UNIT

1

Languages:
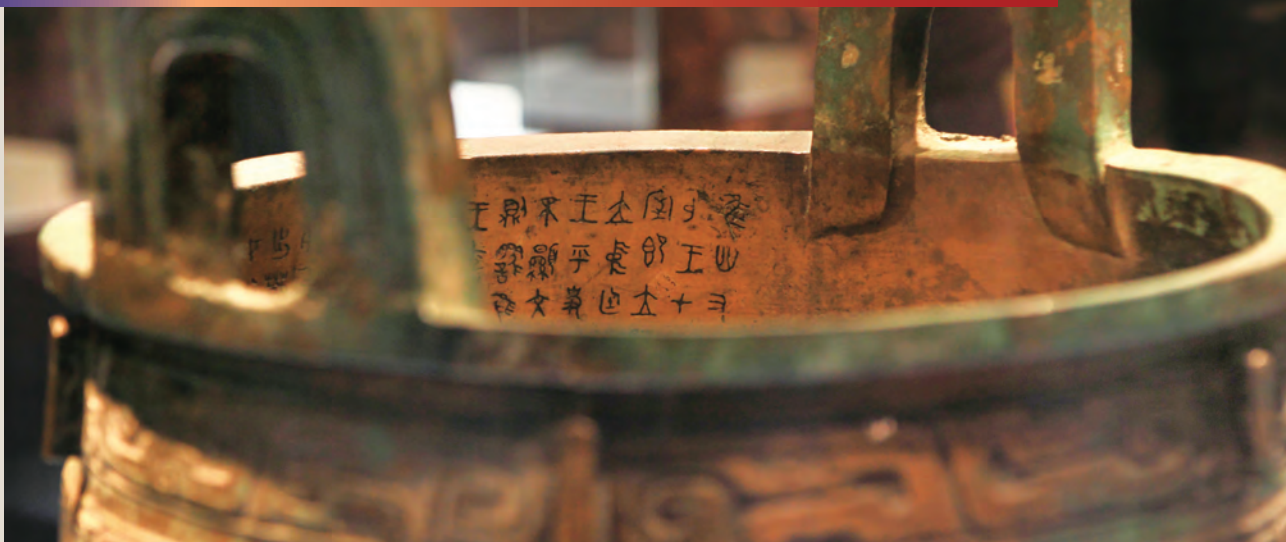# Chinese vs English
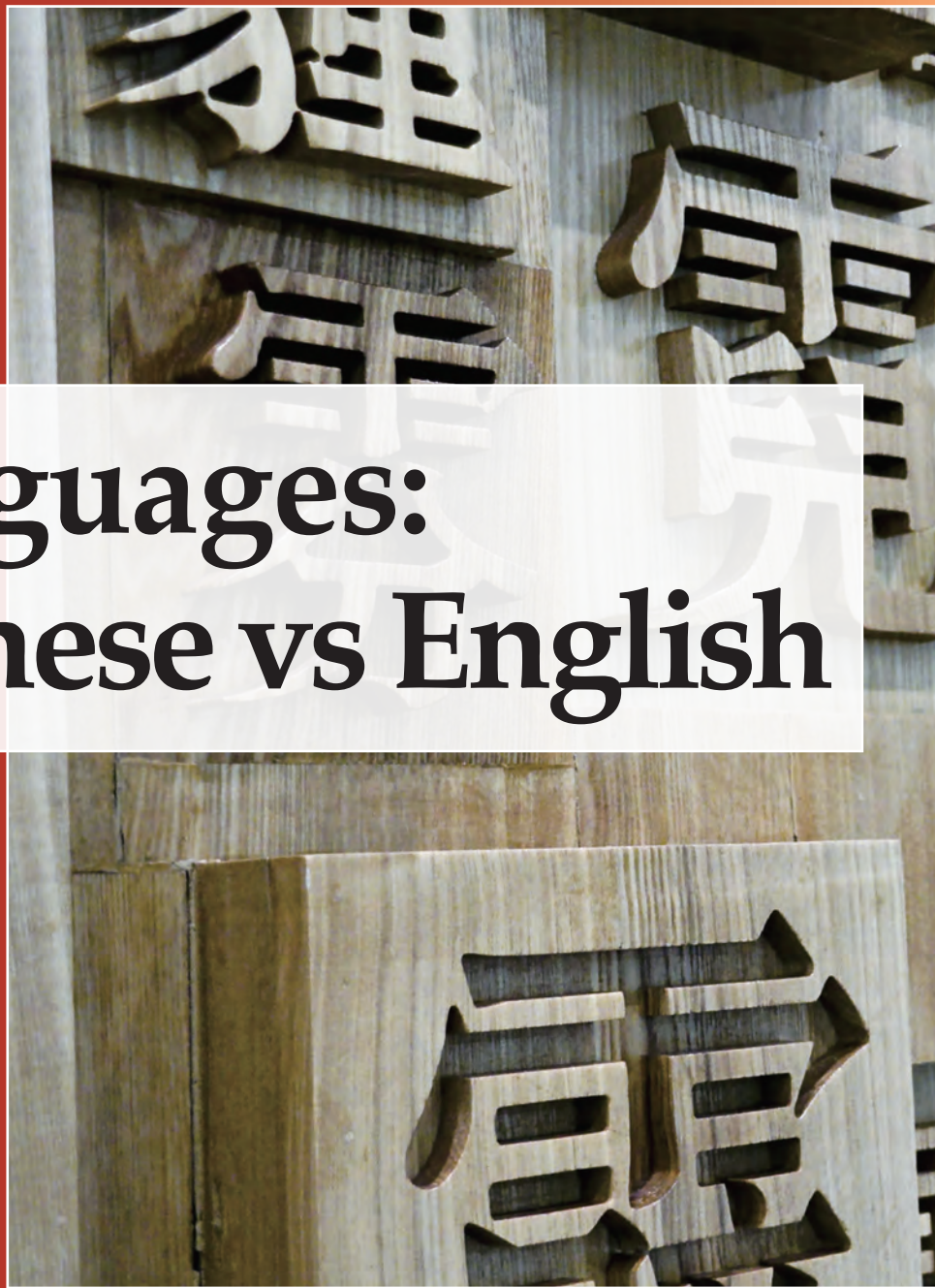
If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.

—— Nelson Mandela

The Chinese language

Passage 1   Aspects of the Chinese language

1   Chinese, a branch of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages[1], consists of hundreds of local language varieties, many of which are not mutually intelligible. It is estimated that more than one billion people speak some form of Chinese as their first language.

History

2   Old Chinese is the oldest attested stage of Chinese, and is the ancestor of all modern varieties of Chinese. It was used from the pre-Qin days to the Jin Dynasty. The first Chinese written records appeared over 3,000 years ago, the earliest examples of which are divinatory inscriptions on oracle bones in the late Shang Dynasty. Bronze inscriptions became plentiful during the following Zhou Dynasty. The latter part of the Zhou Dynasty saw a flowering of literature, including classical works such as *The Analects*, *The Works of Mencius*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. These works served as models for classical Chinese.

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1   The **Sino-Tibetan family of languages** (汉藏语系) is a family of more than 400 languages spoken in East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia. The family is second only to Indo-European in terms of the number of native speakers.

3   Middle Chinese is the language used during the Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Sui, Tang and Song dynasties. It can be divided into an early period, marked by the rhyme book, *Qieyun*[2], and a late period, signified by the rhyme tables[3] — a guide to the *Qieyun* system. Middle Chinese is the traditional starting point for efforts to recover the sounds of early forms of Chinese.

4   After the fall of the Northern Song Dynasty, and during the reign of the Jin and Yuan dynasties in northern China, a common speech (now called Old Mandarin) developed. Officials of the Ming and Qing dynasties carried out the administration of the empire using a "language of officials" based on Mandarin varieties. For most time of the Ming and Qing dynasties, this language was based on dialects spoken in the Nanjing area, though not identical to any single dialect. By 1909, the dying Qing Dynasty had established the Beijing dialect as the "national language."

5   The People's Republic of China continued with the promotion of a common national language, and in 1956, the standard language of China was officially defined. *Putonghua* is the standard form of Modern Chinese with the Beijing phonological system as its norm of pronunciation, and northern dialects as its dialect base, and it looks to exemplary modern works in vernacular literary language for its grammatical norms. *Putonghua* is now used in education, the media and formal situations in China. Chinese is one of the six official languages of the United Nations[4].

Pronunciation

7   Chinese characters do not reliably indicate their pronunciation. It is therefore useful to transliterate Chinese into the Latin alphabet for those who cannot read Chinese characters. The *pinyin* system was developed in the 1950s by many linguists based on earlier forms of Romanization of Chinese. It was published by the Chinese government in 1958 and has been revised several

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2   *Qieyun* (《切韵》) is a Chinese rhyme dictionary, published during the Sui Dynasty. It was a guide to proper reading of classical texts, using the *fanqie* method to indicate the pronunciation of Chinese characters.

3   A **rhyme table** (韵图) is a Chinese phonological model, tabulating syllables by their rhyme groups, tones and other properties.

4   The **official languages of the United Nations** (联合国官方语言) are the six languages that are used in UN meetings, and in which all official UN documents are written. In alphabetical order, they are: Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic), Chinese (Standard Chinese with simplified Chinese characters), English (British English), French, Russian, and Spanish.

times. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO)[5] adopted *pinyin* as an international standard in 1982, followed by the United Nations in 1986.

8   In *pinyin*, initials and finals form the fundamental elements. Every Mandarin syllable can be spelled with one initial followed by one final, or in some cases with one final only, except for the special syllable *er* or when a trailing *-r* is considered part of a syllable. The system includes four diacritics denoting tones. *Pinyin* without tone marks is used to spell Chinese names and words in languages written with the Latin alphabet, and also in certain computer input methods to enter Chinese characters.

Classification

9   Chinese varieties, or dialects, are conventionally classified into seven dialect groups:
   • Mandarin: A group of related varieties of Chinese spoken across most of northern and southwestern China, based on the Beijing dialect.
   • Wu: Varieties spoken in Shanghai, most of Zhejiang and the southern parts of Jiangsu and Anhui, with the Suzhou dialect being usually taken as representative. The Shanghai dialect features several atypical innovations.
   • Gan: Varieties spoken in Jiangxi and neighbouring areas, with the Nanchang dialect being taken as representative.
   • Xiang: Varieties spoken in Hunan, divided into the New Xiang varieties represented by the Changsha dialect and Old Xiang varieties represented by the Shuangfeng dialect.
   • Min: The most diverse varieties spoken in Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, Taiwan, as well as parts of Southeast Asia and other parts of the world, with Hokkien being the most widely spoken.
   • Hakka: Varieties spoken by the Hakka, a group of Han Chinese living in the hills of northeastern Guangdong, southwestern Fujian, Taiwan, and many other parts of southern China, as well as parts of Southeast Asia, with the Meizhou dialect being the prestige form.
   • Yue: Varieties spoken in Guangdong, Guangxi, Hong Kong and Macao, as well as parts of Southeast Asia and many other parts of the world, with the representative variety being Cantonese.

5   The **International Organization for Standardization (ISO)** (国际标准化组织) is an international standard-setting body composed of representatives from various national standards organizations. Founded on 23rd February 1947, the organization promotes worldwide proprietary, industrial and commercial standards.

Reading comprehension

1 Skimming and scanning

Read Passage 1 quickly and decide whether each of the following statements is true (T) or false (F).

(   ) **1**   Old Chinese refers to the Chinese language used before the Qin Dynasty.

(   ) **2**   Middle Chinese can be divided into two periods.

(   ) **3**   The endeavor to unify the Chinese language can be traced back to the Ming and Qing dynasties.

(   ) **4**   After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Beijing dialect became standard Chinese.

(   ) **5**   There was no Romanization system of the Chinese language before the 1950s when it was developed by Chinese linguists.

(   ) **6**   Paragraph 8 mainly introduces the formation and rules of *pinyin*.

(   ) **7**   The conventional classification of the Chinese language is region-based.

2 Careful reading

Read Passage 1 carefully and answer the following questions.

1   What materials were used for recording Old Chinese in the pre-Qin days according to Paragraph 2?

2   What marked the late period of Middle Chinese?

3   What was the basis for the grammar of *putonghua*?

4   What was the measure taken in the Ming and Qing dynasties to promote the use of standard language in China?

5   Why was *pinyin* developed?

6   On what occasions is *pinyin* without tone marks used?

7   What do you learn about Cantonese from the last paragraph?

A Verbal expression

1 The dialect in your home town

There are various dialects across China. Is there a dialect in your home town? To which variety does it belong and what characteristics does it have? Think about these questions and introduce the dialect in your home town to your partner(s).

2 Differences between Chinese and English verb-object collocations

Chinese and English are poles apart in many ways. You may have not realized how simple differences between the two languages could create problems for learners until you see the different verb-object collocations in the two languages. Fill in the table with the English equivalent for each of the Chinese verb-object collocations, and then discuss the differences between the verb-object collocations in Chinese and English with your partner(s).

Chinese	English
看书	
吃饭	
喝汤	
吃药	
坐车	
开灯	
写作业	
打电话	

Critical thinking and cultural exploration

1 Wade-Giles: a Romanization system for Chinese

You may have noticed that some Chinese words or phrases have entered English vocabulary, but the Romanization system used to represent them is different from the modern *pinyin* we are using, for example, Sun Yat-sen (孙中山), Ching Ming Festival (清明节), and Kung Pao chicken (宫保鸡丁). These words and phrases are from Wade-Giles, sometimes abbreviated Wade, an old Romanization system for Chinese. Listen to an introduction to the Romanization system and talk about it in terms of its origin and use.

2 Chinese names vs English names

The differences between Chinese names and English names often confuse both the Chinese and people from English-speaking countries. Listen to an introduction to Chinese names, and talk about the differences between Chinese names and English names with your partner(s).

Passage 2   Written Chinese: Character formation and the layout

1   Written Chinese comprises Chinese characters used to represent the Chinese language. From the oracle bone script in the late Shang Dynasty, Chinese writing evolved into bronzeware script found on Chinese ritual bronzes made during the Western Zhou Dynasty and the Spring and Autumn Period. Later, in the Warring States Period, the script became still more regular, and settled on a form, called "the six categories of Chinese characters." These characters were later embellished and stylized to form the seal script, which represents the oldest form of Chinese characters still in modern use. Following the seal script, the clerical script was developed in the Qin Dynasty. Clerical script characters are wider than the seal script and "flat" in appearance.

2   Then, in the late Eastern Han Dynasty, a semi-cursive form, called "running script," was formed, which reached its prime in the Eastern Jin Dynasty. In running script, the character elements begin to run into each other, although the characters themselves generally remain separate. Running script eventually evolved into cursive script, in which the characters are often entirely unrecognizable by their canonical forms. The most widely recognized script is regular script, a non-cursive form, in which each stroke of each character is clearly drawn out from the others. Regular script is considered the archetype of Chinese writing, and provides the basis for most printed forms. In addition,

regular script imposes a stroke order on writing regular characters. There are two sets of canonical forms in contemporary Chinese written language: traditional and simplified Chinese characters. The former is currently used in China's Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, while the latter is officially used in the mainland of China as well as in Singapore and Malaysia.

Character formation

3 Chinese characters are composed of strokes which fall into eight main categories: dot (丶), horizontal (一), vertical (丨), left-falling (丿), right-falling (乀), rising (㇀), turning (𠃌), and hook (亅). There are seven basic rules of stroke order in writing a Chinese character:
   • Horizontal strokes are written before vertical ones (eg, 十).
   • Left-falling strokes are written before right-falling ones (eg, 人).
   • Characters are written from top to bottom (eg, 亏).
   • Characters are written from left to right (eg, 孔).
   • If a character is framed from above, the frame is completed first (eg, 月).
   • If a character is framed from below, the frame is completed last (eg, 日).
   • In a symmetrical character, the middle is drawn first, then the sides (eg, 小).

4 In addition, there are also some supplementary rules such as "character-spanning strokes last." According to this rule, vertical strokes that pass through many other strokes are written after the strokes through which they pass, as in 弗. There is also a "dots and minor strokes last" rule requiring that minor strokes are usually written last, such as the small "dot" in 玉.

5 All Chinese characters are logograms, but several different types can be identified based on the manners in which they are formed. There are a handful which derive from pictographs in which the character is a graphical depiction of the object it denotes (eg, 木). Many are ideographic, in which the character represents an abstract notion (eg, 上), including compound ideographs in which two or more parts are used for their meaning (eg, 尘). However, the vast majority originated as pictophonetic characters in which one part indicates the general semantic category of the character, and the other part is another character, used for its phonetic value, such as 晴, which is composed of 日 for its meaning and 青 for its pronunciation. Another category in the traditional system of classification is phonetic loan characters, in which a character is used, either intentionally or accidentally, for some entirely different purposes. For example, 难 originally indicates a kind of bird, but now is used for the meaning of "hard" or "difficult."

The layout

6   Chinese characters conform to a roughly square frame. Traditionally, Chinese text was written in vertical columns which were read from top to bottom, right to left. Text written in classical Chinese uses little or no punctuation, so sentence and phrase breaks are determined by context and rhythm. Vertical Chinese is still used for effect or where space requires it, such as for signatures or on spines of books.

7   In modern times, the left-to-right horizontal layout of Chinese has become popular. The horizontal rows are read from left to right, then top of the page to the bottom. In the mainland of China, the government mandated left-to-right writing in the 1950s. The use of punctuation has also become more common, whether the text is written in columns or rows. Chinese punctuation marks are clearly influenced by their Western counterparts, though some marks are unique to Chinese.

Reading comprehension

1 Skimming and scanning

Read Passage 2 quickly and answer the following questions.

1 How many forms of Chinese script are mentioned?

2 Which Chinese script represents the oldest form of Chinese characters still in modern use?

3 Which is the most widely recognized form of Chinese script?

4 How many rules of stroke order are mentioned in Paragraphs 3 and 4?

5 What rules of stroke order are respectively applicable to the characters 水 and 国?

6 How did people divide sense groups in classical Chinese text without the help of punctuation marks?

2 Careful reading

Read Passage 2 carefully and complete the following tasks.

1 Find from Passage 2 the relevant information, if any, and then complete the following table.

Forms	Time of development	Features
oracle bone script		
bronzeware script		
seal script		
clerical script		
running script		
cursive script		
regular script		

2 Translate the basic rules of stroke order into Chinese, and give one more example for each of the rules.
1) Horizontal strokes are written before vertical ones (eg, 十, _____).
2) Left-falling strokes are written before right-falling ones (eg, 人, _____).
3) Characters are written from top to bottom (eg, 亏, _____).
4) Characters are written from left to right (eg, 孔, _____).
5) If a character is framed from above, the frame is completed first (eg, 月, _____).
6) If a character is framed from below, the frame is completed last (eg, 日, _____).
7) In a symmetrical character, the middle is drawn first, then the sides (eg, 小, _____)

3 Give one more example for each of the following categories of character formations according to the descriptions in Passage 2.
1) Pictographs (eg, 木, _____)
2) Ideographs (eg, 上, _____)
3) Compound ideographs (eg, 尘, _____)
4) Pictophonetic characters (eg, 晴, _____)
5) Phonetic loan characters (eg, 难, _____)

Verbal expression

1 Introducing the layout and script form of the Chinese text

The following picture shows a poem of Yang Shen, a scholar in the Ming Dynasty, written in vertical columns. Introduce to your partner(s) how a text with such a layout should be read and which form of script was used in this picture according to what you have learnt in Passage 2.

2 Is Chinese hard to learn?

With unique sounds and thousands of strange-looking characters, Chinese seems alien and intimidating to most English speakers. But, while Chinese is indeed complex, it is nowhere near impossible to learn. In fact, most prospective Chinese learners don't realize that there are several fundamental aspects of Chinese that are actually easier than they think. Listen to a recording on the reasons why Chinese is easier than most of the foreign learners might realize. Then, do a role-play with your partner(s) to persuade or encourage your foreign friends to learn Chinese.

Critical thinking and cultural exploration

1 Arch Chinese: A Chinese learning system

With the popularity of Chinese as a foreign language, various Chinese learning systems and software have been developed. Listen to an introduction to a Chinese learning system named Arch Chinese and make comments on this system.

2 Handwriting vs typing: Is the pen still mightier than the keyboard?

When was the last time you drafted a long text by hand? How long ago did you write your last letter, using a pen and a sheet of writing paper? Are you among the increasing number of people who are switching completely from writing to typing? Listen to a recording, and then use Chinese as an example to discuss with your partner(s) the pros and cons of penmanship and typing.

The English language

Passage 3 Aspects of the English language

History of the English language

1   English is one of the West Germanic languages[1]. The history of the English
language really started with the arrival of three Germanic tribes who invaded
Britain during the fifth century. These tribes, the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes,
crossed the North Sea from what today are Denmark and northern Germany.
At that time the inhabitants of Britain spoke a Celtic language. But most of the
Celtic speakers were pushed west and north by the invaders — mainly into what
is now Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The words "England" and "English" are
derived from the names of the original region and language of the Angles.

2   *Old English*: The invading Germanic tribes spoke similar languages, which in
Britain developed into what we now call Old English. Old English does not
sound or look like today's English. Native English speakers now would have
great difficulty understanding Old English. Nevertheless, about half of the
most commonly used words in Modern English have Old English roots. The
words *be*, *strong* and *water*, for example, derive from Old English.

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1   The **West Germanic languages** (西日耳曼语) constitute the largest of the three branches of the
Germanic languages. The three most prevalent West Germanic languages are English, German
and Dutch.

3   *Middle English*: In 1066, William the Conqueror[2] invaded and conquered England. The new conquerors (called the Normans) brought with them a kind of French, which became the language of the royal court, and the ruling and business classes. For a period there was a kind of linguistic class division, where the lower classes spoke English and the upper classes spoke French. In the 14th century, English became dominant in Britain again, but with many French words added.

4   *Modern English*: Early Modern English began in the late 15th century with the introduction of the printing press to London and the King James Version of the Bible, and the Great Vowel Shift[3]. From the 16th century the British had contact with many peoples around the world. This, coupled with the Renaissance of classical learning, meant that many new words and phrases entered the language. The introduction of printing brought standardization to English. Spelling and grammar became fixed, and the dialect of London, in which city most publishing houses were located, became the standard. In 1604 the first English dictionary was published. Late Modern English is different from Early Modern English in vocabulary. Late Modern English has many more words, arising from two principal factors: First, the Industrial Revolution created a need for new words; second, the British Empire at its height covered one quarter of the earth's surface, and the English language adopted foreign words from many countries and different varieties of English emerged.

Major English varieties

5   British English is the English language spoken and written in the UK. There is a meaningful degree of uniformity in written English within the UK. The forms of spoken English, however, vary considerably in areas of the world where English is spoken, so a uniform concept of British English is more difficult to apply to the spoken language. When distinguished from American English, the term "British English" is sometimes used broadly as a synonym for the various varieties of English spoken in some member states of the Commonwealth of

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2   **William the Conqueror** (征服者威廉) (1028-1087) was the first Norman King of England, reigning from 1066 until his death in 1087. He was Duke of Normandy from 1035 onward. After a long struggle to establish his power, by 1060 his hold on Normandy was secure, and he launched the Norman conquest of England six years later.

3   The **Great Vowel Shift** (元音大推移) was a major series of changes in the pronunciation of the English language that took place primarily in the 15th and early 16th centuries. Through the Great Vowel Shift, all Middle English long vowels changed their pronunciation.

Nations[4]. Most people in Britain speak with a regional accent or dialect. One accent is called Received Pronunciation (also called "the Queen's English," "Oxford English" or "BBC English"), which is an accent derived from a mixture of the Midlands and Southern dialects spoken in London in the early modern period. It is frequently used as a model for teaching English to foreign learners.

6 American English is the set of varieties of the English language native to the United States. The use of English in the United States is a result of British colonization of the Americas. American English and British English often differ at the levels of phonology, phonetics, vocabulary, and, to a much lesser extent, grammar and orthography. *An American Dictionary of the English Language* is an American dictionary by Noah Webster first published in 1928, codifying American English spellings. Compared with the English spoken in England, North American English is more homogeneous, and any North American accent that exhibits a majority of the most common phonological features is known as "General American."

7 Australian English is the English variety used throughout Australia. Although English has no official status in the constitution, Australian English is the country's national and de facto official language. Australian English began to diverge from British English after the founding of the Colony of New South Wales[5] in 1788 and was recognized as being different from British English by 1820. It arose from the intermingling of early settlers from a great variety of mutually intelligible dialectal regions of the British Isles and quickly developed into a distinct variety of English. As a distinct variety, Australian English differs considerably from other varieties of English in vocabulary, accent, pronunciation, register, grammar and spelling. Where British vocabulary and American vocabulary differ from each other, Australians sometimes favour a usage different from both varieties, as with footpath (US: sidewalk, UK: pavement). In other instances, Australian English either shares a term with American English, as with truck (UK: lorry) or eggplant (UK: aubergine), or with British English, as with mobile phone (US: cellphone) or bonnet (US: hood).

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4 The **Commonwealth of Nations** (英联邦) is an intergovernmental organization of 53 member states. It was formally constituted by the London Declaration in 1949, which established the member states as "free and equal."

5 The **Colony of New South Wales** (新南威尔士殖民地) was a colony of the British Empire from 1788 to 1900. It became a state of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901.

Reading comprehension

1 Skimming and scanning

Read Passage 3 quickly and decide whether each of the following statements is true (T) or false (F).

( ) **1** The three Germanic tribes' invasion of Britain marked the beginning of the history of English.

( ) **2** Old English is similar to Modern English in both spelling and pronunciation.

( ) **3** French was the official language in Britain for about 300 years, leaving great influence on the English language.

( ) **4** The only difference between Late and Early Modern English is that the former has more technological vocabulary than the latter.

( ) **5** There is a meaningful degree of uniformity in both written and spoken English within the UK.

( ) **6** Australian English is similar to British English because it was formed on the basis of the English spoken by the early settlers from different regions of the British Isles.

2 Careful reading

Read Passage 3 carefully and answer the following questions.

1 Where were the Celtic speakers driven by the invaders?

2 What has Modern English inherited from Old English?

3 How was the English language influenced by the Norman conquest?

4 How many events are mentioned in Paragraph 4 that have contributed to the development of the English language?

5 Which British accent is often used in teaching English to foreign learners?

6 What differences between American English and British English are indicated in Paragraph 6?

7 In what ways is Australian English different from other English varieties?

Verbal expression

1 English words of Chinese origin

Words taken completely or in part from another language are known as loanwords. The English language has a long history of borrowing words from other languages. It has borrowed words from over 350 languages, and over three-quarters of the English lexicon is actually Romance in origin. These "borrowings" can usually be traced back to specific periods in history. It is estimated that the origins of Modern English can be broken down as follows: Latin (29%), French (29%), Germanic languages (26%), Greek (6%), other languages (6%), and proper names (4%). In the English language, there are many loanwords from the Chinese language. Read the following English loanwords and see how similar or different they are to or from their Chinese counterparts, then try to add more words to the list.

English	Origin	Chinese	English	Origin	Chinese
cheongsam	Cantonese	旗袍	tea	Hokkien	茶
dim sum	Cantonese	点心	typhoon	Cantonese	台风
ketchup	Cantonese	番茄酱	wok	Cantonese	锅
kung fu	Cantonese	功夫	wonton	Cantonese	云吞
lychee	Cantonese	荔枝	mah-jong	Shanghai dialect	麻将

Read an introduction to the English greetings and the following sample conversations. Then do a role-play to practise English greetings for different occasions.

1   Greetings in passing

It is polite to greet a person you know. However, you don't always have time to stop and have a conversation. Just remember to smile as you say "hello." A small wave is also polite. Sometimes you pass the same person a second time on the same day. You can say "hello again" or just smile. Useful expressions include:

• Hello.

• Hi.

• Good morning / afternoon / evening.

• Hey.

• How's it goin'? (Native speakers often shorten *going* to *goin'* in casual speech.)

Using slang in a greeting is typical between close friends. Teens often use slang when they greet each other. Certain English-speaking countries also have their own popular form of "hello," eg,

• Howdy.

• Hiya.

• Yo.

• G'day. (Australian)

2   Greetings at a party

It is polite to greet people at a social event. This is called "mingling." After you greet people you know, look for people you haven't met before. Introduce yourself and start a conversation.

A: I don't think we've met. I'm Stacey. (*hold out hand to shake*)

B: Hi Stacey. I'm Carl.

A: Hi Carl. So, how do you know Jane?

B: Oh, Jane and I used to work together at a coffee shop.

A: Oh, you mean when you were working in New York?

B: That's right. And how do you know her?

A: Actually, Jane is my cousin. Our moms are sisters.

B: No way! You two don't look anything alike.

3 Greetings in business

Proper etiquette is important in business greetings. Make sure to use polite language such as "please" and "thank you." Appropriate titles and gestures should also be used. Shaking hands is common in most English-speaking countries. It is also important to smile.

A: Hello. I'm Mia Conners.

B: Hi Mia. I'm David Sinclair, and this is my partner Gina Evans. (*hold out hand to shake*)

A: Nice to meet you, Mr Sinclair, Ms Evans. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today.

B: It's our pleasure. And please, call us David and Gina. Can I take your coat?

A: Thank you.

B: No problem. Please take a seat and we'll be right with you.

Critical thinking and cultural exploration

1 British English vs American English

While people in both the UK and the US speak English, the two types of English can be very different. Listen to a recording, take note of the examples given, explain how the sentences and phrases below are different in meaning in the two English varieties, and find more similar instances.

NOTES
1   Are you going to wear pants?
2   go to the restroom / bathroom
3   meet me on the first floor

2 Which English variety is Canadian English more similar to, British or American English?

Is there such a thing as Canadian English? If so, what is it? The standard stereotype among Americans is that Canadians are like Americans, except they say "eh" a lot and pronounce "out" and "about" as "oot" and "aboo." Many Canadians, on the other hand, will tell you that Canadian English is more like British English, and as proof will hold aloft the spellings *colour* and *centre* and the name *zed* for the letter *Z*. Canadian English does exist as a separate variety of English, with subtly distinctive features of pronunciation and vocabulary. It has its own dictionaries; the Editors' Association of Canada has released its second edition of *Editing Canadian English*. But an emblematic feature of *Editing Canadian English* is comparison tables of American spellings vs British spellings so the Canadian editors can come to a reasonable decision on which to use on each occasion. The core of Canadian English is a pervasive ambivalence. Listen to a recording for some information about the features of Canadian English and summarize in what ways it is similar to American or British English.

Passage 4   Spread of English and English language learning

Spread of Modern English

1   Modern English is regarded as the first global language because it is the world's most widely used language in various publications, international telecommunications, international trade, mass entertainment, and diplomacy. Approximately 400 million people speak English as their first language, and more than one billion speak it as a secondary language. English is the third largest language by the number of native speakers, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. However, when combining native and non-native speakers, it may be the most commonly spoken language in the world.

2   The countries in which English is spoken are grouped into three circles by how English is used in each country. The "inner-circle" countries share an international standard of written English and jointly influence speech norms of English around the world. These countries include Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand, where the majority speak English, and South Africa, where a significant minority speaks English.

3   In the three-circle model, the "outer-circle" countries are such countries as the Philippines, Jamaica, India, Pakistan, Singapore, and Nigeria with a much smaller proportion of native speakers of English but much use of English as a second language for education, government, or domestic business. The

"expanding circle" is made up of countries in which English has no special administrative status but is recognized as a lingua franca and is widely studied as a foreign language, including Poland, China, Brazil, Germany, Japan, Indonesia, Egypt, and so on.

Learning English as a foreign language

4   Learning English as a foreign language means learning English in a non–English-speaking region. The study can occur either in the students' home country as part of the normal school curriculum, or otherwise, in an English-speaking country where they visit as a sort of educational tourists. Typically, English as a foreign language is learnt either to pass exams as a necessary part of one's education, or for career progression while one works for an organization or business with an international focus.

5   Language teaching practice often assumes that most of the difficulties that learners face in the study of English are a consequence of the differences between their native language and English. A native speaker of Chinese, for example, may face many more difficulties than a native speaker of German, because German is more closely related to English than Chinese is. This may be true for anyone of any mother tongue (also called first language, normally abbreviated to L1) setting out to learn any other language (called a target language, second language or L2).

6   Language learners often produce errors of syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation which are thought to result from the influence of L1, such as mapping its grammatical patterns inappropriately onto L2, pronouncing certain sounds incorrectly or with difficulty, or confusing items of vocabulary known as "false friends[1]." This is known as L1 transfer or "language interference." However, these transfer effects are typically stronger for beginners' language production, and research has highlighted many errors which cannot be attributed to L1, as they are attested in learners of various language backgrounds (eg, failure to apply third person singular -*s* to verbs, as in "he make").

7   Students in the same classroom may have very different cultural perception as far as learning a second language is concerned. Cultural differences in communication styles and preferences are also significant.

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1   **False friends** (假相似词) are words in two languages (or letters in two alphabets) that look or sound similar, but differ significantly in meaning. They are often associated with historically or culturally related languages such as English, French and German, but in fact false friends also appear among totally unrelated languages such as English and Chinese, mainly caused by literal translation.

8　In addition, features of the English language itself can also pose challenges to foreign learners. The history of English has resulted in a very large vocabulary including one stream from Old English and one from the Norman infusion of Latin-derived terms. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (3rd Edition) currently contains over 600,000 entries. According to Susie Dent, a lexicographer and expert in dictionaries, the average active vocabulary[2] of an adult native English speaker is around 20,000 words, while his or her passive vocabulary is around 40,000 words. However, statistics show that the first 25 most common words make up about 33% of all printed material in English, and the first 100 words make up about 50% of all written material. It is said that a vocabulary of just 3,000 words provides coverage for around 95% of common texts (eg, news items, blogs etc).

9　English contains a number of sounds and sound distinctions not present in some other languages. Speakers of languages without these sounds may have problems with both comprehension and pronunciation. In fact, English spelling and pronunciation are difficult even for native speakers to master. The generalizations that exist are quite complex and there are many exceptions, leading to a considerable amount of rote learning[3]. The spelling and pronunciation system causes problems in both directions: A learner may know a word by sound but be unable to write it correctly or he or she may be able to spell a word but do not know how to pronounce it. However, despite the variety of spelling patterns in English, there are dozens of rules that are reliable in the majority of cases.

10　English language learning is no easy task. However, if you have a positive attitude and constantly strive to give your best effort, eventually you will overcome the problems.

2　An **active vocabulary** (积极词汇), also known as recognition vocabulary, is made up of the words readily used and clearly understood by an individual when speaking and writing, while a passive vocabulary is made up of the words that an individual recognizes but rarely uses when speaking and writing.

3　**Rote learning** (死记硬背) is a memorization technique based on repetition. The idea is that, the more one repeats a material, the more quickly one will be able to recall it. Some of the alternatives to rote learning include meaningful learning, associative learning and active learning.

Reading comprehension

1 Skimming and scanning

Read Passage 4 quickly and decide whether each of the following statements is true (T) or false (F).

( ) **1** There are about one billion non-native English speakers.
( ) **2** In the "inner-circle" countries, the majority speak English.
( ) **3** Paragraph 4 is mainly about how English as a foreign language (EFL) is learnt in different countries.
( ) **4** According to Paragraph 5, the more similar an EFL learner's first language is to English, the easier it is for him or her to learn it.
( ) **5** L1 transfer occurs frequently throughout the language learning process.
( ) **6** The large size of English vocabulary is a great obstacle to EFL learners.
( ) **7** Adult native English speakers' passive vocabulary is larger than their active vocabulary.

2 Careful reading

Read Passage 4 carefully and answer the following questions.

1 Why is Modern English regarded as the first global language?
2 Which countries' Englishes are taken as the norms for the use of English in the world?
3 What is the difference between the "outer-circle" countries and the "expanding-circle" countries?
4 Which of the English learning purposes mentioned in Paragraph 4 is most suitable for your situation?
5 What does "this" in the last sentence of Paragraph 5 mean?
6 Does the writer agree that most of the difficulties that language learners face are caused by "language interference"? Why?
7 Can you give an example to illustrate the factors discussed in Paragraph 7?
8 How many entries are there in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (3rd Edition)?
9 Why are English pronunciation and spelling so difficult for both native and non-native English speakers?

Verbal expression

1 False friends

In your English study, you should be alert to "false friends," which can be very deceiving and are apt to cause misunderstanding. The following are some examples of "false friends" in English for Chinese English learners, including both expressions and sentences. Discuss in pairs their meanings and the occasions on which they might be used.

1 turn the table
2 in one's birthday suit
3 skeleton in the closet
4 bring down the house
5 pull up one's socks
6 Look out.
7 You don't say!
8 You can say that again.
9 I haven't slept better.
10 You can't be too careful in your work.

2 The how and why of language learning: An interview with Luca Lampariello

Luca Lampariello is a well-known polyglot and one of the leading online faces promoting foreign language learning. He has been involved with many projects and events in recent years, such as the organization of language workshops in different parts of Europe. The following is part of an interview with him, in which Luca shares some of the experience he has gained while learning 13 languages. Read the first part of the interview, and then listen to the following two questions and answers of the interview and note down the key information of the answers. Then formulate a few questions and interview one of your classmates about his or her language learning experience.

Interviewer: How did you get interested in learning languages and how many do you currently speak?

LL: I got interested in foreign languages when I was 10. I have to thank my grandmother for that. One day during a hot summer, she took me aside and asked me, "Do you want to learn a bit of Latin and French?" She didn't know it, but she had planted an important seed in my head. I speak 13 languages to various degrees of fluency.

Interviewer: How have you managed to learn so many languages in your life so far? Do you have any special techniques or personal methods that you use?

LL: I have a method which has allowed me to learn a lot of languages in the last 20 years, although I must say that what really counted towards my success was neither a particular method nor talent. It was, first and foremost, my burning desire to learn and understand the world.

Interviewer: When I attended elementary and high school in Western Canada, children generally took French or Spanish (and sometimes German) classes as part of the school curriculum; however, they rarely were able to speak very well even after years and years of study in the classroom. What are your thoughts on learning a language strictly in the classroom rather than immersing yourself in the cultural aspects of the speakers of the language you're studying?

LL: _____

_____

_____

Interviewer: Further to the previous question, how useful is it to go to a foreign country to learn a language? Can you achieve a similar level of fluency without leaving your home town?

LL: _____

_____

_____

Critical thinking and cultural exploration

1 What is your English level?

A Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) *for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries. It was put together by the Council of Europe as the main part of the project "Language Learning for European Citizenship." Its main aim is to provide a method of learning, teaching and assessing which can be applied to all languages in Europe. In November 2001, a European Union Council Resolution recommended using the CEFR to set up systems of validation of language ability. The six reference levels (see below) are becoming widely accepted as the European standards for grading an individual's language proficiency. Listen to a description of the language proficiency levels for English, note down the key information about each level and see which is closest to your English level.

NOTES

1   A levels: Basic User
- English Test A1 (Beginner)

  - _____

  - _____

  - _____

- English Test A2 (Elementary)

  - _____

  - _____

  - _____

2   B levels: Independent User
- English Test B1 (Intermediate)

  - _____

  - _____

  - _____

  - _____

- English Test B2 (Upper-Intermediate)

    - _____

    - _____

    - _____

3   C levels: Proficient User
- English Test C1 (Advanced)

    - _____

    - _____

    - _____

    - _____

- English Test C2 (Proficiency)

    - _____

    - _____

    - _____

2 Body language

Body language is a type of non-verbal communication in which physical behaviours, as opposed to words, are used to convey information. Such behaviours include facial expressions, body postures, gestures, eye movements, touch, and the use of space. Although body languages such as handshaking register the same meaning in most cultures, interpretations of many gestures may vary from culture to culture. Listen to an introduction to three common gestures and discuss whether such gestures have been used properly in China.