

## Analysis of CET 4 Question Types and Their Coping Strategies

### --Take CET4 (2019.12 Set 1) as An Example

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#### Abstract

**The paper takes CET 4 (2019. 12 Set 1) as an example to analyze the current CET 4 question types and their coping strategies. The main features of each question type and corresponding suggestions are offered. Through the analysis, CET 4 takers can get a better understanding of CET 4 question types and acquire relevant examination skills.**

#### Keywords

**CET 4, Question types, Coping strategies.**

#### 1. Introduction

CET 4 question types have undergone great changes in the past few years, aiming to better evaluate college students' comprehensive language abilities and cross-cultural communication abilities. The specific changes include the substitution of "short conversations" and "spot dictation" for "news reports" in the listening comprehension part, the shift from multiple choice question type to information matching question type in the reading comprehension part and the substitution of sentence translation for paragraph translation in the translation part. The changes in question types, which are characterized by their increasing difficulty and their increasing incorporation into Chinese culture and nationwide and worldwide current affairs, pose great challenges to CET 4 participants. Therefore, it is necessary to provide some insights into the question types, especially the new ones in CET 4 and their coping strategies so that students can get better prepared for the test.

#### 2. Body

##### 2.1 Traditional Question Types: Insights and Coping Strategies

##### 2.1.1 "Writing": Insights and Coping Strategies

For the writing part, students are required to write a short essay of no less than 120 words within 30 minutes. The writing task for CET4 (2019.12 Set 1) requires students to write a letter, recommending to their foreign friends a university for studying Chinese. So CET 4 writings are not all argumentative. In recent years there has been an occasional shift from argument writing to practical writing, which in fact decreases difficulty and increases writability. For this piece of writing, students must first of all get themselves familiar with the format of a typical English letter which may at least include heading, salutation, body of the letter, complimentary close and signature. Like other writing assignments, students can divide this piece of writing into three paragraphs. In the first paragraph, students had better directly offer the foreign friend the university for studying Chinese. Students had better not recommend a virtual online university for the friend, as such recommendation runs the risk of misinterpreting the directions. In the second paragraph, students should give their reasons for the choice of the very university, which may include the fabulous teaching faculty and various activities available. In the last paragraph, students should get back to the point, suggesting the foreign friend to consider his or her recommendation or giving some wishes and encouragements to the foreign friend. When giving reasons in the second paragraph, students can always turn to the stereotyped model sentences or transitional words for assistance which they have prepared in advance. Therefore, for the writing part, the preparation of some model sentences is of vital importance.

### **2.1.2 “Vocabulary Check” in the Reading Comprehension Part: Insights and Coping Strategies**

The “Vocabulary Check” of section A Reading Comprehension part, which proves to be the most difficult objective question type in CET 4 for most students, requires students to fill in the blanks by choosing ten words or phrases out of the fifteen offered. It is highly advisable that students handle this question type after they have finished all the other question types for its difficulty and relatively small proportion accounting for the total score. To do this part well, students should bear two things in mind: one is the importance of thorough and detailed understanding of the paragraph provided, the other being the grammatical correctness, especially the syntactical functions and morphological features of a certain word that help to determine a part of speech. To handle “Vocabulary Check” in CET4 (2019.12 Set 1), students are supposed to classify the words into four major categories of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Nouns can be subdivided into nouns in singular forms and those in plural forms. Verbs can also be subdivided based on their tenses or persons. Take the last blank for example, the adjective “safe” is followed by the be verb “were”, so an adverb must be inserted in between to make the involved sentence grammatically acceptable. Then the candidates can be narrowed down to the following three words “directly”, “largely” and “vividly”. Based on the context, the writer wants to express the idea that only those who are very close to the individual with a flue have great chances of getting infected. “But” is a cue transition word that indicates other passengers on board are basically safe. Therefore, judging from both the context and grammar, “largely” should be the appropriate choice for the blank.

### **2.1.3 “Reading in Depth” in the Reading Comprehension Part: Insights and Coping Strategies**

“Reading in Depth” of section C Reading Comprehension part checks students’ accurate understanding of the two given passages. Thus more often than not, the key to this question type is the location of the needed information in a passage that resembles the information offered in one of the four choices. As the passages for this part are not quite long, students have enough time to read word by word to get the needed information and strive to comprehend it. Take question 2 in passage 1 of section C Reading Comprehension for example, students should first locate the following information: “Opponents to the measure, including soda lobbyists, made sharp criticisms and a promise to challenge the tax in court.” and “But most importantly, it is against the law. So we will side with the majority of the people of Philadelphia who oppose this tax and take legal action to stop it.” The information in the quotation marks resembles that of choice C (Take legal action against it), so the right answer is C.

## **2.2 New Question Types: Insights and Coping Strategies**

### **2.2.1 “News Reports” in the Listening Comprehension Part: Insights and Coping Strategies**

“News reports” of section A Listening Comprehension part is a most challenging task for many students. In the current CET 4, a news report is spoken only once, and some of the news is difficult to comprehend for the relatively specialized knowledge in a certain field. In the long run, it is a very good habit for students to listen to English news reports on a daily basis. With the help of caption, they may dictate and read out loud after listening to a piece of news several times. Through constant practice, students are sure to make remarkable progress in “listening to news”. To cope with CET 4 news reports, students may as well adopt the following skills on the spot. Before listening, students should make good use of the spared time to look through the four choices offered to get clues about the main idea of the news report. In addition, students should realize that a news report usually consists of the six elements of “who”, “what”, “when”, “where”, “why” and “how” so that they can pay more attention to the key information in the type of news reports that concern current situations or issues. They should also realize that the core information for a piece of news is usually contained in the first sentence. This is what teacher Qiao Jing describes as “inverted pyramids” structure for the composition of a news report---The most important information comes first. [1] Last but not least, students should realize that for a news report, the answer to a certain question may be mentioned more than once, usually in the form of a thesis statement followed by specific details. For example, in the first piece of news of section A Listening Comprehension in CET4 (2019.12 Set 1), the first

question “What happened in New York’s Prospect Park on Tuesday?” is easy enough for most students to follow. The first sentence of the news report “New York city police captured a cow on the loose in Prospect Park on Tuesday.” offers the very core information of the news which includes “who”, “what”, “where” and “when”. By paying attention to the core information in the first sentence, students will find it easy to single out the right answer out of the four choices.

### **2.2.2 “Information Matching” in the Reading Comprehension Part: Insights and Coping Strategies**

“Information Matching” of section B Reading Comprehension is a relatively new question type which tests students’ abilities to locate the needed information and the abilities to paraphrase based on the overall understanding of the given passage. In their everyday study, students should cultivate the habit of reading extensively on a daily basis. They should also accumulate their vocabulary which after all is the basis of English reading.[2] Students’ ability to read at a fast speed is of vital importance for this part, as it is a time-consuming job for most exam takers, and the time saved from this part can be used to handle the other parts. To save the precious time, students may use the reading skills of skimming and scanning. What is more important, they are expected to preview the ten statements before they come to the reading of the passage and mark the signal cue words such as a person’s name, the name of a place etc. in the ten statements when necessary. Students should pay attention that they may choose a paragraph more than once. Take statement number 40 (Airplanes will increasingly become the chief means of transportation, according to a professor.) for instance, in paragraph B, “a professor” talks about the changes in terms of transportation from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The professor’s comment “the 21<sup>st</sup> century will increasingly be an aviation century, as the globe becomes increasingly connected by air,” is an equivalent of the statement in meaning.

### **2.2.3 “Translation”: Insights and Coping Strategies**

The translation part is a newly-developed question type aiming to test students’ language abilities as well as their culture-transmitting abilities. Since the translation part in CET 4 does not aim to test students’ professional knowledge in a specialized field, students will not have trouble comprehending the given information.[3] For this part, students are required to translate a paragraph in Chinese, which is usually about various aspects of Chinese society, into English. Ideally, in their daily learning, students should read materials concerning Chinese society on a regular basis. Also, they are supposed to master in advance basic translation skills such as repetition, amplification, deletion, conversion, inversion, division, negation and change of voice. To deal with this question type during the exam, students should first have a thorough understanding of the original text, and then try to think out the most appropriate English equivalents for the Chinese expressions. Subsequently, students may connect the parts to make a full sentence which should be grammatically correct and show coherence and logic. Take the first sentence in “Translation” of Part IV as an example, students should be familiar with the expression “attach (great) importance to”. Or at least they should bear some substitutes such as “value”, “pay attention to” etc. in mind. With the basic meaning units “attach importance to”, “family” and “education” in mind, students then have to organize the “parts” to form a grammatically acceptable sentence.

## **3. Conclusion**

The paper introduces CET 4 traditional question types of “Writing”, “Vocabulary Check” in section A Reading Comprehension part and “Reading in Depth” in section C Reading Comprehension part as well as new question types of “News Report” in Section A Listening Comprehension part, “Information Matching” in Section B Reading Comprehension part and “Translation”. After the introduction, the paper continues to give some coping strategies both before and during the test. Through the analysis of CET 4 question types and their coping strategies, students can get a better understanding of CET 4 question types and acquire relevant examination skills.

## References

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