching and learning, Alderson and Wall (1993) bring forward 15 hypotheses to describe its working mechanism. Most of these hypotheses relate to the content, methods, and attitudes of teaching and learning. Some are about the intensity of washback, which varies with the importance of the test consequences and the ratio of subjects that the test affects.

Later, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) found that the simple existence of a test is not bound to effect washback. Other factors, such as teaching and learning conception, are needed to guarantee the working of washback. So they added one more to the 15 washback hypotheses "tests will have different amounts and types of washback on some teachers and learners than on other teachers and learners." They suggested that the amounts and types of washback vary with test-takers' conceptions—whether they are willing to innovate to find appropriate methods for test preparation.

1.3.2 Hughes' Basic Model of Washback

Different from Alderson and Wall's dichotomy approach to study washback, whose focus is on micro aspects of teaching and learning that may be influenced by tests, Hughes (1989) distinct the washback in terms of participants, process and products in teaching and learning. The advantage of Hughes' model is to expose the complex mechanism specifically in actual teaching and learning practices. Participants refer to students, teachers, school administrators, textbook editors, etc. Products involve changes in teaching methodology and learning strategy, syllabus designing, textbook writing, the use of test-taking techniques, and so on.

Based on the combination of Alderson and Wall's Hypotheses and Hughes' PPP trichotomy model, Bailey (1996) depicts a basic model of washback (as is shown in Figure 1), which was the result of supplying "test-derived information" to the test-takers, and "washback to the program", which was the result of supplying information to all of the other participants.

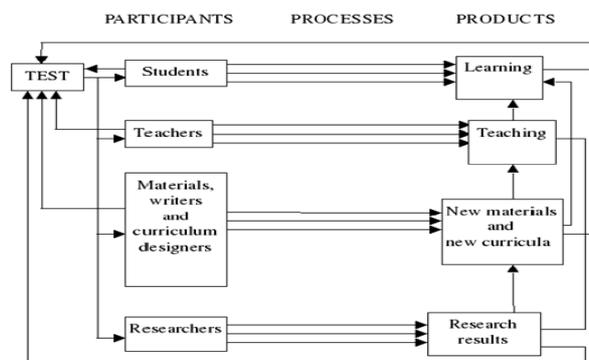


Figure 1. A Basic Model of Washback (as cited in Bailey, 1996, p. 264)

Both Alderson and Wall's dichotomy and Hughes' trichotomy attempt to outline the area of washback study. Alderson & Wall's Washback Hypothesis assumes that washback involves two parties and two processes: teachers and students, teaching and learning. Hughes' Basic model adds to the theoretical discussion by making a distinction between washback on the participants, the processes and the products of an educational system. Besides teachers and students, materials writers, curriculum designers and researchers are also involved in his theoretical framework.

1.3.3 Prodromous' Overt-Covert Washback

Different from the researchers before, Prodromou (1995) prefers "backwash effect" rather than "washback" to refer to the direct or indirect effect of tests on teaching and learning. And he studies backwash from a new angle by classifying it into two trends: overt backwash and covert backwash. The overt washback refers to the explicit consequences of testing which are easily identified, while the covert washback means implicit consequences which are too elusive to present exactly.

The overt washback can be seen in teachers and students' actual practices to deal with a test. Much preparation will be done in order to pass examinations. For example, doing simulated test papers, replicating the exercises favored in the particular test in terms of both test materials and test patterns.

The covert washback is often an unconscious process, which reflects certain pedagogic principles: the role of classroom management, the relationship between learners and teachers, students' learning strategy and so on.

The present study applies the distinction between "overt" washback and "covert" washback as the basic guideline to conduct the classroom observation, in order to perceive what really happens to learning process in the classroom.

1.3.4 Previous Empirical Studies of Washback

The theoretical discussions are followed by empirical studies on the washback of different types of tests in different parts of world.

Table 1. Summary of the influential empirical washback studies abroad

Researcher(s) & Time	Test	Purpose	Methodology	Major Findings
Wall & Alderson (1993)	Sri Lanka O-level Exam	To establish what impact an examination has. To investigate the frequently asserted but rarely researched belief that tests have washback	Classroom Observation Questionnaire Survey Interview	Tests have impact on what teachers teach but not on how they teach. The exam is only one of the factors that affect how innovations succeed or fail. The nature of curricular innovation is much more complex than the advocates of washback seem to realize.
Alderson & Hamp-Lyons (1996)	USA TOEFL	To see whether influence of TOEFL varies from teacher to teacher	Classroom Observation Interview	The TOEFL affects both what and how teachers teach, but the effect is not the same in degree or in kind from teacher to teacher.
Andrews, Fullilove, & Wong (2002)	Hong Kong Advanced Supplementary (AS) "Use of English" (UE) oral exam	To probe into the effects of changes to high-stakes tests on the performance of those who take them.	Oral Exam Observation Interview	The introduction of the UE Oral is exerting some influence on students' performance in spoken English, and the impact of the test on student performance is delayed. The precise nature of the washback seems to vary from student to student.

Read & Hayes (2003)	New Zealand IELTS	To probe the impact of IELTS on the preparation of international students for tertiary study in New Zealand and various dimensions of the washback of IELTS.	Classroom Observation Questionnaire Survey Interview	Teachers rely heavily on exam-preparation materials and pay much attention to the explanation of test-taking strategies.
Green (2006)	IELTS Academic Writing Module	To explore the influence of teacher priorities on learners preparing for a test of academic writing.	Classroom Observation Questionnaire Survey Interview	Learner perceptions of course outcomes are affected by the course focus reported by teachers, but that relationship is not deterministic. Although test preparation courses, as predicted by washback theory, do appear to cover a relatively narrow range of skills, there is evidence that narrow preparation strategies are not driven primarily by learner expectations.

From the table, we can see the influence of test on language teaching and learning has been realized by the experts on testing for a long time, but the empirical studies of washback haven't been conducted until in recent decades. Among them, we can find the contributions made by Alderson and Wall (1993), Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt, and Ferman (1996), Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996), Cheng (1997) and so on. Their researches have focused on the following aspects: does washback exist; how does washback function; what are the factors influence washback; how to weaken negative effects and strengthen positive ones, etc. The tests under research are mainly nationwide foreign language examinations in researchers' own countries or the large-scale, international standardized tests, such as TOEFL, IELTS and University Entrance Examination, etc. The researchers often conduct questionnaires, class observations and interviews to collect their data.

Table 2. Summary of the influential empirical washback studies in China

Researcher(s) & Time	Test	Purpose	Methodology	Major Findings
Li Xiaojun (1990)	Matriculation English Test (MET)	To see whether the innovation in MET led to any change in English language teaching in the middle schools.	Questionnaire Survey	Changes have taken place in three different areas: teaching materials, the content of lessons, and activities outside the classroom.
He Chongzhou (1998)	Test for English Majors	To investigate the anticipated washback of the grammar test on the teaching of grammar.	Analysis from test-designer's perspective	The anticipated washback of the grammar test is beneficial to the teaching and learning of English majors.
Qi Luxia (2004)	National Matriculation English Test (NMET)	To investigate the impact of the exam in China	Classroom Observation Questionnaire Survey	The NMET has considerable impact on materials and learning activities but not the kind of influence that is envisaged by its designers.

Gu Xiangdong (2007)	CET-4 & CET-6	To investigate the relationship between CET and CE teaching and learning.	Classroom Observation Questionnaire Survey Interview Analysis of documents	<p>Most CET stakeholders think highly of the test, especially the design, administration, marking and the measures newly adopted.</p> <p>CET is more influential on teaching content, teaching pace and attitudes towards teaching, but less influential on teaching methods.</p> <p>The influence varies from university to university, from grade to grade and from teacher to teacher.</p> <p>Teacher factors, such as teachers' devotion to work and their English proficiency, may outweigh the effect of the test on CE classroom teaching and learning.</p>
Cai Jigang (2009)	IB CET-4 & IB CET-6	To investigate the gap between the intended and actual washback of the IB CET	Questionnaire Survey	<p>IB CET is beneficial for the innovation of teaching and learning mode</p> <p>IB CET helps to cultivate students' sustainable learning ability</p>

As stated above, Chinese scholars' studies on washback mainly concentrate on whether tests have brought positive or negative effects on teaching, learning and even the educational system. Nevertheless, the question which is rarely further studied lies in whether a particular test succeeds in achieving test constructors' intentions.

Though College English teaching reform and CET innovation have been undergoing over ten years, and the IB CET-4 has been undergoing (on trial) experimentation for two years and is to be implemented nationwide in the near future, the present author thinks it is high time to do some immediate research in this field, to investigate how successful and unsuccessful the innovated test is in achieving its goal. The present research is conducted to bridge the gap between test constructors and test takers, thereby leads to an improvement of CET and College English teaching and learning.

2. Method

2.1 Research Questions

The present study addresses itself to providing feedback to test constructors to inform them of the actual washback of the IB CET-4 and whether it is in accordance with their intentions. The research questions to be addressed are as follows:

- 1) What is the actual washback of the IB CET-4?
- 2) What are the matches and mismatches between the test constructors' intentions and the actual washback of the IB CET-4?

2.2 Participant Characteristics

Beijing Jiaotong University was approved as one of the first trial universities where the IB CET was implemented. That means, it has been implementing the IB CET for more than five years. The present researchers chose it as the case university to conduct the investigation of the washback of the IB CET.

Students: 150 non-English major undergraduates in Beijing Jiaotong University. 70 students come from Grade 2011 and 80 students come from Grade 2012. The latter are sophomores who are preparing to attend CET-4.

2.3 Instruments

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are adopted in order to make the present research effective and valid. In the present study, unstructured interview and classroom observation belong to qualitative method while student questionnaire falls into the quantitative one.

According to the theoretical foundation of Alderson and Wall's (1993), one questionnaire would be designed for students and teachers. For the benefit of effective communication, the questionnaire was written in Chinese, which offered us preliminary data on students' general practice on CE learning, and their perceptions of CET-4 and its innovation, etc.

The items in the SQ in the present study are mainly derived from the following sources:

Alderson and Wall's "Washback Hypotheses" (Alderson & Wall, 1993, pp. 120-121)

Questionnaire for the sampled university teachers and questionnaire for the sampled university students (Gu, 2007; Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Qi, 2007)

Consultations with teachers and students of the case study university and an educational psychologist.

2.3.1 Sample Size, Power, and Precision

The student's questionnaire is made up of two parts. Part one is about personal information including college, grade, gender, and major. Part two is the main body with 20 items (See Appendix I). Their purposes are to examine the following variables: students' perception on the IB CET-4 (Item 1-5, 20); the aspects of CE learning influenced by changes of the IB CET-4, such as students' learning motivation (Item 6), their learning strategy (Item 7-13), learning contents (Item 14-15), learning activities (Item 16-17) and learning mediums (Item 18-19).

The interviews are conducted to obtain the in-depth data about what and how teachers and students actually do both in the classroom and outside the classroom and to help interpret the data collected by the quantitative methodology.

The interviews are held with twenty students to gain complementary data for a better understanding and a better analysis of classroom observations. Their interview includes university policies concerning CET-4; general learning practice such as learning objectives and materials; their attitude towards the changes of the IB CET-4.

The classroom observations were conducted to see what students and teachers actually did in class in response to the IB CET-4 and to discover whether their performance in classroom was consistent with their answers to the questionnaires. Due to the limited time and human resources, it was impossible to have the classroom observations in a large scale. Four teachers' classes are chosen purposefully, two in grade 2011 and the other two in grade 2012. Classroom observation will concentrate on the following aspects: teaching content, teaching method, teachers' role in class, the materials used in class and the medium of instruction; students' focus in class, learning strategies and the materials and medium of learning.

3. Results

3.1 Analysis of Questionnaires

The results of both teachers' and students' questionnaires will be presented separately from three aspects: the evidence of the existence of the IB CET-4 washback; in what aspects the IB CET-4 influences college English teaching and learning; the washback of the IB CET-4 on learners' multi-literacy, sustainable learning ability and cross-cultural communicative ability. The purpose is to investigate the actual washback of the IB CET-4 based on Bailey's model.

3.1.1 Results of Students' Questionnaires

One hundred and fifty students answered the questionnaires on the Website of Beijing Jiaotong University named education on line. The data are calculated automatically, among which thirty questionnaires turn out to be invalid. Based on the results of the other 120 valid questionnaires, the following aspects is analyzed to explore the washback of the IB CET-4 on college English learning.

Students' perception on the IB CET-4

Questions 1-5 and 20 are related to students' perception on the IB CET-4.

The results can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of students' questionnaire (Q1-Q5, Q20)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q1	6.4%	75.8%	5%	17.7%	0
Q2	22.5%	54.8%	16.1%	6.4%	0
Q3	17.7%	64.5%	16.1%	1.6%	0
Q4	29%	35.4%	9.7%	21.7%	4.2%
Q5	17.5%	40%	30%	2.5%	10%
Q20	5%	74.2%	11.7%	0	9.1%

From the data collected, we found that most students (6.4% plus 75.8%) assert that they are aware of the content, format and rating scale of the IB CET-4. A vast majority of students (17.7% totally and 64.5% to a great extent) regard it as an objective and reliable measurement of their integrated competence. Moreover, major parts of students (29% plus 35.4%) think that the test helps to improve their English communicative competence. Meanwhile, most students claim (17.7% totally and 64.5% to a great extent) that the IB CET-4 helps to stop the cheating behavior on exams. As for the implementation of the IB CET-4, more than half of students support it. In general, 79.2% of students believe that the IB CET-4 has made positive effects on their daily learning.

To conclude, students' responses show that most of them feel positive about the IB CET-4. They have been quite familiar with this new test based on internet. They approve of the general validity and positive washback of such a test. Although only 57.5% of them (17.5% plus 40%) support the implementation of the test, it does not mean that nearly half of students are against it. Instead, it merely means that students do not like tests, because up to 30% of students choose to show their indifference to the test.

Students' learning motivation

Q6: To what extent does the IB CET-4 stimulate my interest and enthusiasm of learning by using the internet resources?

A. Totally B. To a great extent C. To an average extent D. To some extent E. Totally not

Table 4. Results of students' questionnaire (Q6)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q6	10%	59.3%	10.6%	14.3%	6.4%

As is shown in Table 4, 69.3% of students believe that the IB CET-4 make them feel interested in learning by using the resources on line, such as some authentic news materials, TV programs and talk show and so on.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the IB CET-4 stimulates students' motivation of taking advantage of the authentic aural visual materials on line.

Students' learning strategy

Questions 7-8 are related to students' listening strategy (see Table 5).

Table 5. Results of students' questionnaire (Q7-8)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q7	85.8%	6.7%	5.8%	1.7%	0
Q8	8.1%	12.9%	47.5%	24.5%	6.7%

Question 7 and 8 are concerning learners' listening strategy. The statistics show that up to 85.8% of students totally agree that the increase of the weighting of the listening part and the parts related to listening in the IB CET-4 make them concentrate more on the English listening training. From the table, we can also see there are only 8.1% students usually make use of the CET-4 tests paper or materials with similar content and format to

CET-4 in their listening study, that is to say only a few students would take CET-4 related materials as a part of their learning material. On the other hand, 47.5% students prefer to practice listening via making use of the textbooks and its internet edition. The reason for this may be that the current visual, listening and speaking textbooks and its internet edition are more authentic and practical to take the IB CET-4. Another small part of students (24.5%) practice daily listening activities, such as daily conversations, speeches and English TV or radio programs, and so on. On the contrary, the BBC and VOA programs are not widely adopted by them (12.9%) in training. The reason for this may be that the contents are too difficult for non-English major students to understand. Even though, the trend is obvious: Most students focus on authentic listening to improve their English listening competence.

Questions 9-11 are related to students' reading strategy (see Table 6).

Table 6. Results of students' questionnaire (Q9-11)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q9	4.2%	68.3%	18.3%	5.9%	3.3%
Q10	38.3%	40%	19.2%	2.5%	0
Q11	36.7%	41.7%	11.7%	9.9%	0

Question 9, 10 and 11 are about learners' reading strategy. As what can be seen in Table 6, 72.5% of students (4.2% plus 68.3%) agree that the implementation of the IB CET-4 helps to prevent the behavior of memorizing vocabulary and grammar forcedly. It is possibly resulted from the fact that the IB CET-4 has no test items directly checks the vocabulary and grammar knowledge. When comparing the different learning emphases while reading, 40% of students regard the discourse analysis as the first important thing, and 19.2% look on developing the reading strategy as their reading objective. A similar part of students (38.3%) stress vocabulary and grammar. Only 2.5% of students notice the importance of cultural and background knowledge. It means that the consciousness of developing across-cultural communicative competence still needs to be emphasized. Nevertheless, to our delight, most students have mastered the skimming strategy, and formed a good reading habit of discourse reading. Up to 78.4% of students (36.7% plus 41.7%) approve of the importance of discourse reading to find the theme and the author's writing purpose.

Question 12-13 are related to students' speaking and writing strategy (see Table 7).

Table 7. Results of students' questionnaire (Q12-13)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q12	7.5%	29.2%	14.2%	38.3%	10.8%
Q13	6.7%	56.7%	12.5%	18.3%	5.8%

Table 7 shows that only a small part of students (7.5% plus 29.2%) agrees that it is necessary to practice each phoneme systematically. The reasons may be that most students are satisfied with their pronunciation, or they believe the key of speaking training does not lie on pronunciation. Anyway, it can be inferred that the listening and repeating part in the IB CET-4 does not exert enough washback on students' learning, and its validity should be reconsidered and improved too. In terms of writing strategy, most students (6.7% plus 56.7%) realize the importance of the discourse arrangement, the prominent place of the topic sentence and the skills to develop the topic sentence (partially via unstructured interview). They got rid of the difficult situation in which everything is surrounded with forming a grammatically correct sentence.

Based on the above analysis, the implementation of the IB CET-4 influences students' learning strategy. The most prominent phenomenon is that a vast majority of students have converted their concentration from learning reading based on vocabulary and grammar to training listening ability based on some authentic aural and visual materials. As for the reading strategy, most students began to put the discourse understanding and strategy developing on an important place. In addition, most of them have mastered the general reading skills. However, the value of the vocabulary and grammar tend to be underestimated because as a proficiency test, the IB CET-4 has no test items directly related to them. This will undoubtedly lead to students' lack of basic linguistic

knowledge, such as spelling, sentence structure, and so on. One more weak point in learning reading is that only a few students notice the necessity and importance learning the cultural and background knowledge to develop their across-cultural communicative ability. When it comes to the writing strategy, it is quite evident that most students have realized the prominent place of the topic sentence and the skills to develop the topic sentence. They got rid of the difficult situation in which everything is surrounded with forming a grammatically correct sentence. Instead, the consciousness of logical discourse development helps students to complete a full and convincing essay. Finally, students' speaking strategy is touched upon merely on the phonemic level. That is because there is only one test item concerning speaking in the IB CET-4 (the listening and repeating part). The statistics indicate that the listening and repeating part in the IB CET-4 does not exert enough washback on students' learning, and its validity should be reconsidered and improved too.

Students' learning content

Question14-15 are related to Students' learning content (see Table 8).

Table 8. Results of students' questionnaire (Q14-15)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q14	6.7%	55.8%	16.7%	16.7%	4.2%
Q15	14.2%	6.7%	46.7%	20%	13.4%

From the data collected (seen from Table 8), students (55.8%) generally agree that the materials used most frequently in daily English learning are the internet edition of the college English course. Moreover, another two similar small parts of students (16.7% respectively) often use English reading materials (novels, newspaper and magazines) and the video and audio materials (movies, music and news report) as their learning materials. Internet (46.7%) has replaced the library and the bookshop and become the main source of knowledge.

Various sorts of learning content coming from various sources indicate that students have the ability to identify and choose what is suitable for them to learn and how to learn. Because the IB CET-4 attached great importance to communicative competence and selected authentic materials as the test materials, so accordingly, students' learning content changed to be more real-life-oriented or even from the authentic world to adjust in line with the IB CET-4. Meanwhile, the advance of modern technology and improvement of internet devices give more possibilities and feasibility.

Students' learning activities

Question16 and 17 are related to Students' learning activities (see Table 9 & 10).

Table 9. Results of students' questionnaire (Q16)

Class-room activity	A very frequently	B frequently	C average	D not frequently	E rarely
Vocabulary and grammar learning	5%	15%	38.3%	36.7%	5%
Discourse understanding	20.8%	71.7%	5.8%	1.7%	0
Strategy developing	19.2%	74.2%	2.4%	1.7%	2.5%
English presentation	76.7%	23.3%	0	0	0
Group discussion	12.5%	41.7%	8.3%	22.5%	15%
Debate	0	4.2%	20%	70.8%	5%
Role acting	80%	16.7%	3.3%	0	0
English speech	0	0	13.3%	70.8%	15.9%

Table 10. Results of students' questionnaire (Q17)

Outside-classroom activity	A very frequently	B frequently	C average	D not frequently	E rarely
Study vocabulary and grammar by oneself	17.5%	39.2%	21.7%	9.9%	11.7%
Learn the internet edition of the college English course	77.5%	22.5%	0	0	0
Search for materials online	13.3%	41.7%	22.5%	31.6%	4.2%
Group study (such as prepare for the presentation)	2.5%	55.8%	20%	8.3%	13.4%
Do the paper-based simulated CET-4 papers	5%	9.2%	17.5%	45.8%	22.5%
Write an English journal	0	5%	29.2%	58.3%	7.5%
Memorize vocabulary via the CET-4 vocabulary book	19.2%	36.7%	28.3%	13.3%	2.5%
Read and recite loudly the English essay outside	10.8%	7.5%	39.2%	19.2%	23.3%
Practice oral English in the English Corner	3.3%	11.7%	24.2%	20.8%	40%

Question 16 and 17 present us a general picture of the specific learning activities that students do in class as well as out of class.

From the table 9, we can see that the activities of discourse understanding, strategy developing, English presentation and role acting are conducted most frequently in class. Via unstructured interview, both the teacher and students admit that English presentation (in the Reading, writing and translating class) and role acting (in the video, listening and speaking class) have become their in-class daily routine, which occupy certain part of students' final grades. On the contrary, a large part of students (70.8% and 70.8% respectively) claims that the activities of debate and English speech are not frequently done. As for group discussion, there are respectively 12.5% and 41.7% students think that they are very frequently and frequently involved. There is another point worthy of mentioning. 20% (5% plus 15%) of students believe that they learn vocabulary and grammar very frequently or frequently in class. Nevertheless, another group of students (36.7%) asserts that they do not learn vocabulary and grammar often. In addition, a similar large group of students (38.3%) state that they learn vocabulary and grammar not so often and rarely either. The three groups with similar numbers of students hold quite different opinion towards the vocabulary and grammar learning. The reason for this may be that the teacher designs a variety of methods and class activities to guide students to conduct the vocabulary and grammar learning. It is difficult for students to identify whether these activities belong to vocabulary and grammar learning or not. Even though, the trend is obvious: the vocabulary and grammar learning has given place to discourse understanding and strategy developing in class. Instead, it became a main self-study activity out of class.

From the table 10, we can see that the most popular activity out of class among students is to learn the internet edition of the college English course. Via unstructured interview, students admit that the internet edition of the college English course has become a regular daily assignment for them. Each week, they are supposed to complete two units according to the schedule, which occupy certain part of their final grades. (How? This could be the part of motivation) The learning content concerns intensive reading and the related exercises, video aural materials and the related exercises, listening and repeating exercises, and some authentic CNN news materials. In addition, the two units are closely related to the topics they are to learn in that week. The second popular activities include group study (2.5% plus 55.8%), vocabulary and grammar self-study (17.5% plus 39.2%), searching for materials online (13.3% plus 41.7%), and memorizing vocabulary via the CET-4 vocabulary book (19.2% plus 36.7%). On the contrary, the three activities of reading and reciting loudly the English essay outside, practicing oral English in the English Corner and doing the paper-based simulated CET-4 papers belong in the unpopular group. It indicates that students still have no enough chances to practice their oral English. In other words, oral English is still a weak point in English testing and learning. The least popular activity is writing an

English journal. Only 5% of students prefer to write journals. The reason for this may be that both the teacher and students attach importance to the writing tasks related to the test, such as comments, arguments, solving problems, etc. instead of daily free writing. Actually, writing journals is a good habit and strategy to practicing English writing, which helps students to express their opinions and moods freely and exactly.

To conclude, students' learning activities, either in class or out of class, are the best evidence of their learning mode. Based on the above analysis, it is not hard to find that currently, students' learning is largely dependent on themselves. Their learning process has been extended from classroom-based one to classroom and internet-based one. In class, the traditional vocabulary and grammar learning has given place to discourse understanding and strategy developing, which are guided and organized by the teacher. Classroom activities, such as the English presentation and group discussion, make students participate in class learning more actively. Students are the real main role in class. Out of class, the autonomous study of the internet edition of the English course has become a regular daily learning activity. With the help of modern technology, students can take the chance to practice different skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. In order to prepare for the presentation task, students have to work together with their partners to search for information on line, to distribute responsibility, to design the PPT and to rehearse together. In the process, they have developed a good teamwork spirit. In a word, the teacher-depending, in-class learning based learning mode is to give place to teacher-guided, autonomous learning based one. Such a change will undoubtedly encourage the development of students' sustainable learning ability.

Students' learning mediums

Question 18-19 are related to Students' learning mediums (see Table 11).

Table 11. Results of students' questionnaire (Q18-19)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q18	40%	48.3%	0	11.7%	0
Q19	38.3%	39.2%	0	20%	2.5%

Question 18 and 19 provide us the direct evidence of the immediate washback of the IB CET-4 on students' learning mediums. From the table 4.9, we can see there are respectively 40% and 48.3% of students strongly agree and agree that the IB CET-4 encourages them to develop the habit of screen reading. At the same time, 38.3% and 39.2% of students have the same opinion towards keyboard writing. It suggests the change of students' learning mediums. It also suggests that students' ability of sending and receiving message via the computer-based internet has been improved by the implementation of the IB CET-4.

Based on the above analysis of the results of students' questionnaires, in view of students' perception on the IB CET-4, their learning motivation, learning strategy, learning content, learning activities and learning mediums, we can arrive at the following conclusions:

First, the IB CET-4 has actually exerted its immediate washback on most students. They approve of the general validity and positive washback of such a test. The IB CET-4 stimulates students' motivation of taking advantage of the authentic aural visual materials on line.

Second, a vast majority of students have converted their concentration from learning reading based on vocabulary and grammar to training communicative ability based on some authentic aural and visual materials. It is beneficial for them to communicate effectively in their work and life in the future. Nevertheless, only a few students notice the necessity and importance learning the cultural and background knowledge, which hinders the development of the across-cultural communicative ability.

Third, most students begin to put skill training and strategy developing, instead of knowledge learning, on an important place. In addition, students' learning content changed to be more real-life-oriented or even from the authentic world to adjust in line with the IB CET-4. That indicates that they have had the ability to choose what to learn and how to learn. In other words, students' learning becomes more self-controlled rather than depending on the teacher. However, the value of the vocabulary and grammar tend to be underestimated, which will undoubtedly lead to students' lack of basic linguistic knowledge, such as spelling, sentence forming, and so on.

Fourth, the analysis of learning activities, either in class or out of class, shows that students' learning process has been extended from classroom-based one to classroom and internet-based one. In class, the traditional

vocabulary and grammar learning has given place to discourse understanding and strategy developing, which are guided and organized by the teacher. Students are the real main role in class and participate in class learning more actively. Out of class, the autonomous study has become a regular daily learning activity. With the help of modern technology, students can take the chance to practice different skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. In order to prepare for the presentation task, students have to work together with their partner, which helps to develop a good teamwork spirit.

Finally, students' ability of sending and receiving message via the computer-based internet has been improved by the implementation of the IB CET-4, which contributes to the cultivation of modern talents' multi-literacy.

In a word, the teacher-dependent, in-class learning based learning mode is to give place to teacher-guided, autonomous learning based one. Such a change will undoubtedly encourage the development of students' sustainable learning ability.

3.1.2 Results of Teachers' Questionnaires

Thirty copies of teacher questionnaires were handed out to teachers in Beijing Jiaotong University. Thirty copies were collected and all of them were regarded as valid. The following aspects are conducted to explore the actual washback of the IB CET-4.

Teachers' perception on the IB CET-4

Questions 1-5 and 20 are related to teachers' perception on the IB CET-4. The result can be seen in Table 12.

Table 12. Results of teachers' questionnaire (Q1-Q5, Q20)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q1	20%	63.3%	16.7%	0	0
Q2	0	60%	33.3%	6.7%	0
Q3	16.7%	66.6%	13.3%	3.3%	0
Q4	13.3%	46.7%	16.7%	23.3%	0
Q5	6.7%	60%	20%	13.3%	0
Q20	0	56.7%	16.7%	16.6%	10%

From the returned 30 copies, we found that the vast majority of teachers (20% plus 63.3%) assert that they are aware of the content, format and rating scale of the IB CET-4. Moreover, (16.7% totally and 66.6% to a great extent) of teachers approve of the construct validity of the test, and regard it as a reliable measurement of students' integrated ability. A major part of teachers (13.3% plus 46.7%) thinks that the test encourages them to adopt communicative approaches to improve students' English communicative competence. As for the implementation of the IB CET-4, most teachers (6.7% totally agree and 60% agree) claim that it encourages communicative teaching. Meanwhile, 60% of teachers claim that the IB CET-4 helps to stop the cheating behavior on exams. In general, more than half of students (56.7%) believe that the IB CET-4 has made positive effects on their teaching.

To conclude, teachers' responses are in accordance with students' responses. First, they have been quite familiar with this new test based on internet. Then, they approve of the general validity and positive washback of such a test. In a word, they think the IB CET-4 has actually exerted its immediate washback on their teaching, and the positive washback outweighed the negative one.

Teachers' teaching enthusiasm

Questions 6 is related to teachers' teaching enthusiasm (see Table 13).

Table 13. Results of teachers' questionnaire (Q6)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q6	60%	6.7%	16.7%	16.7%	0

From the data presented, 66.7 percent of teachers believe that the IB CET-4 make them feel interested in teaching by using the resources on line, such as some authentic news materials, TV programs and talk show and so on.

Teachers' teaching strategy

Questions 7-8 are related to teachers' listening teaching strategy (see Table 14).

Table 14. Results of teachers' questionnaire (Q7-8)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q7	30%	46.6 %	16.7%	6.7%	0
Q8	3.3%	13.3%	63.3%	13.4%	6.7%

Question 7 and 8 present us a general picture of teachers' listening teaching strategy. From the table, we can see that a large number of teachers (30% plus 46.6%) agree that the increase of the weighting of the listening part and the parts related to listening in the IB CET-4 make them concentrate more on the English listening training. To be more specific, there are 63.3% of teachers believing that the best way of teaching listening competence is to encourage students to listen to the video, listening and speaking course and the materials in its internet edition. There are respectively 13.3% and 13.4% of teachers usually make use of some native programs, such as VOA or BBC, and some authentic conversations, speeches, and English TV or radio programs.

On the contrary, only 3.3% of teachers would like to use paper-based CET-4 test or simulated test, which indicates that the IB CET-4 listening test has few similarities with the paper-based one. No matter what they prefer to use, the trend is obvious: The vast majority of teachers attach more importance to authentic listening materials.

Questions 9-11 are related to teachers' reading teaching strategy (see Table 15).

Table 15. Results of teachers' questionnaire (Q9-11)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q9	13.3%	40%	26.7%	19%	10%
Q10	3.3%	36.7%	40%	20%	0
Q11	20%	36.7%	26.7%	9.9%	6.7%

Question 9, 10 and 11 are about teachers' reading strategy. As what can be seen in Table 15, more than half of teachers (53.3%) agree that the implementation of the IB CET-4 helps to prevent the teaching of vocabulary and grammar by explaining and translation, because the IB CET-4 has no test items directly checks the vocabulary and grammar knowledge. In addition, vocabulary and grammar learning has become a frequent learning activity for students out of class (see the Analysis of the results of students' questionnaires). Through the class observation, the author also finds that the teacher designs some check and review class activity instead of the traditional explanation and translation. When comparing the different teaching emphases while reading, 40% of teachers regard developing the reading strategy as the first important thing, and a similar large group of teachers (36.7%) looks on discourse analysis as the first teaching objective. Only 3.3% of teachers still stress the teaching of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. To our delight, 20% of teachers notice the importance of developing students' across-cultural communicative competence. Many teachers have realized the necessity of developing the skimming strategy, and help students form a good reading habit of discourse reading. Up to 56.7% of students (20% plus 36.7%) approve of the importance of discourse reading to find the theme and the author's writing purpose.

Question 12-13 are related to teachers' general teaching strategy (see Table 16).

Table 16. Results of teachers' questionnaire (Q12-13)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q12	20%	26.7 %	16.7%	36.6%	0
Q13	30%	33.3%	13.3%	20%	3.4%

Table 16 shows that 36.6% of teachers would not do any simulated test or the previous real test for preparation. Compared with those who would like to (20% plus 26.7%), the number is on the rise. That means more and more teachers' teaching has changed from exam-oriented style to authenticity-oriented style. The reasons may be that the test items of the IB CET-4 do not differ from the authentic materials, which is the main content of the present teaching. In terms of the development of students' autonomous learning ability, most teachers (30% plus 33.3%) realize its significance and necessity. They got rid of the difficult situation in which everything is surrounded by the teacher in class.

Based on the above analysis, the implementation of the IB CET-4 influences teachers' teaching strategy. The most prominent change is that a vast majority of teachers have converted their concentration from teaching reading based on vocabulary and grammar to training listening ability based on some authentic aural and video materials. As for the reading strategy, most teachers began to put the discourse understanding and strategy developing on an important place. In addition, many teachers have noticed the necessity and importance of learning the cultural and background knowledge to develop students' across-cultural communicative ability. When it comes to the preparation for the IB CET-4, it is quite evident that many teachers got rid of the difficult situation in which the teacher surrounds everything. Instead, they try to make students feel less dependent on the teacher by cultivating students' autonomous learning ability.

Teachers' teaching content

Question14-15 are related to teachers' teaching content (see Table 17).

Table 17. Results of teachers' questionnaire (Q14-15)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q14	23.3%	10%	30%	32.5%	4.2
Q15	26.7%	0	36.6%	30%	6.7%

From the data collected (seen from Table 17), two similar large parts of teachers (30% and 32.5% respectively) often use English reading materials (novels, newspaper and magazines) and the video and audio materials (movies, music and news report) as their teaching materials. Quite different from the results of students' questionnaires, only 10% of teachers agree that they use the materials in the internet edition of the college English course frequently. It is because the internet edition of the college English course is the main autonomous learning materials out of class. Teachers take other measures to check the quality of students' learning other than the simple repeat in class. As far as teachers are concerned, the library and the bookshop, as well as the Internet, are still the main source of knowledge. In a word, most of the materials that teachers generally use are from the real world, which proved that teachers' teaching content changed to be more real-life-oriented to adjust in line with the IB CET-4. It is certainly beneficial to develop students' communicative competence.

Teachers' teaching activities

Question16 and 17 are related to teachers' teaching activities (see Table 18 & 19).

Table 18. Results of teachers' questionnaire (Q16)

Class-room teaching activity	A very frequently	B frequently	C average	D not frequently	E rarely
Check and review vocabulary and grammar	40%	33.3%	20%	6.7%	0
Discourse analysis	86.7%	13.3%	0	0	0
Strategy developing	60%	20%	13.3%	6.7%	0
Check students' presentation	73.3%	20%	6.7%	0	0
Organize group discussion	20%	33.3%	13.3%	33.4%	0
Organize debate	0	6.7%	20%	33.3%	40%
Organize role acting	33.3%	46.7%	13.3%	6.7%	0
Organize English speech	0	0	0	26.7%	73.3%

Table 19. Results of teachers' questionnaire (Q17)

Teaching activity based on the internet interactive software	A very frequently	B frequently	C average	D not frequently	E rarely
Release the week learning objective and the related tasks	13.3%	73.3%	6.7%	6.7%	0
Answer questions on line	6.7%	40%	20%	33.3%	0
Supervise students' learning of the internet edition of the English course and offer the individual guidance	86.7%	13.3%	0	0	0
Record students' appointed class and make preparations	13.3%	33.3%	13.3%	40.1%	0
Search for learning materials and upload them on line	10%	46.7%	16.7%	26.6%	0

Question 16 and 17 present us a general picture of teachers' teaching activities either in the classroom or on the internet.

From the table 18, we can see that discourse analysis is conducted the most frequently (86.7% plus 13.3%). All the teachers approve of this teaching activity, which indicates that teachers have formed the teaching habit of analyzing texts from the angle of the whole context instead of cutting it into small parts of vocabulary and grammar. It is a more communicative approach and beneficial for the development of students' reading skills. The second most frequent teaching activity (73.3% plus 20%) in class is to check students' presentation. The third one (33.3% plus 46.7%) is organizing the role acting. As what has been mentioned in the analysis of the results of students' questionnaires, English presentation (in the Reading, writing and translating class) and role acting (in the video, listening and speaking class) have become their in-class daily routine, which occupy certain part of students' final grades. It's quite evident and the English class attaches more and more importance to developing students' listening and speaking ability. Strategy developing runs the fourth place. A majority of teachers (60% very frequently and 20% frequently) believe that cultivating student's strategy of learning, including listening strategy, reading strategy, translating strategy and writing strategy, is more important than teaching them some language knowledge. It is like the old saying goes: "Give a man a fish, and you have fed him today; Teach a man to fish, and you have fed him for a lifetime." Strategy developing is good for the promotion of one's sustainable learning ability. In addition, 40% and 33.3% of teachers strongly support checking and reviewing vocabulary and grammar knowledge in class. Via unstructured interview, most teachers encourage students to learning vocabulary by themselves with their own self-made vocabulary log. However, checking and reviewing how well students learn is still indispensable. There are respectively 20% and 33.3% of teachers regard group discussion as a frequent class activity. On the contrary, debate and speech are rarely

organized. Even though, the trend is obvious: the college English class has put more and more emphasis on developing students' communicative competence, especially the listening and speaking ability; students have become the center of class activities instead of the teacher.

From the table 19, we can see that the most frequent activity of teachers (86.7% plus 13.3%) on the interactive internet teaching platform is to supervise students' learning of the internet edition of the English course and offer the individual guidance. As what has been mentioned in the analysis of the results of students' questionnaires, the internet edition of the college English course has become a regular daily assignment for students, which occupy certain part of their final grades. Via unstructured interview, teachers widely admit that students' autonomous learning on line seems to be more efficient with regular supervision. The second frequent activity in teachers' opinions (13.3% plus 73.3%) is releasing the week learning objective and the related tasks, which shows that most teachers are playing the role of a guide instead of a spoon feeder. They help students to schedule and control the pace of autonomous study. In addition, 10% and 46.7% of teachers frequently search for learning materials and upload them on line, which is the main source of materials for students' self-study on line. As for answering questions on line and preparing for students' appointed class, less than half of teachers have done that frequently. The reason for this may be that it costs too much energy and time. Most teachers would rather invest more in designing class activity, writing academic papers, etc.

To conclude, teachers' teaching activities, either in classrooms or on the internet, are the best evidence of their teaching mode. Based on the above analysis, it is not hard to find that currently, teachers are playing a role as a guide instead of a controller. Their teaching process has been extended from classroom-based one to classroom and internet-based one. That means the teacher-centered, classroom-based teaching mode is to give place to students-centered, classroom and internet-based one. Such a change also encourages the development of students' sustainable learning ability.

Teachers' opinions on students' learning mediums

Question 18-19 are related to teachers' opinions on students' learning mediums (see Table 20).

Table 20. Results of teachers' questionnaire (Q18-19)

Questions	A	B	C	D	E
Q18	16.7%	43.3%	23.3%	16.7%	0
Q19	13.3%	36.7%	20%	23.3%	6.7%

From the table 20, we can see there are respectively 16.7% and 43.3% of teachers strongly believe and believe that the IB CET-4 encourages students to develop the habit of screen reading. At the same time, 13.3% and 36.7% of teachers think in the same way towards students' habit of keyboard writing. The numbers are much lower than those of students who feel positive about screen reading and keyboard writing. It indicates that teachers are still observing the change of students' learning mediums.

Based on the above analysis of the results of teachers' questionnaires, in view of teachers' perception on the IB CET-4, their teaching enthusiasm, teaching strategy, teaching content, teaching activities and their opinions on students' learning mediums, we can arrive at the following conclusions:

First, the IB CET-4 has actually exerted its immediate washback on most teachers. Like their students, they approve of the general validity and positive washback of such a test. The IB CET-4 stimulates teachers' enthusiasm on taking advantage of the authentic aural visual materials on line.

Second, a majority of teachers have converted their concentration from teaching reading based on vocabulary and grammar to training students' communicative ability based on some authentic aural and visual materials. In addition, more than half of teachers have noticed the necessity and importance teaching the cultural and background knowledge, which helps to develop students' cross-cultural communicative ability.

Third, most teachers put strategy developing on an important place instead of knowledge learning. In addition, teachers' teaching content seems to be more real-life-oriented to adjust in line with the IB CET-4. That indicates that teachers are playing an important role of a guide instead of a controller or a spoon-feeder. In other words, teachers' teaching becomes more student-centered rather than teacher-centered.

Finally, the analysis of teaching activities, either in class or on the internet, shows that teachers' teaching process has been extended from classroom-based one to classroom and internet-based one. Teachers widely admit that

students' autonomous learning on line seems to be more efficient with regular supervision. Therefore, they frequently supervise students' learning of the internet edition of the English course and offer the individual guidance, help students to schedule and control the pace of autonomous study.

In a word, the teacher-centered, classroom-based teaching mode is to give place to students-centered, classroom and internet-based one. Such a change also encourages the development of students' sustainable learning ability.

3.1.3 Conclusion of the Analysis of Questionnaires

To conclude, from the analysis on the questionnaires, we may find that the IB CET-4 affects both teachers and students, and many positive washback are elicited. First, college English teaching and learning concentrates more on learners' communicative competence, especially listening and speaking ability. Second, the teacher-centered, classroom-based teaching mode is to give place to students-centered, classroom and internet-based one. Third, the teacher-depending, in-class learning based learning mode is to give place to teacher-guided, autonomous learning based one. The trend is obvious: Influenced by the test, both CE teaching and learning are more or less changing to cultivate learners' multi-literacy, sustainable learning ability and cross-cultural communicative ability.

3.2 Results of Classroom Observation

Classroom observation is the most direct and reliable way of witnessing teachers' teaching and students' learning in class. Another purpose is to check whether teachers and students' replies to the questionnaire are in agreement with their actual actions. From April to June in 2010, two rounds of class observation were conducted in the case university. Each round involved the same four teachers' two class periods (90 minutes). All the teachers are labeled A, B, C and D for privacy. The basic information can be seen in Table 21.

Table 21. The basic information of teachers

Subject	A	B	C	D
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	32	32	43	43
Teaching years	6	5	10	3
Degree	Master	Master	Master	PhD.
Grade	One	Two	Two	Two
Teaching materials	The New Era Interactive College English			
Teaching instruments	Multimedia	Multimedia	Multimedia	Multimedia

The college English teaching in the case university is usually conducted based on teachers' collective discussion in order to improve efficiency and keep the similar teaching pace. So the four teachers have something in common in terms of the teaching procedure, class activity design and the teaching materials (teaching plans and PPT).

First, the teaching of each unit is divided in to three phases: before class, in class and after class. All the teachers provide the before-class and after-class learning materials on line. The purpose is to make sure that students can well prepare for the class before they come into the classroom and well consolidate what they learn after they get out of the classroom. Another purpose is to help students develop a good study habit. The preview materials that teachers offer are mainly about the background reading materials and language points concerning the text. The review materials are about the answer key to the exercises after the text and self-assessment recording. Of course, students are supposed to finish the learning of the related internet edition. The in-class teaching is composed of four parts: check and review of the vocabulary and grammar knowledge; students' presentation on the unit topic; the discourse analysis of the text; reading and writing strategy (the facts of the related strategy can be found in the text). To sum up, teachers have attached great importance to training learners' integrative English proficiency and sustainable learning ability.

Secondly, a variety of classroom activities is designed to make the class learning efficient and interesting. The

frequent presentation, group discussion, and role-play (on the video, listening and speaking class) can offer learners opportunities to promote their communicative language ability. Students are the center of class. However, not all the students can participate in these activities well, even though in the compulsory activity like presentation. In addition, the check and review part exposes that about one third of students still have trouble learning and mastering the vocabulary and grammar knowledge. That means, teachers need to work out more feasible and favorable plans to deal with it.

Finally, as for the teaching materials, authentic materials are commonly used in the classroom, such as CNN news, the video of job interview, etc. It inevitably stimulates learners' interests. Nearly all the materials are closely related with the content of textbook.

Despite the similarities, many differences were also detected in terms of the actual performance of students' presentation and teachers' specific methods for strategy developing.

First, the actual performance of students' presentation differs greatly. The intention of designing presentation is to offer a precious chance to students to practice their oral English and develop their communicative and cooperative ability. At the same time, it also helps them to develop their strategy of convincing and demonstrating. But the actual situation differs greatly. In Teacher A's class, students feel quite relaxed, and positive about learning. They do very creatively in their presentation on the topic of A World of Fast Food. Pictures, video materials, posters are widely and properly used, which make their performance more convincing and impressive. The group search for their materials all by themselves and most of the materials come from the real world. They video the whole process of street interview for different people's different opinions on fast food, even some of the interviewee are foreigners. Their language is well prepared, presentation very logical and coherent, teamwork well. In addition, the audience is involved in their argument. It seems that they have a good understanding of the text entitled A World of Fast Food. It really surprises the present author that students' communicative competence are completely demonstrated and developed in such a short period of 20 minutes. However, In Teach C's class (the same unit), it feels more quiet and indifferent. Students behave seriously in their presentation. Each member reads his or her script word for word. Although they show their PPT too with some pictures, it seems that they themselves do not make their ideas clearly to understand. The language needs to be improved a lot. While they do the presentation, some of the audience seems to be distracted from the topic. After their performance, Teacher C asks about two students' comments on the presentation and offers a grade. When Teacher C begins her next step of check and review, those absent-minded students get back to the text. It is obvious that the students in Teacher C's class do not understand and support the activity of doing presentation. They just do what they have to do, which is a waste of time with no positive effects. Therefore, class activity design is important, but obtaining the intended effect is more important. Even though teachers know the importance of developing students' communicative ability due to the implementation of the IB CET-4, the specific methods still need to be improved.

Secondly, in the course of strategy developing (reading and writing), teachers behave differently, which makes a big difference. Teacher D not only introduces what the strategy is, but also shows examples of how to use such a strategy, and at last create an opportunity for students to use or experience it by doing the related reading or writing. However, Teacher B merely introduces the specific strategy and gives many examples. As a result, students passively input some principles and examples and can hardly remember or use it the next day.

In short, classroom observation further confirms the belief that the IB CET4 does exert some influences on in-class teaching and learning. For one thing, all of the four teachers' classes attach importance to developing students' communicative ability, learning strategy, cooperative ability, and across-cultural ability, only the actual effects differ. With time passes, the current teaching and learning will be better and better. For another, students begin to have the ability to study by themselves. The outstanding group's presentation makes us confident in a prosperous future of college English teaching. What they do in the preparation for their presentation proves that they can accomplish the challenging tasks without depending on the teacher. Students are turning to be the center of English class.

3.3 Results of Unstructured Interview

Unstructured interview is conducted to help interpret data collected in the questionnaire survey. Eight students from Teacher A, B, C and D's classes (two for each class), and two teachers (Teach A and B) attend the interview. Through the interview, they expressed both positive feedback and negative feedback towards the implementation of the IB CET-4.

In terms of the positive side, both teachers and students claimed that they have recognized the CET-4 further revision—the implementation of the IB CET-4, and both of them think it necessary and important to put

developing the communicative competence in the first place. One girl student says, “There are no test items concerning vocabulary and grammar directly and merely. All I meet is something concerning a certain context, of either listening or reading.” They also notice that all the test materials come from the authentic world, which encourage them to participate more actively in the learning of the internet-edition of the video, listening and speaking course. As Teacher B says, “The present IB CET-4 reflects the authentic uses of English. It is reasonable for a language test.” “It can help to direct students’ attention from the linguistic knowledge to the practical skills. The language in the test materials is quite new, which conveys the message of the new era. Practicing the language of the modern world helps to improve their competition in the international talents market.” What’s more, when asked the best way of learning a language, teachers and students agree to each other again. The answer is to practice instead of to memorize. One student mentions, “learning the internet edition of college English video, listening and speaking is similar to attending the IB CET-4. While seeing a period of video material, answering questions based on the understanding of the video, repeating sentences, I feel immersed in an English world. It feels good. I like it”. At last, students confess that with the growth of modern technology, they have been used to using the computer and internet to search for, send off or receive information. The implementation of the IB CET-4 enhances their determination to practice screen reading and keyboard writing, which is beneficial to fulfill themselves with multi-literacy.

In terms of the negative side, students say that they have much pressure, especially for those who have never received regular training of listening and speaking in high school and never got the chance of using computers due to the shortage of related equipment. One of the students says, “It is so difficult, I don’t know how to face it. When I do the repeating exercise in the internet course, even though I caught it very clearly word for word, I cannot pass the judgment of the system. I come from Hubei Province.” Another student says, “We invest too much energy, time and passion in learning English, is it really worthy? What if we had no chances to use it after graduation?” Secondly, facing the huge testing and teaching innovations, many learners are still not used to it. “I am not willing to conduct autonomous learning. I hate the so-called communicative approach. I like to be fed by teachers’ spoon.” Teach C also believes that for the top and diligent students, autonomous learning on line is efficient and rewarding; while for those who lack the basic linguistic knowledge and self-control, autonomous learning seems to be wasteful. At last, Teachers generally express their worries about students’ spelling ability and basic grammatical knowledge. The current teaching and learning attach great importance to students’ learning strategy as well as communicative competence, especially listening and speaking; and ignore the spelling practice and some basic grammatical knowledge.

To summarize, the unstructured interview confirms that the IB CET-4 has produced immediate washback on both teaching and learning. Teachers pay more attention to developing students’ learning strategy, communicative competence and autonomous learning ability. Students also notice the innovation of college English teaching and testing. Although some students are still not accustomed to the change, and another part of students feel stressed, most students are positive about it. In a word, data from interview has further supplemented research results in questionnaire and classroom observation.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

4.1 Summary

The IB CET-4 was first on trial in 2008. By Jun. 21st, 2009, the IB CET-4 (still on trial) has been extended to more than 1000 universities and colleges. Remarkable changes have been achieved in input materials, test format and test medium. Why does the Ministry of Education support and enhance the implementation the IB CET-4? Whether do such changes influence teachers’ teaching and students’ learning as is intended? Based on Bailey’s basic model of washback, the present study is designed to explore both the intended and actual washback of the IB CET-4. Document analysis, questionnaires, class observation and unstructured interview were adopted as the research methods. The major findings are briefly summarized to answer the three research questions:

1) What is the actual washback of the IB CET-4?

From the perspective of students, the IB CET-4 has actually exerted more positive than negative washback on them. The teacher-depending, in-class learning based learning mode is to give place to teacher-guided, autonomous learning based one. Such a change will undoubtedly encourage the development of students’ sustainable learning ability.

First, the IB CET-4 stimulates students’ motivation of taking advantage of the authentic aural visual materials on line. Second, a vast majority of students have converted their concentration from learning reading based on vocabulary and grammar to training communicative ability based on some authentic aural and visual materials. Nevertheless, only a few students notice the necessity and importance learning the cultural and background

knowledge, which hinders the development of the across-cultural communicative ability. Third, most students begin to put skill training and strategy developing, instead of knowledge learning, on an important place. In addition, students' learning becomes more self-controlled rather than depending on the teacher. However, the value of the vocabulary and grammar tend to be underestimated, which will undoubtedly lead to students' lack of basic linguistic knowledge, such as spelling, sentence forming, and so on.

Fourth, the analysis of learning activities, either in class or out of class, shows that students' learning process has been extended from classroom-based one to classroom and internet-based one.

Finally, students' ability of sending and receiving message via the computer-based internet has been improved by the implementation of the IB CET-4, which contributes to the cultivation of modern talents' multi-literacy.

From the perspective of teachers, the teacher-centered, classroom-based teaching mode is to give place to students-centered, classroom and internet-based one. Such a change also encourages the development of students' sustainable learning ability.

First, most teachers approve of the general validity and positive washback of the IB CET-4 which stimulates teachers' enthusiasm on taking advantage of the authentic aural visual materials on line. Second, a majority of teachers have converted their concentration from teaching reading based on vocabulary and grammar to training students' communicative ability based on some authentic aural and visual materials. Third, most teachers put strategy developing on an important place instead of knowledge teaching. That indicates that teachers are playing an important role of a guide instead of a controller or a spoon-feeder. In other words, teachers' teaching becomes more student-centered rather than teacher-centered. Finally, the analysis of teaching activities, either in class or on the internet, shows that teachers' teaching process has been extended from classroom-based one to classroom and internet-based one. Teachers widely admit that students' autonomous learning on line seems to be more efficient with regular supervision.

2) What are the matches and mismatches between the test constructors' intentions and the actual washback of the IB CET-4?

With respect to the perception of the IB CET-4, college English teachers and students have perfectly achieved test constructors' intention, for they have all realized the importance of communicative competence, especially listening and speaking.

As for the teaching and learning mode, test constructors' intention has been partly achieved. Teachers' teaching procedure, teaching strategy and class activity design indicate that they try to convert the teacher-centered, classroom-based teaching mode into the students-centered, classroom and internet-based one. However, in view of various teaching style and different ability to organize and control classroom teaching, the results differ. Students' learning activities in class and out of class, learning strategy and learning mediums demonstrate that nearly half students are guided to get rid of the teacher-depending, in-class learning based learning mode and start a teacher-guided, autonomous learning based one. But the other half is not accustomed to the change. They would rather be fed by teachers than learn at their own pace. The intensity of washback effects of the new CET4 are various on different participants.

In terms of cultivating learners' multi-literacy, sustainable learning ability and cross-cultural communicative ability, the results are far from satisfactory with anticipated washback effects designed by test constructors. As what is mentioned above, nearly half students find it hard to organize various learning materials, make their own learning schedule and follow the schedule strictly. Instead, they like the spoon-feeding teaching method. Although a large majority of students are training their screen reading and keyboard writing to improve multi-literacy, they are too busy practicing their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills to concentrate on culture diversity.

4.2 Limitations and Suggestions

It is impossible to make a research perfect at the first attempt. Despite the author's great efforts to conduct the research scientifically and systematically, the present study still has some limitations.

First, given the limited time, funds, and manpower, the investigation is only conducted in one university. And Beijing Jiaotong University is the model University for conducting internet autonomous learning, which has the reliable financial supports and the advanced modern technology devices. The current teaching and learning situation is much better than others. Therefore, this study has its limitation in universality.

Second, the intentions of test constructors are inferred from some public papers and officials' public speech rather than in-depth interview for test constructors.

Third, due to the limitation of the researcher's knowledge and capacity, the discussion on the results of questionnaire, class observation and interview is far from thorough enough.

Since CET-4 is a large-scale national examination, which has great effect on both CE teaching and learning, more researches are needed to study its positive and negative washback. Thus, CET-4 can serve well as a measurement of college students' English proficiency and a stimulus to encourage communicative teaching and learning. As a result, the efficiency of CE teaching and learning can be improved. Therefore, more empirical studies on the washback of CET are needed to have more reliable and substantial evidence for improvement of the innovation of the testing.

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Appendix

1. The Questionnaire of the IB CET-4 Washback for Students

Q1: I am aware of the content, format and rating scale of the IB CET-4.

- A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know D. Disagree E. Totally disagree

Q2: To what extent can the IB CET-4 stop the cheating behavior on exams?

- A. Totally B To a great extent C. To an average extent D To some extent E. Totally not

Q3: To what extent does the IB CET-4 objectively and actually reflect my integrated English competence?

- A. Totally B To a great extent C. To an average extent D To some extent E. Totally not

Q4: To what extent does the IB CET-4 encourage me to improve my English communicative competence?

- A. Totally B To a great extent C. To an average extent D To some extent E. Totally not

Q5: I support the implementation of the IB CET-4.

- A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know D. Disagree E. Totally disagree

Q 6: To what extent does the IB CET-4 stimulate my interest and enthusiasm of learning by using the internet resources?

- A. Totally B. To a great extent C. To an average extent D To some extent E. Totally not

Q7: The increase of the weighting of the parts concerning listening in the IB CET-4 led me to emphasis more on the training of listening and speaking ability.

- A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know D. Disagree E. Totally disagree

Q8: I believe that the most effective way of improving my English listening competence is to _____.

- A. Use paper-based CET-4 test or simulated test in class
 B. Listen to some authentic programs, such as VOA or BBC, etc.
 C. Use textbooks of the video, listening and speaking course and the materials in its internet edition.
 D. Listen to conversations, speeches, and English TV or radio programs
 E. others

Q9: To what extent does the implementation of the IB CET-4 help to prevent the behavior of memorizing vocabulary and grammar forcedly?

- A. Totally B. To a great extent C. To an average extent D. To some extent E. Totally not

Q10: While learning a new reading passage, I would like to concentrate on _____.

- A. The vocabulary and grammar knowledge
 B. The understanding on the discourse level
 C. The developing of reading strategy
 D. The understanding of cultural and background knowledge
 E. Others

Q11: Before reading in detail, I usually skim the whole passage first to identify the theme and the author's purpose.

- A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know D. Disagree E. Totally disagree

Q12: While practicing the oral English, I would learn systematically how to pronounce each phoneme, especially the explodent and link phonemes.

- A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know D. Disagree E. Totally disagree

Q13: While practicing writing, I would rather concentrate on the structure of each paragraph as well as the whole essay other than the expression and sentence writing.

- A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know D. Disagree E. Totally disagree

Q14: Except the textbooks, the materials that I frequently use are _____.

- A. Teachers' books companied by the textbooks and the audio-edition of the text

- B. The internet edition of the college English course
 C. English reading materials (novels, newspaper and magazines)
 D. The video and audio materials (movies, music and news report)
 E. Others

Q15: Except the teacher, my English learning materials are from _____.

- A. The bookshop B. TV C. Internet D. The library E. Others

Q16: In my English class, I get involved into the following activities _____.

Class-room activity A very frequently B frequently C average D not frequently E rarely

Vocabulary and Grammar learning

Discourse understanding

Strategy developing

English presentation

Group discussion

Debate

Role acting

English speech

Q17: In my leisure time, I get involved into the following activities _____.

Outside-classroom activity A very frequently B frequently C average D not frequently E rarely

Study vocabulary and grammar by oneself

Learn the internet edition of the college English course

Search for materials online

Group study (such as prepare for the presentation)

Do the paper-based simulated CET-4 papers

Write an English journal

Memorize vocabulary via the CET-4 vocabulary book

Read and recite loudly the English essay outside

Practice oral English in the English Corner

Q18: The implementation of the IB CET-4 encourages students to adapt themselves to screen reading.

- A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know D. Disagree E. Totally disagree

Q19: The implementation of the IB CET-4 encourages students to adapt themselves to keyboard writing.

- A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know D. Disagree E. Totally disagree

Q20: The washback of the IB CET-4 on my daily learning is _____.

- A. Totally positive
 B. More positive than negative

- C. More negative than positive
- D. Totally negative
- E. zero

2. *The Questionnaire of the IB CET-4 Washback for Teachers*

Q1: I am aware of the content, format and rating scale of the IB CET-4.

- A. Totally agree
- B. Agree
- C. I don't know
- D. Disagree
- E. Totally disagree

Q2: To what extent can the IB CET-4 stop the cheating behavior on exams?

- A. Totally
- B. To a great extent
- C. To an average extent
- D. To some extent
- E. Totally not

Q3: To what extent does the IB CET-4 objectively and actually reflect students' integrated English competence?

- A. Totally
- B. To a great extent
- C. To an average extent
- D. To some extent
- E. Totally not

Q4: To what extent does the IB CET-4 encourage me to adopt the communicative approach to improve students' English communicative competence?

- A. Totally
- B. To a great extent
- C. To an average extent
- D. To some extent
- E. Totally not

Q5: I support the implementation of the IB CET-4.

- A. Totally agree
- B. Agree
- C. I don't know
- D. Disagree
- E. Totally disagree

Q6: To what extent does the IB CET-4 stimulate my interest and enthusiasm of teaching by using the internet resources?

- A. Totally
- B. To a great extent
- C. To an average extent
- D. To some extent
- E. Totally not

Q7: The increase of the weighting of the parts concerning listening in the IB CET-4 led me to more emphasis on the training of students' video, listening and oral ability.

- A. Totally agree
- B. Agree
- C. I don't know
- D. Disagree
- E. Totally disagree

Q8: I believe that the most effective way of training English listening competence is to _____.

- A. Use paper-based CET-4 test or simulated test in class
- B. Listen to some native programs, such as VOA or BBC, etc.
- C. Use textbooks of the video, listening and speaking course and the materials in its internet edition.
- D. Listen to conversations, speeches, and English TV or radio programs
- E. others

Q9: To what extent does the implementation of the IB CET-4 help to prevent teaching the vocabulary and grammar knowledge by explaining and translation?

- A. Totally
- B. To a great extent
- C. To an average extent
- D. To some extent
- E. Totally not

Q10: While teaching a new reading passage, I would like to concentrate on _____.

- A. The vocabulary and grammar knowledge
- B. The understanding on the discourse level
- C. The developing of reading strategy
- D. The understanding of cultural and background knowledge
- E. Others

Q11: Before reading in detail, I usually advise students to skim the whole passage first to identify the theme and the author's purpose.

- A. Totally agree
- B. Agree
- C. I don't know
- D. Disagree
- E. Totally disagree

Q12: Before the IB CET-4, I would prepare students for the test in class by drilling the same or similar test items to the previous real IB CET-4.

- A. Totally agree
- B. Agree
- C. I don't know
- D. Disagree
- E. Totally disagree

Q13: My English class has become students-centered, for I value the development of students' autonomous learning ability greatly.

A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know D. Disagree E. Totally disagree

Q14: Except the textbooks, the materials that I frequently use as teaching materials are _____.

- A. Teachers' books companied by the textbooks and the audio-edition of the text
- B. The internet edition of the college English course
- C. English reading materials (novels, newspaper and magazines)
- D. The video and audio materials (movies, music and news report)
- E. Others

Q15: My English teaching materials are mainly from _____.

- A. The bookshop B. TV C. Internet D. The library E. Others

Q16: In my teaching practice, I impliment the following classroom activities _____.

Class-room teaching activity	A very frequently	B frequently	C average	D not frequently	E rarely
Check and review vocabulary and grammar					
Discourse analysis					
Strategy developing					
Check students' presentation					
Organize group discussion					
Organize debate					
Organize role acting					
Organize English speech					

Q17: Using the online learning system, I impliment the following activities _____.

Teaching activity based on the internet interactive software	A very frequently	B frequently	C average	D not frequently	E rarely
Release the week learning objective and the related tasks					
Answer questions on line					
Supervise students' learning of the internet edition of the English course and offer the individual guidance					
Record students' appointed class and make preparations					
Search for learning materials and upload them on line					

Q18: I believe that the implementation of the IB CET-4 encourages students to adapt themselves to screen reading.

- A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know C. Disagree D. Totally disagree

Q19: I believe that the implementation of the IB CET-4 encourages students to adapt themselves to keyboard writing.

- A. Totally agree B. Agree C. I don't know C. Disagree D. Totally disagree

Q20: The washback of the IB CET-4 on my teaching is _____.

- A. Totally positive
- B. More positive than negative

- C. More negative than positive
- D. Totally negative
- E. zero

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