



**Title of Project:**

Chinese Students' Journey to Success on Highstakes English Language Tests: Nature, Effects and Values of Their Test Preparation

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**Project Summary:**

Many Chinese students take test preparation courses with an aim to achieve high scores on English language tests (Matoush & Fu, 2012), because performance on such tests is related to their entrance into national and international educational institutions and their success in academic study (Cheng, 2008). My doctoral dissertation, with a multi-phase multi-method design of three related studies, investigated nature, effects and perceived values of Chinese students' test preparation for two major English tests—the TOEFL iBT and the College English Test (CET). Study 1 uses a case study approach to investigate the nature of Chinese students' test preparation for the TOEFL iBT at a test preparation centre in China. Study 2 examines the relationship between Chinese students' test preparation practices on the CET (Band 4) and their CET test performances by collecting data of a questionnaire on students' CET test preparation practices and of students' test scores. Study 3, using in-depth interviews, explores Chinese students' perceived values of TOEFL iBT test preparation on both their test-taking and academic study.

This research is a timely attempt to investigate Chinese students' test preparation on highstakes English language tests, which is an under-studied topic in language assessment field. Including Chinese students with a wide range of English proficiency levels, this research will sequentially explore Chinese students' test preparation in terms of why and how Chinese students take test preparation courses, what effects such test preparation courses produce on their test performances, and what values are associated with such test preparation courses. Findings triangulated from three interrelated studies, will provide an empirically based, comprehensive and contextual illustration of washback effects of high-stakes English language tests on Chinese students. Drawing on the link between washback and consequential validity that Messick (1996) conceptualized, this research is expected to serve as a basis for future research examining validity of high-stakes English language tests involving Chinese students as test-takers.