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Investigating the A-level Chinese examination in England: teachers' perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates England's A-level Chinese examination from teachers' perspectives. This examination is one of the subject-based qualifications typically taken by students at the age of 18 who plan to go to university. Despite the government's promotion of Chinese teaching in different educational settings, there remains a lack of empirical research in this area, especially focusing on this examination. This paper, which is part of a larger project that explores the validity of A-level Chinese from various perspectives, reports findings from surveys and interviews with Chinese-language teachers in England, both native and non-native speakers. The primary aim is to understand teachers' attitudes toward various aspects of the A-level Chinese examination, including difficulties in the listening and reading papers, textbook suitability, and continuity from GCSE studies. Potential obstacles to the promotion of A-level Chinese teaching and learning are also identified in this paper.

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Introduction

The increasing global influence of China has led to a rise in the number of Mandarin Chinese-language learners worldwide (Natzler 2022). According to Murray and Scarino (2014), the decision to learn Chinese is predominantly driven by students' recognition of its potential in enhancing future career opportunities, with the belief that it will ultimately lead to 'prosperity and success'. The British Council (2017) also recognises Chinese as one of the top five languages deemed useful to UK companies post-Brexit. According to Ruan and Medwell (2020), children in UK schools have shown a keen interest in learning this new foreign language. A recent survey conducted by Zheng, Lu, and Li (2023) revealed that students who were learning Chinese in UK state schools reported that although it was a difficult language to learn, they enjoy learning it. They could feel a sense of uniqueness while learning this language in schools as compared to learning other European languages, and they can also envisage the possibility of using Mandarin in their future careers highlighting the fact it is also not limited to those involved in international business.

The development of learning and teaching Mandarin Chinese¹ in the UK, however, has encountered various challenges over the years, particularly at higher levels such as the A-level in England. A-level qualifications, the focus of the current study, are usually taken at age 18, at the end of Key Stage 5 in the English system, and are used for university admission purposes in the UK. They

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follow on from the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in secondary schools, taken at age 16 at the end of Key Stage 4. Mandarin Chinese is one of the 14 modern foreign languages (MFLs) in the curriculum in England and can be taken at both GCSE and A-level. Edexcel is now the only examination board offering Mandarin Chinese at A-level in England. The Chinese examination comprises three papers: Paper 1 emphasises receptive skills through listening, reading, and translation, Paper 2 involves written responses to literature and films, while Paper 3 comprises an oral examination. Full details of the Edexcel A-level specification is available at Edexcel A-level Chinese (2017) | Pearson qualifications.

Students who choose to take advanced Chinese-language courses in England generally come from three groups: (1) native speakers from China, (2) British-born Chinese speakers who speak Chinese at home (heritage students) and (3) learners of Chinese as a foreign language. It is widely recognised that the growing presence of native Chinese-speaking students and British-born Chinese speakers at Key Stage 5 has posed difficulties for learners of Chinese as a foreign language aiming for higher grades at A-level (Natzler 2022). An alternative examination, the Cambridge Pre-U, was offered worldwide from 2008 by Cambridge International and was generally considered a fairer assessment for non-native Chinese-language learners. Despite the shared cultural elements, such as a focus on literature and films, in both the Cambridge Pre-U and Edexcel A-level courses, the fundamental difference in the Cambridge Pre-U was that students studied the prescribed literature and films in English and answered the questions in English, while there was a separate writing paper to test students' Chinese essay writing skills. However, the Cambridge Pre-U was discontinued in 2023 due to a lack of participation from secondary schools (Natzler 2022). Now, non-native students have to take A-level Chinese and compete with peers who are either Chinese native speakers or heritage students. Further, teachers who were used to preparing their students for the Cambridge Pre-U have had to turn to A-level and seek professional development support to familiarise themselves with the A-level qualification.

Having worked as, and with, Chinese-language teachers in both higher education and secondary schools in England, we recognise the many issues and challenges surrounding Chinese language education in England, particularly at more advanced levels. We believe it is imperative to explore Chinese-language teachers' attitudes towards, and perceptions of, the A-level assessment, along with their corresponding needs for professional development in order to develop an effective A-level course, attractive to non-native learners of the language. This, we argue, is one of the keys to promoting further study of the Chinese language in England. In the following sections, the background to our study will be presented before moving to the research design, results, and discussion, followed by a conclusion.

Chinese-language teaching and learning in the UK

While the UK government has expressed a strong desire to achieve a 'truly globalised United Kingdom' (British Council 2017), language learning in England generally falls behind that of other European countries (Long and Danechi 2022). The increasing number of students withdrawing from language courses has further exacerbated this concerning situation over recent years (British Council 2017; Collen 2022; Natzler 2022). Since 2014, primary schools have been required to teach a second language to pupils from age 7, and French, Spanish and German remain the 'Big three' languages taught in educational settings in England. However, recent British Council surveys (Collen 2022, 2023) found that there is considerable variation in the amount of time devoted to languages, with one in four primary schools unable to deliver language classes even once a week.

At secondary level, the 2022 *Language Trends* Report (Collen 2022) points to yet another decrease in the enrolment of students opting to take languages at Key Stage 4, leading to the GCSE examinations. This downward trend is evident even for French which historically is the most favoured

language subject. The entry data from the Joint Council of Qualifications (2023) confirm that, in 2023, there were 130,901 students taking GCSE French, compared with 251,706 students in 2005.

Although primary and secondary schools in the UK continue to support language provision, there are problems ensuring sufficient resources and qualified staff members (Bowler 2020). The research published by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (2021) has identified various barriers impeding the success of British students in language learning. These obstacles include limited exposure to language lessons in comparison to their European counterparts and educators' low expectations, which adversely affect students' attitudes toward language learning.

Against this background of a general decline in the uptake of languages, Chinese-language teaching has been introduced in England's schools over the last twenty years or so (Zhang and Li 2010). At the primary level, Collen (2022) notes a recent decline in uptake, from 3% of UK primary schools teaching Chinese in some form in 2021, to 1.2% in 2022 and 2% in 2023 (Collen 2023). In the secondary sector, Chinese is taught at Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14) in 22% of independent schools and 7% of state schools (Collen 2022). Chinese may then be offered as one of the optional MFL courses within the GCSE curriculum. There was a significant rise in the number of students taking GCSE Chinese between 2014-2018, although this remains very small in comparison with numbers taking the major European languages, French, Spanish and German (Natzler 2022). GCSE Chinese entries then declined somewhat from 4,410 in 2018 to 3,201 in 2019, but numbers have now doubled to 7,091 in 2023. The Ofsted research report (2021) noted that many of these entries are likely to be from heritage students. The findings from British Council's survey (Collen 2023) indicate that Mandarin is the next most popular language subject, after the 'Big three', that is taught as a full curriculum subject in the state secondary sector.

The overall increase in numbers of students taking Chinese at secondary school may also be attributed to the government-initiated Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP), which was launched in 2016 with the goal of ensuring that 5,000 secondary school students were on track to achieve fluency in Chinese by 2021. The 2022 Evaluation Report (Nicoletti and Culligan 2022), assessing the programme based in part on the first round of GCSE results for MEP students, highlights how 6,274 were studying within the programme at the end of 2021, with MEP students outperforming the national average in the 2021 GCSE examinations. Responding to the programme's success, the Department for Education (2023a) announced an expansion plan to recruit an additional 21 schools to reach 100 participating schools by September 2024. In order to better support the development of Chinese-language skills, the UK government allocated £16.4 million in 2021 to provide further assistance to over 6,500 students from 75 state schools participating in the MEP programme.

At A-level, the number of entries for Chinese decreased from 2,272 in 2019 to 1,312 in 2021 before rising slightly in 2022 to 1,349, and 1,499 in 2023 (Joint Council of Qualifications 2022, 2023). The significant decrease from GCSE Mandarin Chinese to A-level is noteworthy. As part of an attempt to understand how A-level Chinese could be encouraged more widely in England's schools – against the prevailing downward trend for language study in general – this paper surveys Chinese-language teachers' views on aspects of the current A-level Chinese course, as specified by Edexcel, now the only examination board to offer this qualification from 2023 (at the time of our data collection in 2022, Pre-U was still available as an option).

Chinese-language teachers' professional development needs

The professional development of Chinese-language teachers is a particular challenge for the development of Chinese-language teaching in England. As demand for learning Chinese has increased across the country, the need for qualified Chinese-language teachers has also grown. Song (2014) points out that, while finding Chinese-language teachers for tertiary education may be relatively easy, there is still a substantial shortage of qualified teachers in the subject for secondary schools. This is mainly due to the requirement for all teachers in primary and secondary sectors in England to hold a Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), regulated by the UK government. This means Chinese-

language teachers originally from China are not immediately eligible to work in England as their Chinese teaching qualifications are not recognised, and they must complete the one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) training or have their teaching skills directly assessed by a teacher training provider authorised by the Department for Education (See 'Routes to qualified teacher status (QTS) for teachers and those with teaching experience outside the UK – GOV.UK' (www.gov.uk)). The number of teacher training providers offering Chinese PGCE with QTS training is limited so gaining the necessary qualifications can be problematic.

As Howlett and Penner-Williams (2020) suggest – although in relation to their enquiry with teachers in US schools – continuing professional development (CPD) is vital even for qualified teachers, as it enables them to understand standards better and integrate them into lesson planning, classroom implementation and assessments. Kang's (2020) research highlights how current Chinese-language teachers in England believe that more targeted pedagogical or professional teacher training focused on the UK education system, including PGCE programmes, is an area that requires improvement, especially in the area of assessment literacy.

A further issue for teachers of Mandarin Chinese, as noted by Yu and Zhang (2022), is that overall, the availability of teaching resources appropriate to educational settings in England is limited; in particular, there is a notable lack of teaching resources for advanced level, although beginner learners in secondary school may be better served. Lu, Zheng, and Lin (2019) acknowledged that suitable Mandarin teacher training and professional development must be tailored to fit local educational contexts. This need for more CPD for Mandarin teachers in the UK was also echoed by Zhang and Zheng (2022).

The current research is part of a larger project that investigates A-level Chinese from the perspectives of test papers and teachers' perceptions. Considering the challenges that Chinese-language teachers and students face as discussed above, we argue that there is an urgent need to examine A-level Chinese more closely, including exploring teachers' attitudes towards A-level and their CPD needs.

Our research

Research questions

We have reviewed existing literature on various aspects of language teaching in the UK and the challenges teachers of Chinese face in relation to their training and CPD. While there has been very limited research on the overall development of Chinese-language teaching and learning in the UK, no research that we are aware of has focused specifically on pedagogy or Chinese-language examinations, particularly GCSE or A-level, as conducted by examination boards in England, and certainly not from teachers' perspectives. Our two key research questions were therefore as follows:

- (1) What are teachers' perceptions of teaching A-level Chinese and of the examination itself?
- (2) What are the current CPD needs of A-level Chinese teachers?

Participants

Fifty Chinese-language teachers participated in our online survey. All of them were qualified teachers holding Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) with experience of teaching Chinese at Key Stage 5 in state and independent schools in England, with a focus on either A-level Chinese or an equivalent examination, such as the Cambridge Pre-U. 35 teachers (70%) had gained QTS via the PGCE teacher training route, while the remainder had obtained QTS through non-PGCE routes, such as the School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) route. The participants were recruited via two online platforms: WeChat (a teachers' social media group) and an online Chinese-language teachers' forum.

Table 1. Demographic background of the participants ($N = 50$).

Factors	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Age	20–29	4	8%
	30–39	20	40%
	40–49	11	22%
	50–59	13	26%
	60 or above	2	4%
Gender	Female	39	78%
	Male	8	16%
	Prefer not to say	3	6%
L1	Chinese	37	74%
	Non-native Chinese	13	26%
Education	Bachelor	13	26%
	Master or above	37	74%
Chinese teaching experience	1–6 years	22	44%
	7 years or above	28	56%
Experience teaching a-level or equivalent	<3 years	21	42%
	4–9 years	19	38%
	>10 years	10	20%

We also recruited nine of the teachers with experience of teaching A-level Chinese for further interview.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants: 74% were native Chinese speakers, and 26% were non-native Chinese speakers. Regarding educational qualifications, 74% held a master's degree or higher. 44% of the teachers had one to six years of Chinese-language teaching experience, while 56% had seven years of experience or more. 58% had over four years' teaching experience at Key Stage 5, including A-level Chinese, Cambridge Pre-U Chinese, International Baccalaureate and similar qualifications.

Methods

As noted above, there has been very little investigation of the Chinese A-level examination. The current study is part of a larger project, and the other two sub-projects aim to determine the difficulty level of A-level test papers focusing on listening and reading skills. To be in line with the objectives of the main project, we chose to focus our current project on the receptive skills in Paper 1, as we did not have access to test-takers' responses from writing and speaking papers. We designed an anonymous questionnaire in English, to be accessed via Google Forms. The first section included 10 multiple-choice questions about participants' background information. Subsequent questions (see Appendix 1) were divided into two parts. Participants with A-level Chinese teaching experience (Survey A, $n = 30$) were invited to answer a first set of 10 multiple-choice questions relevant to A-level Chinese at the participant's school, including choice of examination board, student motivation, approaches to the curriculum, timetabling and challenges in preparing students. These were followed by three five-point Likert-scale questions relating respectively to the evaluation of textbooks and continuity between GCSE and A-level, and the difficulty of the listening and reading tests. There were a few more questions on the topics of weekly timetables, textbook use, teaching approaches and text genres; however, due to limited space, regrettably we have had to focus the discussion in the next section on the most directly relevant sections of the survey. One open-ended question asked for any further views on the A-level Chinese examination. Participants with no A-level Chinese teaching experience (Survey B, $n = 20$) were invited to answer eight questions (five multiple-choice questions and three open-ended questions) relevant to Chinese-language teaching at Key Stage 5, covering in particular why A-level Chinese might not currently be offered. SPSS was used to analyse the data collected from the online surveys.

In this study, a sequential mixed-method approach was adopted with qualitative data collected from interviews after the quantitative data had been analysed. The interviews had three parts. The

first part aimed to collect relevant background information on the interviewees as the online questionnaires had been completed anonymously. Then each interviewee was invited to expand on their views about the A-level Chinese examination, and specifically the listening and reading tests that form part of Paper 1. This was guided by seven questions, ranging from why Edexcel was chosen as the examination board, to the advantages and disadvantages of the current examination design. The final part focused on 12 questions relating to the teachers' opinions on A-level Chinese teaching and learning. The interviews were conducted in English online via Zoom (see Appendix 2 for Interview questions). The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis was then undertaken using MAXQDA software. The process involved coding all the data before identifying key themes.

Results

Survey A (A-level)

Overview

In Survey A, 57% of the teachers with experience of teaching the A-level course noted that they were not offered any alternatives to this examination in their schools, with 40% stating that senior management had made the decision to choose the Edexcel A-level course. This suggests that the choice of examination board and corresponding curriculum may have been heavily influenced by administrative decisions at school management level, rather than by individual Chinese teachers' preferences.

73% of the teachers said they had heritage Chinese students in their classes, with 53% reporting that the main motivation among their students in choosing A-level Chinese was their status as heritage language learners. 57% reported that they felt their students had chosen the course due to their personal interests, while 33% reported that parental influence was probably a factor.

Three key issues: teaching materials, continuity and difficulty of assessments

The questionnaire responses from the 30 A-level teachers were analysed in order to explore more fully three key issues: their evaluation of current teaching materials for A-level Chinese, their views on continuity between GCSE and A-level Chinese courses, and their views on the relative ease/difficulty for students of aspects of the A-level Chinese reading and listening tests. The teachers' responses on textbooks provided some insight into the effectiveness, suitability and availability of the resources currently used for teaching A-level Chinese. The connection between GCSE and A-level Chinese explored the teachers' views on the continuity, alignment and progression of Chinese-language learning from GCSE to A-level. Teachers' observations and opinions regarding the difficulty of the A-level Chinese listening and reading papers helped identify possible reasons for learners thinking of continuing Chinese-language study at A-level.

Table 2 shows that a majority of Survey A teachers (70%) disagreed with the statement that 'A-level textbooks are sufficient to deliver the course'. Many also mentioned this issue multiple times throughout the survey or at interview. Concerning GCSE provision in their school, 36.7% reported that the school had chosen the Edexcel GCSE Chinese examination, while 46.7% offered the alternative AQA GCSE Chinese. The remainder said that their schools offered either Cambridge International

Table 2. Teachers' perceptions of textbooks and GCSE – A-level continuity ($n = 30$).

Items	1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither agree/Disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree	Mean	Sd
The textbooks I use are sufficient for a-level Chinese teaching	27%	43%	20%	10%	0%	2.13	1.81
GCSE Chinese and a-level are well-connected	50%	33%	10%	7%	0%	1.73	1.44

Table 3. Listening test difficulty ($n = 30$).

	1. Too easy	2. Easy	3. Neither easy nor difficult	4. Difficult	5. Too difficult	Mean	SD
Pace	3%	7%	43%	33%	13%	3.47	3.07
Topic choice	0%	10%	43%	30%	17%	3.53	3.12
Length	0%	13%	27%	47%	13%	3.60	3.18
Vocabulary range	0%	10%	20%	47%	23%	3.83	3.42
Grammar	3%	10%	37%	37%	13%	3.47	3.08

Table 4. Reading test difficulty ($n = 30$).

	1. Too easy	2. Easy	3. Neither easy nor difficult	4. Difficult	5. Too difficult	Mean	SD
Topic choice	0%	13%	43%	27%	17%	3.47	3.07
Length	0%	13%	37%	37%	13%	3.50	3.09
Vocabulary range	0%	17%	23%	33%	27%	3.70	3.33
Grammar	6%	17%	37%	27%	13%	3.23	2.90

GCSE Chinese or Edexcel International GCSE Chinese. Despite the different examination boards being offered at GCSE – or perhaps because of this – 80% of the teachers did not consider that the GCSE and A-level Chinese examinations were well-aligned, suggesting that continuity between the two curricula is a problem.

In response to a final open question on their views of the A-level Chinese, most teachers noted the absence of clear guidance and appropriate teaching resources. This suggests that A-level Chinese teachers face significant challenges, particularly in effectively preparing non-native speaker students for the examination.

Regarding the difficulty of the A-level listening and reading tests, 70% of the teachers judged the vocabulary range of the listening passages to be 'difficult' or 'too difficult' for their students while 60% similarly judged the length of the passages. Half the teachers felt that grammar in the listening passages was 'difficult' or 'too difficult', while 47% felt the topics chosen were (too) difficult, and 46% felt similarly about the pace of delivery (Table 3). Responses were not dissimilar for the reading tests: 60% judged the vocabulary range to be (too) difficult with 50% responding similarly in relation to the length of reading passages. 44% felt the choice of topic was (too) difficult and 40% felt grammar was (too) difficult (Table 4).

Teaching experience and language background in perceptions of A-level Chinese

To explore whether teaching experience and language background might impact participants' perceptions, comparisons of various groups within the Survey A teacher sample were undertaken. The first division was based on teaching experience, resulting in three groups: novice teachers with less than three years of experience ($n = 11$); experienced teachers with four to nine years of experience ($n = 8$); and teachers with 10 years or more of experience ($n = 11$). The second division was based on language background, resulting in two groups: native ($n = 23$) and non-native ($n = 7$) Chinese-language teachers.

Statistical analyses were employed to examine the relationship between these two factors and teachers' perceptions. Correlation analysis was used to assess the associations between different

Table 5. Teaching experience and perceptions of Chinese A-level ($n = 30$).

	Textbooks adequate	GCSE- a-level continuity	Listening					Reading			
			Pace	Topic choice	Length	Vocabulary range	Grammar	Topic choice	Length	Vocabulary range	Grammar
Correlation	0.32	0.23	-0.37	-0.27	-0.37	-0.38	-0.36	-0.21	-0.32	-0.38	-0.39
p	.08	.22	.04	.15	.04	.04	.05	.27	.09	.04	.04

Table 6. ANOVA between groups with different levels of experience.

		<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>
Textbook	Between groups	3.046	2	1.523	1.834	.179
	Within groups	22.420	27	0.830		
	Total	25.467	29			
Continuity	Between groups	0.958	2	0.479	0.564	.575
	Within groups	22.909	27	0.848		
	Total	23.867	29			
Listening pace	Between groups	8.137	2	4.069	6.339	.006
	Within groups	17.330	27	0.642		
	Total	25.467	29			
Listening topic choice	Between groups	3.103	2	1.552	2.057	.147
	Within groups	20.364	27	0.754		
	Total	23.467	29			
Listening content length	Between groups	4.109	2	2.055	2.906	.072
	Within groups	19.091	27	0.707		
	Total	23.200	29			
Listening vocabulary range	Between groups	5.473	2	2.737	3.953	.031
	Within groups	18.693	27	0.692		
	Total	24.167	29			
Listening grammar	Between groups	5.603	2	2.802	3.460	.046
	Within groups	21.864	27	0.810		
	Total	27.467	29			
Reading topic choice	Between groups	2.376	2	1.188	1.389	.267
	Within groups	23.091	27	0.855		
	Total	25.467	29			
Reading content length	Between groups	4.443	2	2.222	3.148	.059
	Within groups	19.057	27	0.706		
	Total	23.500	29			
Reading vocabulary range	Between groups	7.425	2	3.713	4.030	.029
	Within groups	24.875	27	0.921		
	Total	32.300	29			
Reading grammar	Between groups	8.037	2	4.019	3.970	.031
	Within groups	27.330	27	1.012		
	Total	35.367	29			

variables. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was undertaken to compare the views of teachers with different levels of experience, while independent-sample *t*-tests were conducted to determine if language background significantly impacted their perceptions.

Teaching experience and perceptions of A-level Chinese

Table 5 shows the correlations between the Survey A participants' teaching experience and their perceptions of A-level Chinese. Several significant correlations were identified. Firstly, no significant correlations were found between teaching experience and views on the adequacy of A-level Chinese textbooks or on continuity between GCSE and A-level Chinese. In relation to listening tests, teachers' perceptions of the pace of the listening ($p = .04$), the length of the listening ($p = .04$), vocabulary range ($p = .04$) and grammar ($p = .05$) were negatively correlated with their teaching experience. In relation to reading tests, teachers' perceptions of grammar ($p = .04$) and vocabulary range ($p = .04$) were negatively correlated with their teaching experience. It seems that the more experienced teachers perceived various aspects of the listening and reading examinations as less difficult compared with less experienced teachers.

ANOVA was used to examine further how teaching experience influenced the participating teachers' opinions regarding the perceived difficulty of the A-level listening and reading tests. The ANOVA results (Table 6 and Appendix 3) confirmed significant differences between the experience groups in rating the difficulty of various aspects of the listening and reading tests. In relation to the listening paper, this concerned pace ($p = .006$), vocabulary range ($p = .031$) and grammar ($p = .046$), while in relation to the reading paper, it concerned vocabulary range ($p = .029$) and grammar ($p = .031$). In all cases, the less experienced teachers perceived the tests as more difficult. This

Table 7. Non-native teachers' perceptions of listening tests ($n = 7$).

Listening	Too easy	Easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Difficult	Too difficult
Pace	0%	0%	14%	43%	43%
Topic choice	0%	0%	29%	14%	57%
Length	0%	14%	14%	14%	58%
Vocabulary range	0%	0%	0%	43%	57%
Grammar	0%	0%	14%	43%	43%

Table 8. Non-native teachers' perceptions of reading tests ($n = 7$).

Reading	Too easy	Easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Difficult	Too difficult
Topic choice	0%	0%	29%	14%	57%
Length	0%	0%	28%	29%	43%
Vocabulary range	0%	14%	14%	14%	58%
Grammar	14%	0%	14%	29%	43%

finding aligns with Brown's (2015) case study, which suggested that novice teachers may need to develop the pedagogical and personal skills required to help their students succeed in high-stakes examinations and to navigate teaching in such contexts; more experienced teachers face these challenges with greater confidence.

Language background and perceptions of A-level Chinese

As shown in Tables 7 and 8, at least two thirds of the non-native Chinese-language teachers teaching the A-level syllabus regarded all aspects of both the listening and the reading tests as 'difficult' or 'too difficult'. Vocabulary range in the listening tests was seen by all as 'difficult' or 'too difficult' while grammar and pace were (too) difficult for 86%. Non-native Chinese-language teachers typically judged the listening tests to be more difficult than the reading tests with an average 'difficult' response of 83% across all aspects of the listening tests, and 72% for all aspects of the reading tests. This could be attributed to the nature of the A-level Chinese listening tasks, which involve both listening comprehension and character writing. These challenges are likely to represent a particular difficulty for Chinese learners without a native or heritage background in the language.

An independent-samples t -test was employed to investigate whether language background influenced teachers' views relating to listening and reading test difficulty. Caution is necessary in

Table 9. Independent-samples test – language background.

	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means					95% confidence interval	
	F	p	t	df	p	Mean difference	Std. error difference	Lower	Upper
Textbook adequate?	0.537	0.470	1.372	28	.181	0.547	0.399	-0.270	1.363
Continuity	2.357	0.136	1.525	28	.139	0.584	0.383	-0.201	1.368
Listening pace	0.007	0.933	-2.978	28	.006	-1.068	0.359	-1.803	-0.333
Listening topic choice	1.151	0.292	-2.812	28	.009	-0.981	0.349	-1.696	-0.267
Listening content length	3.961	0.056	-1.917	28	.066	-0.708	0.369	-1.465	0.049
Listening vocabulary range	1.836	0.186	-2.694	28	.012	-0.963	0.357	-1.695	-0.231
Listening grammar	0.153	0.699	-2.835	28	.008	-1.068	0.377	-1.840	-0.296
Reading topic choice	0.933	0.342	-2.978	28	.006	-1.068	0.359	-1.803	-0.333
Reading content length	0.056	0.815	-2.314	28	.028	-0.839	0.362	-1.581	-0.096
Reading vocabulary range	0.390	0.538	-1.282	28	.210	-0.578	0.451	-1.501	0.345
Reading grammar	1.694	0.204	-1.768	28	.088	-0.814	0.460	-1.756	0.129

Note: In all cases, equal variances assumed.

interpreting these comparative results as the overall sample size was relatively small and the two groups compared were unequal in number, consisting of native Chinese-language teachers ($n = 23$) and non-native Chinese-language teachers ($n = 7$). Nevertheless, our results are fairly clear: non-native Chinese-language teachers tended to perceive the listening and reading tests as more difficult than native Chinese-language teachers. The detailed results (Table 9) revealed significant differences in perception of the difficulty of the listening tests in relation specifically to audio pace ($p = .006$), topic choice ($p = .009$), listening vocabulary range ($p = .012$) and grammar ($p = .008$). In relation to the reading test, there were significant differences in the perception of difficulty relating to topic choice ($p = .006$) and length ($p = .028$). Non-native teachers perceived that tests of receptive skills were far more difficult than their native counterparts, but the constraints and the unbalanced sample size has to be noted.

Survey B (non A-level)

In Survey B, the participants comprised 20 teachers with no prior experience of teaching A-level Chinese. All apart from two were teaching the Cambridge Pre-U Chinese course; of the remaining two, one taught Scottish qualifications, and one taught up to GCSE level. The survey revealed that the majority of teachers in this group strongly favoured the Cambridge Pre-U Chinese course due to its perceived accessibility and fairness for non-native speakers. However, half the teachers mentioned that their school planned to switch to Edexcel A-level Chinese as the Pre-U course was being discontinued from 2023 (Table 10).

Table 10. Challenges of switching to A-level: non-A-level teachers' responses ($n = 20$).

Schools	Students' language proficiency is below required level: 80%
	No suitable teaching resources: 55%
	No suitable teachers: 0%
Teachers	Students' language proficiency is below required level: 80%
	No suitable teaching resources: 70%
	I am not confident in teaching A-level Chinese: 25%
Students	Students' language proficiency is below required level: 80%
	Literature reading is too hard: 70%
	Not going to study Chinese in university: 20%

80% of the Survey B participants identified students' language level as the biggest factor perceived as dissuading schools, teachers and students from choosing the A-level course; the teachers, mostly teaching an alternative curriculum to A-level but at the same level, expressed strong concerns over the likely mismatch between their students' language proficiency and the difficulty of the A-level examination. 70% of the teachers also expressed concerns about the lack of suitable resources for teaching A-level Chinese, while 25% admitted they lacked confidence in teaching this advanced level course.

Interviews: teachers' professional development needs

In addition to our two surveys, we also gathered qualitative data through interviews with nine teachers from our Survey A group, i.e. teachers with experience of teaching A-level Chinese. The interview transcripts were analysed according to the order of the interview questions with the help of MAXQDA software. 'Lack of teaching resources' was the first topic where many interviewees expressed negative views, as shown in Table 11. One interviewee highlighted the lack of Chinese-language resources compared with other languages while another believed the current A-level Chinese textbook, namely, *Edexcel Chinese for AS*, was outdated. Another interviewee stated that among several obstacles that might challenge the future development of A-level Chinese, the lack of adequate resources would be the most significant.

Table 11. Lack of teaching resources – extracts from interviews.

Question	
2.3 Pros and cons	... all of our other languages, Spanish and French use Edexcel A-level, so we [Chinese] are the same, but their resources are much more than ours. (Interviewee 1)
3.4 Textbook	... there are several books now, although there is a series of purple books [the old A-level textbook: Edexcel Chinese for AS], but I think it is too old, and then I also think that the articles from the purple books are too long, it can't reflect the layout of real exam, the length of the article is totally inconsistent, and the topic is not timely. (Interviewee 4)
3.9 Challenges	... there are too few choices, and this hinders them from learning Chinese. If this level of obstacles is removed, some students may choose A-level Chinese, and then teachers will have to overcome all these obstacles, such as no textbooks, no resources, and the exam is particularly difficult. (Interviewee 1)

Table 12. Limitations in teachers' pedagogic knowledge – extracts from interviews.

Question	
3.2 Teaching approach	There is no particular need for training, and my focus is on writing and speaking. (Interviewee 3)
3.5 CEFR	I don't know about CEFR, but I'm very interested in it. (Interviewee 5)
3.5 CEFR	I don't think A-level Chinese fits with CEFR, although the Edexcel exam board always refer to the CEFR level. (Interviewee 6)
3.9 Challenges	For the teacher, it will involve cross curriculum preparation. It will assume that the Chinese teacher is only good at Chinese. Assuming that he does not have a media background, he must first do some Continuous Professional Development before he can understand how to teach. (Interviewee 4)

The second key issue emerging from the interviews was that of limitations in some teachers' pedagogic knowledge (see Table 12). For example, one teacher faced difficulty in clearly defining her teaching approaches, while more than half of the interviewees had no knowledge of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is used to establish a clear scale of reference for second language performance levels, against which all examinations can align. Like most language examinations in the UK, the Edexcel A-level is mapped against the CEFR. Those who were familiar with the CEFR felt that A-level Chinese could not be directly aligned to this prominent framework.

Table 13. Relationship between teachers and the exam board – extracts from interviews.

Question	
3.7 How to improve	We should unite all the teachers around us to challenge Ofqual. (Interviewee 7)
3.8 How to help	I think we need Edexcel to give us some guidance, then our material will be recognized by them, but they have to give us guidance. (Interviewee 1)
3.12 Opinions	... The exam board, Edexcel, said they sent out a survey about things we would like to see, and then they did none of them. (Interviewee 8)

A further issue that most interviewees raised was the attitude of the examination board, which they felt was not supportive or open to feedback from teachers themselves. As shown in Table 13, one teacher advocated for unity among Chinese-language teachers in England to challenge Ofqual, the UK government's examinations regulator, and request modifications to the Chinese A-level. Another highlighted perceived lack of guidance from the examination board. A further teacher shared her frustration that the examination board appeared to have ignored suggestions made by teachers on improving A-level assessment. The tensions between test designers and teachers, as reflected in the participants' opinions, may pose an additional obstacle to A-level Chinese development and teachers' professional growth.

Discussion and conclusion

Discussion

In response to our first research question, the results indicate that the participating teachers of A-level Chinese in England overall hold negative views of the current textbook resources available in their schools for teaching at this level. They also believe there is discontinuity between the GCSE and A-level Chinese courses. Furthermore, both novice and experienced teachers share the view that, currently, expectations of appropriate levels of achievement at A-level are likely to be skewed by the significant proportion of heritage language students taking the examination, making it difficult for students without a Chinese-language background to achieve top grades. If more non-heritage learners cannot be attracted to Chinese-language study in general, and A-level study in particular, many Chinese classrooms in English schools will consist only of first and heritage language students in the future. This in turn would be wholly inconsistent with the role of foreign-language courses to help build a 'truly global UK' (British Council 2017). An urgent review of the Chinese A-level syllabus and assessment is thus needed, particularly now that the Cambridge Pre-U Chinese examination has been withdrawn.

Encouragingly, the Department for Education (2023a) has recently announced an optimistic plan to conduct a consultation on modifying the Chinese A-level syllabus and examination. This anticipated reform aims to enhance the suitability and accessibility of the examination in particular for students who do not have a Chinese-language background.

The second research question sought to investigate the participating teachers' needs for professional development. From our research, it appears that there are three obstacles to A-level Chinese teachers' CPD. The first is the lack of teaching resources. There is a gap between the currently available A-level Chinese textbooks in schools of England and what the participants feel is required to prepare students effectively for the current A-level Chinese examinations. This issue aligns with previous studies (e.g. Yu and Zhang 2022, Zhang and Li 2010) that have highlighted concerns about the inadequacy and imbalanced of Chinese-language teaching resources available in the UK, as materials in the market mainly focus on beginner levels, and not advanced level. There is also a shortage of teachers who can teach such an advanced level course. To address this obstacle, it is necessary to update and develop more teaching resources specifically designed for A-level Chinese students.

Furthermore, there needs to be a clearer approach to ensuring that Chinese-language teachers are able to gain appropriate UK teaching qualifications, and develop relevant teacher knowledge. Although many teachers in this study had significant experience of teaching Chinese, they struggled to articulate their teaching approaches. In particular, their familiarity with language assessment frameworks such as the CEFR, against which both GCSE and A-level language examinations are referenced, was limited. This finding resonates with previous research by Song (2014), who highlighted the significant demand for appropriately qualified Chinese-language teachers in UK schools. To support the professional development of A-level Chinese teachers, relevant language teacher education programmes need to be offered, both pre-experience and once teachers are in post, to enable them to enhance relevant pedagogical knowledge and skills.

The third and final obstacle concerns the perceived communication gap between Chinese-language teachers and the examination board. The teachers participating in our research expressed the need for their voices to be heard and considered in the modification of the A-level Chinese curriculum and assessment. They believed that, if the A-level Chinese examination is to increase its influence in schools of England, experienced Chinese-language teachers should be actively involved in the design of test papers that their students will sit. Overcoming this obstacle requires establishing effective channels of communication and collaboration between teachers of Chinese and the examination board to ensure their valuable insights and perspectives are taken into account.

Conclusion and limitations

Our study highlights the strong feeling among the Chinese-language teachers surveyed that reforms and development are needed in the design of the Chinese curriculum in schools of England, especially regarding teaching resources, continuity between programmes and assessment design. Additionally, it must be recognised that students whose first or heritage language is Chinese have an advantage at GCSE and A-level compared to those who started as absolute beginners, and that this situation may lead to skewed curriculum planning and demotivation for students without a Chinese-language background.

Attention also needs to be given to CPD for Chinese-language teachers. Here, three obstacles remain: the lack of appropriate teaching resources, the lack of opportunities for Chinese-language teacher education (and thus the lack of qualified teachers), and the lack of participation by experienced teachers in the process of curriculum – and specifically, assessment – development.

Our study provides a starting point for understanding some of the challenges associated with the delivery of A-level Chinese in England. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that the number of participants in our study was relatively small. Further research needs to be undertaken to explore in greater depth the issues raised here, surveying more stakeholders, especially teachers and students with direct experience of A-level Chinese. More research should also focus on the learning needs and journeys of non-native learners of Chinese beyond the beginner's level. In this study, most of the teachers were teaching students who were mainly either native speakers from China or British-born Chinese speakers who speak Chinese at home.

This study has also only focused on participating teachers' attitudes towards the reading and listening sections of A-level Chinese examination. A-level Chinese students' writing and speaking performance is also important in understanding their experience of the current A-level curriculum and in identifying the challenges faced by their teachers.

Concerns have been raised consistently regarding the difficulty in the A-level Chinese examination by teachers from relevant online forums (e.g. <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=MANDARIN-CHINESE-TEACHING> and dedicated WeChat groups), which is also supported by our interview and survey data. The Department for Education (DfE) thus conducted a public consultation in 2023 (Department for Education 2023b). The data from the consultation show that 73% of the 169 responses strongly agree with the proposition that Paper 1 comprehension tests should be answered in English, not in Chinese (as was the case at the time of this survey). Additionally, 38 responses articulated the belief that non-native students face a greater disadvantage. 23 responses also noted there is discrimination against non-native learners, while 32 participants observed that character-based languages, such as Mandarin, pose greater challenges in acquisition in comparison with alphabetical languages. DfE has now agreed that English should be used for questions in Paper 1, and this change is scheduled to take effect with the new content in 2024 and the first assessment in 2026. As this consultation took place after the data collection of the present study had been completed, we were not able to take account of this change in our survey. Using English in the reading and listening paper, however, should be investigated further in terms of the impact on teaching, learning, and assessment of the Chinese language. It is clear that Chinese writing skills could be another significant area where the current performance gap between heritage students and students whose first language is not Chinese is reinforced.

Note

1. All references to the 'Chinese' language refer to Mandarin Chinese.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire (excluding Part I)

Survey A (for teachers who have A-level Chinese teaching experience)

Part II A Level Mandarin Chinese at your school

1. Why does your school choose Edexcel as the A-level Chinese Exam board? (You may choose more than one answer)
 - 1) A decision from the senior management. 40%
 - 2) There's no alternative. 57%
 - 3) My school doesn't choose A level Chinese.
 - 4) Any other: please indicate here _____
2. Do you have heritage Chinese students (that is, the Chinese language learned at home as children) in your class?
 - 1) 1. Yes 73%
 - 2) No
 - 3) Any other: please indicate here _____
3. What is the biggest motivation of your students to choose Mandarin as an A-level subject? You can choose more than one answer.
 - 1) They have the advantage of speaking Chinese as a heritage language. 53%
 - 2) They are interested in the Chinese culture and Chinese language. 57%
 - 3) Their parents advise that they should choose A-Level Mandarin Chinese. 33%
 - 4) Any other: Please indicate here _____
4. Do you follow A-level Curriculum plan in lexis, grammar, or language functions? Please specify.
 - 1) Edexcel's curriculum for A-level Chinese
 - 2) Cambridge International A-level
 - 3) I design my own curriculum
 - 4) Any other: Please indicate here _____
5. How does your school timetable A-Level Mandarin courses in Y12 and Y13? Please give details of the weekly timetable (每周课时安排) : _____ hours per week
6. What textbooks do you use for teaching Mandarin?
 - 1) Easy steps to Chinese
 - 2) Chinese for Advanced Subsidiary Level
 - 3) I design my own curriculum.
 - 4) Any other: Please indicate here _____
7. What exam board does your school choose for GCSE Mandarin?
 - 1) Edexcel GCSE
 - 2) AQA GCSE
 - 3) Cambridge International GCSE
 - 4) Any other: Please indicate here _____
8. What are the challenges of preparing students for A level Chinese?
 - 1) No suitable materials.
 - 2) The curriculum is too challenging.
 - 3) Any other: please indicate here _____
9. What teaching approach(es) do you use in your lessons? (You may choose more than one answer)
 - 1) Communicative approach 交际法 (e.g. using role-play activities)
 - 2) Content-based approach 内容教学法 (e.g. focusing on subject content such as literature)
 - 3) Grammar translation approach 语法翻译法
 - 4) Any other: please indicate here _____
10. Are you aware of the main modes of discourse (types of genres) from the test papers? (You may choose more than one answer.)
 - 1) Narrative writing 叙述
 - 2) Argumentative writing 议论
 - 3) Expository writing 说明
 - 4) Descriptive writing 描写
 - 5) Others _____

Part III Your opinions about A-level Chinese

1. Please choose one option based on how you agree or disagree with each of the statements.

	1. strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neither agree nor disagree	4. agree	5. strongly agree
The textbooks I use are sufficient for A-level Mandarin teaching	27%	43%	20%	10%	0%
GCSE Mandarin and A-level are well-connected					

2. Please indicate if the difficulty level of the A-level Chinese **Listening Test** is appropriate for your students in the following areas.

	1. too easy	2. easy	3. neither easy nor difficult	4. difficult	5. too difficult
pace of recording	3%	7%	43%	33%	13%
topic choice	0%	10%	43%	30%	17%
content length	0%	13%	27%	47%	13%
vocabulary range	0%	10%	20%	47%	23%
grammar	3%	10%	37%	37%	13%

3. Please indicate if the difficulty level of the A-level Chinese **Reading Test** is appropriate for your students in the following areas.

	1. too easy	2. easy	3. neither easy nor difficult	4. difficult	5. too difficult
topic choice					
content length					
vocabulary range					
grammar points					

4. What is your view of A-level Chinese? Please explain.

Survey B (for teachers who have NO A-level Chinese teaching experience)

Part II 6th form Mandarin Chinese

- Does your school offer a 6th form Chinese course at your school?
 - Yes (please go to Q2 and Q3)
 - No (please go to Q4)
- What Mandarin courses does your school offer at 6th form now?
 - Cambridge Pre-U
 - Cambridge International A-level
 - IB
 - HSK
 - Any other: please indicate here _____
- Why does your school choose this exam board as a Chinese course at 6th form?
- Does your school plan to offer A-level Chinese at 6th form in the future, and why?
- What may be the biggest challenge for your school to offer Edexcel A-level Chinese? (You may choose more than one answer)
 - No suitable teaching resources.
 - No suitable teachers.
 - Students' language proficiency is under the level.
 - Any other: please indicate here _____
- What may be the biggest issue for you to prepare your students to study Edexcel A-level Chinese? (You may choose more than one answer)
 - No suitable teaching resources.
 - I am not confident in teaching A-level Chinese.
 - Students' language proficiency is under the level.
 - Any other: please indicate here _____
- What is the biggest obstacle for your students to choose Edexcel A-level Chinese? (You may choose more than one answer)
 - Students' language proficiency is under the level.
 - Literature reading is too difficult for them.
 - They are not going to study Mandarin related subjects at university.
 - Any other: please indicate here _____
- What is your view of A-level Chinese? Please explain.

Appendix 2. Teacher Interview Questions

Part I Background info

Gender	<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female
Age	<input type="radio"/> 20-29 <input type="radio"/> 30-39 <input type="radio"/> 40-49 <input type="radio"/> 50-59 <input type="radio"/> 60 or above
Education	<input type="radio"/> Bachelor <input type="radio"/> Masters <input type="radio"/> PhD
Teaching qualification (PGCE/NQT etc.)	<input type="radio"/> PGCE <input type="radio"/> PGCHE <input type="radio"/> NQT <input type="radio"/> Any other: please indicate here
L1 Chinese	Yes / No
Position held in the school	
Years of Mandarin teaching experience in the UK	<input type="radio"/> 1-3 years <input type="radio"/> 4-6 years <input type="radio"/> 7-10 years <input type="radio"/> 10 year or above <input type="radio"/> Any other: please indicate here
Years of A-level equivalent (i.e. Pre-U, A-Level) teaching experience (please specify the exam board)	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 year <input type="radio"/> 1-3 years <input type="radio"/> 4-6 years <input type="radio"/> 7-10 years <input type="radio"/> 10 year or above <input type="radio"/> Any other: please indicate here
What other courses have you taught?	<input type="radio"/> GCSE Chinese <input type="radio"/> Pre-U <input type="radio"/> HSK <input type="radio"/> Any other: please indicate here

Part II Look at A level Chinese Listening and Reading paper

1. Why did you choose EdExcel A level Chinese as the exam board? 为什么选择 Ed A-level作为exam board?

2. What are your views of the content of the test, including (根据past paper 进行讨论)

1. Source : 你知道考题来源/出处 (新闻, 文学, 期刊, 网络。。。) 吗? 如何评价?
2. Do you know the types or modes of discourse from the test paper? Please give examples. 你知道听力和阅读试卷的语篇类型吗? 是科技文章, 记叙文, 还是议论文, 或者是其他类型? 请举例。

* (考题语篇类型 The four types or modes of discourse are description表述型, narration叙述型, exposition 阐述型和 argumentation论证型)

3. Topics 你观察到试卷话题类型有哪些 (日常, 校园, 社会。。。), 请举例。

4. Item difficulties, including content length, vocabulary, and grammar 你觉得这套题目总体的难度/长度, 词汇语法难度怎么样? 有没有个别特别难/容易的题目。请举例说明。

5) 你觉得这套试卷是考察学生什么样的技能? 学生怎么样才能在考试中取得高分? --考试技巧 【题型, 包括题干及选项, 选择题和回答题, 题目所考核的认知能力 (比如识别汉字的能力, 推断能力, 词汇组合能力, 评估能力等) item types, including their views on response types (i.e., selected response/constructed response/extended response) and cognitive functions (i.e., recognise and retrieve/make inferences/ evaluate). 】

What you think about how A level Chinese is designed in its current form? What do you like about it, and what areas still need to improve?

请举例说明目前A-level试卷的优缺点以及如何改进。

Part III A-level Chinese teaching and Learning

1. Do you have students with Chinese as a heritage language in your class? Why do they choose Ed A-level Chinese Course? What about non-native?

你的班级里有母语者吗？他们学习动机是什么？非母语者多学习动机呢？

2. What is your teaching approach, e.g. content-based, CLIL?

你通常用什么教学方法？（传统教学手法-重视字词句语法，听说法，交际法，内容为导向的教学法，CLIL等）

3. Do you follow any curriculum in lexis, grammar, or language functions? Curriculum plan?

有教学大纲吗？如何安排每周课时？为什么这么安排？

4. What textbooks do you use?教材：

5. Do you know CEFR?你知道CEFR吗？--if YES, ask the question below; if Not, ignore

(What would you say is the major differences between A level Chinese with European languages such as French, Spanish in the same CEFR in relation to A level? Do you think it is fair to compare them A-level 中文与CEFR的关系，欧洲语言与CEFR的关系最大区别是什么？)

6. A level Chinese and GCSE Chinese 之间的衔接或不够衔接的点及由此带来的教学备考上的问题？

7. What should we do to encourage more students taking A-level Mandari?你觉得应该我们我们应该怎么做才能更好地鼓励学生选择A-level?

8. What should we do to support current students to achieve higher marks in A-level exams? 你觉得我们应该怎么做才能帮助现有的A-level 学生在考试中取得高分？

9. What are the challenges of preparing students for A level Chinese?

目前帮助学生准备A-level 中文考试的挑战是什么？

10. Do you any similar issues in other MFL subjects? 你知道欧洲语言有类似Ed中文A-level这样的问题吗？

11. In your view, how can A level Chinese test be used as a useful tool to promote Chinese teaching and learning in your school. A-level中文考试应该怎么样做才能促进你们学校的中文教学发展呢？

12. What is your view of the future of A-level Chinese? Do you think it is heading in the right direction? Please give your reason. 你觉得A-level 中文未来会朝着好的方向发展吗？为什么？

Appendix 3. Multiple Comparison among all three groups

		Bonferroni				95% confidence interval	
Dependent variable		Mean difference	Std. error	Sig. <.05	Lower bound	Upper bound	
		(I-J)					
Textbook	< 3 years experience	4- 9 years	-0.273	0.389	1.000	-1.26	0.72
		>10 years	-0.807	0.423	0.202	-1.89	0.27
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	0.273	0.389	1.000	-0.72	1.26
		>10 years	-0.534	0.423	0.654	-1.61	0.55
	> 10 years	< 3 years	0.807	0.423	0.202	-0.27	1.89
		4- 9 years	0.534	0.423	0.654	-0.55	1.61
Continuity	< 3 years	4- 9 years	-0.182	0.393	1.000	-1.18	0.82
		> 10 years	-0.455	0.428	0.893	-1.55	0.64
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	0.182	0.393	1.000	-0.82	1.18
		> 10 years	-0.273	0.428	1.000	-1.37	0.82
	> 10 years	< 3 years	0.455	0.428	0.893	-0.64	1.55
		4- 9 years	0.273	0.428	1.000	-0.82	1.37
Listening pace	< 3 years	4- 9 years	-0.273	0.342	1.000	-1.14	0.60
		>10 years	1.011*	0.372	0.034	0.06	1.96
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	0.273	0.342	1.000	-0.60	1.14
		>10 years	1.284*	0.372	0.006	0.33	2.23
	> 10 years	< 3 years	-1.011*	0.372	0.034	-1.96	-0.06
		4- 9 years	-1.284*	0.372	0.006	-2.23	-0.33
Listening topic choice	> 10 years	4- 9 years	0.000	0.370	1.000	-0.95	0.95
		> 10 years	0.727	0.404	0.248	-0.30	1.76
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	0.000	0.370	1.000	-0.95	0.95
		> 10 years	0.727	0.404	0.248	-0.30	1.76
	> 10 years	< 3 years	-0.727	0.404	0.248	-1.76	0.30
		4- 9 years	-0.727	0.404	0.248	-1.76	0.30
Listening content length	< 3 years	4- 9 years	0.182	0.359	1.000	-0.73	1.10
		> 10 years	0.909	0.391	0.083	-0.09	1.91
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	-0.182	0.359	1.000	-1.10	0.73
		> 10 years	0.727	0.391	0.221	-0.27	1.72
	> 10 years	< 3 years	-0.909	0.391	0.083	-1.91	0.09
		4- 9 years	-0.727	0.391	0.221	-1.72	0.27
Listening vocabulary range	< 3 years	4- 9 years	0.000	0.355	1.000	-0.91	0.91
		> 10 years	0.966	0.387	0.057	-0.02	1.95
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	0.000	0.355	1.000	-0.91	0.91
		> 10 years	0.966	0.387	0.057	-0.02	1.95
	> 10 years	< 3 years	-0.966	0.387	0.057	-1.95	0.02
		4- 9 years	-0.966	0.387	0.057	-1.95	0.02
Listening grammar	< 3 years	4- 9 years	0.000	0.384	1.000	-0.98	0.98
		> 10 years	0.977	0.418	0.081	-0.09	2.04
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	0.000	0.384	1.000	-0.98	0.98
		> 10 years	0.977	0.418	0.081	-0.09	2.04
	> 10 years	< 3 years	-0.977	0.418	0.081	-2.04	0.09
		4- 9 years	-0.977	0.418	0.081	-2.04	0.09
Reading topic choice	< 3 years	4- 9 years	0.000	0.394	1.000	-1.01	1.01
		> 10 years	0.636	0.430	0.451	-0.46	1.73
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	0.000	0.394	1.000	-1.01	1.01
		> 10 years	0.636	0.430	0.451	-0.46	1.73
	> 10 years	< 3 years	-0.636	0.430	0.451	-1.73	0.46
		4- 9 years	-0.636	0.430	0.451	-1.73	0.46
Reading content length	< 3 years	4- 9 years	-0.182	0.358	1.000	-1.10	0.73
		> 10 years	0.761	0.390	0.185	-0.24	1.76
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	0.182	0.358	1.000	-0.73	1.10
		> 10 years	0.943	0.390	0.068	-0.05	1.94
	> 10 years	< 3 years	-0.761	0.390	0.185	-1.76	0.24
		4- 9 years	-0.943	0.390	0.068	-1.94	0.05

(Continued)

Continued.

		Bonferroni				95% confidence interval	
Dependent variable		Mean difference (I-J)		Std. error	Sig. <.05	Lower bound	Upper bound
Reading vocabulary range	< 3 years	4- 9 years	0.000	0.409	1.000	-1.04	1.04
		> 10 years	1.125	0.446	0.054	-0.01	2.26
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	0.000	0.409	1.000	-1.04	1.04
		> 10 years	1.125	0.446	0.054	-0.01	2.26
	> 10 years	< 3 years	-1.125	0.446	0.054	-2.26	0.01
		4- 9 years	-1.125	0.446	0.054	-2.26	0.01
Reading grammar	< 3 years	4- 9 years	0.000	0.429	1.000	-1.09	1.09
		> 10 years	1.170	0.467	0.056	-0.02	2.36
	4- 9 years	< 3 years	0.000	0.429	1.000	-1.09	1.09
		> 10 years	1.170	0.467	0.056	-0.02	2.36
	> 10 years	< 3 years	-1.170	0.467	0.056	-2.36	0.02
		4- 9 years	-1.170	0.467	0.056	-2.36	0.02