

A Study on the Linguistic Features of TEM-4 Compositions by Junior English Majors from the Perspective of Systemic Functional Grammar

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Abstract:

The Test for English Majors Band 4 (TEM-4) is one of the most authoritative standards for evaluating the basic language abilities of English majors in China. Since 2016, revised writing requirements have demanded higher-order skills, including the ability to summarize source materials and critically discuss specific issues. Despite growing research interest in English writing instruction, few studies have analyzed TEM-4 compositions specifically from the perspective of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). This study recruited 12 junior English majors from Zhejiang International Studies University to produce TEM-4 compositions under authentic examination conditions. Using syntactic and lexical complexity indices from TAASSC 1.3.8 and TAALES 2.2, participants were divided into three proficiency groups: High-Level (Group A), Intermediate-Level (Group B), and Low-Level (Group C). Group validity was confirmed by the Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 9.846$, $p = 0.007$). UAMCorpusTool6 was then used to annotate each composition according to three SFG meta-functions. With respect to the ideational function, Groups A and C most frequently employed the material process, whereas Group B favored the relational process. With respect to the interpersonal function, all groups used modal operators at relatively high rates, with usage decreasing from Group A (46.3%) to Group C (33.3%). With respect to the textual function, all groups used marked themes, with frequency again decreasing from Group A (39.0%) to Group C (24.2%). These findings suggest that higher-quality TEM-4 compositions are characterized by more diverse process types, more strategic use of modal operators, and more varied thematic structures. The study offers a new, SFG-based perspective for analyzing and improving TEM-4 writing, with practical implications for writing instruction.

Keywords:

TEM-4 Writing, Systemic Functional Grammar, Linguistic Features

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Test for English Majors Band 4 (TEM-4) is one of the most authoritative standards for evaluating the basic language abilities of English majors in China [1]. Since its reform in 2016, the writing section has undergone substantial revision: students are no longer asked to produce a propositional essay on a given topic, but must instead read a source text on a current or controversial issue, concisely summarize its main arguments, and then critically discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a specific position introduced in the excerpt. This shift from purely expressive writing to reading-integrated writing demands significantly higher levels of comprehension, critical thinking, coherent argumentation, and stylistic control.

Despite these heightened requirements, many students continue to struggle with TEM-4 writing. Common difficulties include grammatical inaccuracies, poor logical organization, limited vocabulary range, and unclear expression of ideas. These weaknesses are partly attributable to interference from Chinese-English thinking patterns and partly to the persistence of grammar-translation teaching methods that prioritize linguistic accuracy over communicative competence. Although various pedagogical approaches — including multi-interactive teaching model [2], mind mapping [3-4], intelligent correction [5], and combined reading-writing approach [6]— have been applied in Chinese university writing classrooms, their effectiveness remains inconsistent. Crucially, such studies tend to evaluate writing quality primarily through score comparisons, treating compositions as a vehicle for measuring pedagogical impact rather than as objects of linguistic analysis in their own right. This risks overlooking the specific linguistic features that distinguish higher-quality from lower-quality compositions.

1.2. Theoretical Framework: Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), established by M. A. K. Halliday [7-19], offers a powerful framework for addressing this gap. Unlike traditional grammar, SFG views language as a meaning-making resource that simultaneously fulfills three meta-functions: the ideational meta-function (the construction of experience and logical relations), the interpersonal meta-function (the enactment of social roles and relationships), and the textual meta-function (the organization of discourse into coherent text). Each meta-function is realized through a distinct grammatical system, providing a comprehensive and multi-dimensional lens for analyzing the linguistic features of student writing.

The ideational meta-function is realized through the transitivity system, which categorizes clauses into six process types: material (physical actions or events), mental (cognitive and affective activities), relational (attributes or identities), verbal (symbolic exchanges), behavioral (physiological or psychological behaviors), and existential (existence or occurrence) [16,20]. The interpersonal meta-function is realized through the modality system, in which modal operators (e.g., “can,” “may,” “should,” “will”) enable writers to calibrate the epistemic weight of their claims and construct a persuasive yet epistemically responsible argumentative stance [18,20,21,22]. The textual meta-function is realized through thematic structure: each clause comprises a Theme (the point of departure, occupying the initial position) and a Rheme (the development of the theme). Themes may be unmarked (where the

subject occupies the theme position) or marked (where a non-subject element is fronted), with the distribution of marked and unmarked themes reflecting the writer's choices about information prominence and rhetorical emphasis [15,17].

1.3. Review of Related Studies and Research Gaps

SFG has been applied to analyze speeches from various sources and fields, such as news discourse from three prestigious universities [23], New Year greeting messages delivered by Chinese and US presidents [24], and educational English speeches from TED [25] and the same case can be seen in a range of student writing corpora. existing SFG-based studies of Chinese learner compositions have predominantly focused on the textual meta-function alone — particularly cohesive devices and thematic progression — with limited attention to the ideational and interpersonal dimensions. Li [26] analyzed lexical cohesion in TEM-4 compositions, Wang [27] investigated thematic progression in senior high school writing, and Wu [28], Zhang [29], Lu [30] and Ge [31] examined cohesive devices and discourse markers in various high school and university writing contexts. While these studies make valuable contributions, none applies all three meta-functions of SFG simultaneously, and few target TEM-4 compositions written specifically by university-level English majors.

1.4. Purpose and Significance of the Study

Three gaps in the existing literature motivate the present study. First, most studies on Chinese learner writing focus on high school students or CET-4 compositions, with relatively little attention to TEM-4 compositions produced by university-level English majors. Second, SFG-based analyses of TEM-4 writing remain rare. Third, no study has yet applied all three SFG meta-functions simultaneously to investigate how linguistic features differ across compositions of different quality levels. The present study addresses all three gaps by recruiting junior English majors to produce TEM-4 compositions, grouping participants by proficiency using automated linguistic complexity tools, and analyzing the ideational, interpersonal, and textual features of their compositions using SFG annotation software.

The study is guided by the following research question: What are the linguistic features of TEM-4 compositions written by junior English majors in terms of the three meta-functions of SFG, and how do these features differ across compositions of different quality levels? Theoretically, the study expands both the scope of TEM-4 writing research and the application of SFG as an analytical framework. Practically, it offers teachers and students evidence-based guidance on the specific linguistic choices — in terms of process selection, modal operator use, and thematic organization — that characterize high-quality TEM-4 argumentative writing.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research question:

What are the linguistic features of TEM-4 compositions written by junior English majors in terms of the three meta-functions of SFG, and how do these features differ across compositions of different quality levels?

2.2. Participants

Twelve junior undergraduate students (6 females and 6 males; mean age = 21.2 years, SD = 0.37) were recruited from Zhejiang International Studies University. All participants majored in English and had taken TEM-4 in 2023. Their average TEM-4 score was 74 points (rounded to the nearest whole number). Participants were invited to write a TEM-4 composition under authentic examination conditions, following the 2023 TEM-4 writing prompt (see Appendix I). Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

2.3. Data Collection and Scoring

Each participant produced one composition, yielding a corpus of 12 texts. Compositions were scored using two automated linguistic analysis tools: TAASSC 1.3.8 (Tool for the Automatic Analysis of Syntactic Sophistication and Complexity) and TAALES 2.2 (Tool for the Automatic Analysis of Lexical Sophistication). From TAASSC, two indices were selected: the mean number of dependents per clause (Index 1), a measure of syntactic complexity, and the standard deviation of dependents per clause (Index 2), a measure of syntactic variation [32,33]. From TAALES, the COCA_Academic_Range_AW index (Index 3) was selected [34], representing the mean range of academic word usage across corpus documents; notably, higher values on this index indicate lower lexical complexity, so the index was negated when calculating total scores.

Total scores for each participant were computed by summing the three indices (with Index 3 negated). Participants were then ranked in descending order and assigned to three groups: the top four participants formed Group A (High-Level), the middle four formed Group B (Intermediate-Level), and the bottom four formed Group C (Low-Level). It should be noted that, as no validated composite scoring model for TEM-4 compositions using TAASSC and TAALES has been established in the literature, this grading procedure represents a preliminary quantitative estimate intended to provide a basis for subsequent grouping and linguistic analysis rather than a definitive measure of writing quality.

2.4. Validity of Grouping

To verify that the three groups differed significantly in their composite writing scores, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted. This non-parametric test was selected given the small sample size. The results confirmed that the grouping was statistically valid (see Section 4.1), supporting the use of between-group comparisons in the subsequent linguistic analysis.

2.5. SFG Annotation

UAMCorpusTool6 was used to automatically annotate each composition according to the three SFG meta-functions, using three built-in annotators: SFL-Transitivity (ideational function), SFL-Mood (interpersonal function), and Halliday-Theme (textual function). Clause segmentation was also performed automatically by the tool. Manual annotation was applied in two situations: when the automatic annotator failed to assign a category to a clause, and when the automatic annotation was clearly ambiguous or erroneous. Data from the annotation were then aggregated to calculate the frequency and proportion of each SFG category for each group.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Grading and Grouping Results

Table 1 presents the individual and group scores derived from the three indices. Based on total scores, the top four participants (P1–P4) were assigned to Group A, the middle four (P5–P8) to Group B, and the bottom four (P9–P12) to Group C.

Table 1. Results of Grading and Grouping.

Rank	Code	Group	Index 1	Index 2	Index 3	Total Score	Group Mean (SD)
1	P1	Group A	2.758	1.652	−0.571	3.839	3.659 (0.152)
2	P2		2.816	1.502	−0.589	3.729	
3	P3		2.920	1.230	−0.596	3.554	
4	P4		2.622	1.421	−0.530	3.513	
5	P5	Group B	2.684	1.397	−0.606	3.475	3.430 (0.038)
6	P6		2.467	1.586	−0.610	3.443	
7	P7		2.714	1.278	−0.577	3.415	
8	P8		2.833	1.143	−0.590	3.386	
9	P9	Group C	2.714	1.296	−0.646	3.365	3.098 (0.311)
10	P10		2.558	1.369	−0.603	3.325	
11	P11		2.286	1.305	−0.588	3.003	
12	P12		2.313	0.950	−0.564	2.699	

The Kruskal-Wallis test results are presented in Table 2. The mean ranks of the writing scores for Groups A, B, and C were 10.5, 6.5, and 2.5, respectively. The Kruskal-Wallis statistic was $H = 9.846$ ($df = 2$, $p = 0.007$), indicating a statistically significant difference in the distribution of scores across the three groups ($p < 0.05$). This result confirms that the grouping procedure produced meaningfully differentiated proficiency levels, supporting the validity of between-group comparisons in the subsequent analysis.

Table 2. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results for Writing Scores Across Three Groups (a).

	Group	Mean Rank
Score	A	10.50
	B	6.50
	C	2.50
	Total (N = 12)	

Table 2. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results for Writing Scores Across Three Groups (b).

	Score
K-W Value	9.846
df	2
Asymp. Sig. (p)	0.007

3.2. Linguistic Features in Terms of the Ideational Function

Table 3 presents the frequency and percentage of each process type in the compositions of the three groups. For Groups A and C, the material process was most frequent, followed by the relational process. For Group B, however, the relational process was most frequent, followed by the material process. Verbal and behavioral processes were absent from all compositions, consistent with the argumentative genre of TEM-4 writing.

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of Process Types Across Groups (Ideational Function).

Process Type	Group A: Frequency (%)	Group B: Frequency (%)	Group C: Frequency (%)
Material	23 (56.1%)	16 (39.0%)	36 (54.5%)
Relational	10 (24.4%)	18 (43.9%)	18 (27.3%)
Mental	6 (14.6%)	4 (9.8%)	6 (9.1%)
Existential	2 (4.9%)	3 (7.3%)	6 (9.1%)
Total	41 (100%)	41 (100%)	66 (100%)

These findings have several implications. The material process conveys dynamic actions with precise semantic content, enabling writers to construct specific, concrete arguments. Group A's preference for material process verbs is consistent with the use of semantically rich and varied lexical verbs, as illustrated in the following examples drawn from participants' compositions (grammatical errors have been corrected):

(1) Teacher quality assessment... contains teacher qualification and quality and investigation on teachers' work.

(2) Quantities of uncertainty will result in the fluctuation of students' scores...

By contrast, the relational process—realized predominantly through “be + adjective” and “have + noun” structures—tends to produce more semantically generic and structurally monotonous clauses, as illustrated in the following examples:

(3) ... it can be very intuitive to assess teachers' personal qualities...

(4)... teacher quality pertaining to students' achievements has both advantages and disadvantages...

(5) There are many factors that can affect student's academic performance.

The higher proportion of relational process clauses in Group B compositions suggests that intermediate-level writers may over-rely on copular and possessive constructions, thereby limiting the semantic richness and expressive variety of their writing. This pattern is consistent with previous research indicating that more proficient L2 writers employ a greater variety of lexical verbs and more complex predication structures.

The complete absence of verbal and behavioral process types across all groups reflects the argumentative genre of the TEM-4 writing task, which does not require narration or depiction of speech events. The presence of existential clauses (“there be” constructions) across all groups is likely a genre-specific feature, used to introduce and foreground the arguments and counterarguments required by the task prompt.

3.3. Linguistic Features in Terms of the Interpersonal Function

Table 4 presents the frequency and percentage of clauses containing modal operators across the three groups.

Table 4. Frequency and Percentage of Modal Operator Usage Across Groups (Interpersonal Function).

Modal Operator	Group A: Frequency (%)	Group B: Frequency (%)	Group C: Frequency (%)
With	19 (46.3%)	15 (36.6%)	22 (33.3%)
Without	22 (53.7%)	26 (63.4%)	44 (66.7%)
Total	41 (100%)	41 (100%)	66 (100%)

All three groups used modal operators in a substantial proportion of their clauses, reflecting the interpersonally engaged nature of argumentative writing. However, the rate of modal operator usage decreased progressively from Group A (46.3%) to Group B (36.6%) and Group C (33.3%), suggesting that higher-quality compositions make more strategic and frequent use of modality.

In argumentative writing, modal operators serve multiple rhetorical functions. They enable writers to calibrate the epistemic weight of their claims (distinguishing between what is certain, probable, or merely possible), to soften potentially contentious positions, and to signal awareness of alternative perspectives. The following examples illustrate the range of modal meanings deployed by participants:

(6) ...investigations on teaching practice can be tested through many periods... [modal value: low; expresses possibility]

(7) This kind of assessment may be impression-based or narrative... [modal value: low-median; expresses epistemic possibility]

(8) Quantities of uncertainty will result in the fluctuation of students' scores... [modal value: high; expresses strong prediction]

The more frequent use of modal operators in Group A compositions indicates that higher-proficiency writers are more adept at constructing rhetorically nuanced arguments, using modality to build a persuasive but epistemically responsible stance. This finding is consistent with research showing that effective L2 argumentative writers deploy a wider range of modal resources than their less proficient peers.

3.4. Linguistic Features in Terms of the Textual Function

Table 5 presents the frequency and percentage of marked and unmarked themes across the three groups.

Table 5. Frequency and Percentage of Marked and Unmarked Themes Across Groups (Textual Function).

Thematic Structure	Group A: Frequency (%)	Group B: Frequency (%)	Group C: Frequency (%)
Marked Theme	16 (39.0%)	11 (26.8%)	16 (24.2%)
Unmarked Theme	25 (61.0%)	30 (73.2%)	50 (75.8%)

Across all three groups, unmarked theme (where the grammatical subject occupies the initial position) was the dominant sentence structure. This is consistent with the norms of academic argumentative writing in English, where direct and transparent information structure is generally preferred. However, the proportion of marked themes decreased from Group A (39.0%) to Group B (26.8%) and Group C (24.2%), suggesting that higher-quality compositions employ a more varied thematic repertoire.

Marked themes draw readers' attention to foregrounded information, signaling its importance within the discourse. Their appropriate use can enhance the rhetorical organization of a composition by highlighting transitions, contrasts, or consequences. The following examples illustrate marked themes from participants' compositions:

(11) Among them, teacher quality pertaining to students' achievements has both advantages and disadvantages... [prepositional phrase as theme]

(12) Consequently, teachers' quality is supposed to be measured in a comprehensible and whole-rounded way... [conjunctive adjunct as theme]

(13) ***For this point***, it may lose its scientific aspect... [prepositional phrase as theme]

(14) ***In that case***, if students can solve the problems, it means, basically, the teacher has given an understandable lesson to students to absorb the knowledge... [prepositional phrase + conditional clause as theme]

These examples illustrate how marked themes can effectively signal logical relationships (e.g., consequence, contrast, and concession) and structure the argumentative flow of a composition. The higher frequency of marked themes in Group A compositions indicates that higher-proficiency writers are more able to exploit thematic variation as a rhetorical resource, producing compositions with more deliberate and purposeful discourse organization. However, it should be noted that the overuse of marked themes can impede readability; the goal is strategic deployment rather than maximization.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Major Findings

This study analyzed the linguistic features of TEM-4 compositions written by 12 junior English majors across three proficiency levels using the three meta-functions of SFG. Three main findings emerged. First, with respect to the ideational meta-function, Groups A and C most frequently used the material process, while Group B preferred the relational process, suggesting that intermediate-level writers may over-rely on copular and possessive constructions. Second, with respect to the interpersonal meta-function, all groups used modal operators at relatively high rates, but the frequency of modal operator use decreased progressively from Group A to Group C, indicating that higher-quality compositions deploy modality more strategically. Third, with respect to the textual meta-function, all groups used both marked and unmarked themes, but the proportion of marked themes decreased from Group A to Group C, suggesting that higher-quality compositions exhibit more varied and purposeful thematic organization.

4.2. Implications

These findings yield several practical implications for TEM-4 writing instruction. First, students should be encouraged to prioritize material process verbs over relational process verbs, since the former convey more specific and semantically rich meanings. The relational process is not to be avoided altogether, but its overuse in the form of “A is B” or “A has B” constructions should be discouraged. Second, students should be guided to use modal operators deliberately and appropriately, both to calibrate the epistemic force of their claims and to signal nuanced argumentative stances. The use of modal operators also tends to co-occur with more complex syntactic structures, providing an additional benefit in terms of syntactic sophistication. Third, students should be trained to exploit marked thematic structures as a rhetorical resource for organizing and emphasizing key information, while being careful not to overuse them in ways that reduce readability.

4.3. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the sample size of 12 participants is small, which limits the generalizability of the findings and the applicability of more powerful statistical analyses. Future studies should recruit larger samples to enable inferential statistical comparisons of linguistic features across

groups. Second, the study focused on a restricted set of SFG categories (transitivity type, modal operator presence, and theme type) and did not examine within-category variation (e.g., modal value, or the specific types of marked theme). Third, the automated scoring procedure used for grouping is not a validated measure of TEM-4 writing quality; future research should incorporate human expert ratings or official TEM-4 scores as the basis for grouping. Finally, the study is descriptive in nature and does not establish causal links between specific linguistic features and writing quality. Longitudinal or experimental designs could be employed in future research to investigate whether explicit instruction in SFG categories produces improvements in TEM-4 writing quality.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. No sensitive personal data were collected or retained.

Appendix I. TEM-4 Writing Prompt (2023)

Read carefully the following excerpt on teacher quality assessment and then write your response in NO LESS THAN 200 words, in which you should: (1) summarize the main message of the excerpt, and (2) discuss the pros and cons of one particular teacher quality assessment measure introduced in the excerpt. You may support yourself with information from the excerpt. Marks will be awarded for content relevance, content sufficiency, organization and language quality. Failure to follow the above instructions may result in a loss of marks.

Teacher quality assessment commonly includes reviews of qualifications, tests of teaching quality, and observations of teaching practice. Assessments of teacher quality are currently used for policy making, employment, merit-based pay awards, and as data to inform the professional growth of teachers. Teacher qualifications include a range of variables affecting teacher quality: type of teaching certification, undergraduate major or minor, undergraduate institution, advanced degree(s) or certifications, type of preparation program, test scores, and years of teaching experience. In many countries, teaching credentials represent the main measure of teacher quality and serve as a threshold for holding teaching positions. Teacher quality with regard to student achievement—also known as “teacher effectiveness”—is measured in terms of student achievement gains. Student achievement is measured through the use of standardized tests to determine the academic growth of students

over time. Assessments of teacher quality may also draw upon evidence collected from observations of teachers' work. This evidence may be collected from in-person or video-recorded observations of teaching, pre- and post-observation conferences with teachers, and samples of teachers' work with students. Such assessments may be impression-based or narrative in form but have become increasingly common in teacher quality assessment.

Appendix II. Sample Compositions

Appendix II.A. Group A Sample Composition (Participant code: P2)

Teacher quality assessment, a reference for policy making, employment, pay awards, and teacher's professional progress, contains teacher qualification and quality and investigation on teachers' work. First, teachers' qualifications, seen as the major criterion for holding teaching positions, are affected by various factors, including teaching certification type. Second, teacher quality is measured according to students' academic improvement in formal tests. Third, investigations on teaching practice can be conducted through observations over many periods, usually based on subjective impression or narration of individual lessons or an entire school year of teaching.

Among these, teacher quality pertaining to students' achievements has both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, students take examinations on the knowledge that teachers have taught in class. Whether students can figure out those problems can be regarded as an indication of whether teachers have explained the knowledge and demonstrated strategies to students clearly and appropriately. If students can solve the problems, it means, broadly speaking, that the teacher has delivered an understandable lesson and enabled students to absorb the knowledge—from which we can evaluate whether a teacher is qualified enough to prepare lessons, analyze students, and design optimal activities.

However, during the assessment of a teacher's quality, there exist many influencing factors, including student absence, inattentiveness in class, differences in students' metacognitive and cognitive levels, preparation and review habits, and students' emotional state during testing. These uncertainties will result in fluctuations in students' scores, which, if taken as the criterion for a teacher's quality, will produce misleading, confusing, and unreliable results. This point represents a threat to the scientific validity of the assessment.

In conclusion, defining a teacher's quality solely on the basis of students' academic achievements has its limitations. Consequently, teachers' quality should be measured in a comprehensive and holistic manner, which is the key to developing a better-equipped teaching profession.

Appendix II.B. Group B Sample Composition (Participant code: P7)

Teacher quality assessment usually addresses three aspects: reviews of qualifications, tests of teaching quality, and observations of teaching practice. The purpose of this assessment includes informing policy making, employment decisions, merit-based pay awards, and professional development. Teacher qualifications are concerned with multiple factors, such as types of teaching certification and undergraduate major, among which teaching credentials play the most important role, serving as a prerequisite for holding a teaching position. Secondly, student

achievement gains are closely related to teacher quality. In today's educational climate, students' academic performance is the primary criterion for evaluating a teacher's ability. Yet every approach has its limitations.

On one hand, this kind of measurement is effective for identifying students' academic weaknesses, which helps teachers to adapt their teaching strategies and assignments. In a densely populated country where educational resources are limited, it is also the most efficient way to select high-performing students through standardized testing.

However, focusing exclusively on students' academic performance is harmful to their overall development, both physically and mentally. The belief that a higher score equates to a better student has become a prevailing assumption in many parents' minds. Yet we all know that a person's character—comprising qualities such as perseverance, courage, patience, and optimism—truly determines long-term success. All in all, every assessment method has its pros and cons, and what we need to do is to maintain an appropriate balance between academic achievement and the holistic development of students.

Appendix II.C. Group C Sample Composition (Participant code: P11)

Teacher assessment commonly includes reviews of qualifications, tests of teaching quality, and observations of teaching practice. Teacher qualifications encompass a range of variables affecting teacher quality. Teacher effectiveness is measured by student achievement gains, tested by examinations, and is also informed by evidence collected from observations of teachers' work that promote professional growth. This kind of assessment may be impression-based or narrative in form but has become increasingly common in teacher quality assessment.

When it comes to teacher quality with regard to student achievement, in my view, this approach does have benefits but also has shortcomings in the long term. It is undeniable that teachers' effectiveness can be objectively tested through students' academic performance, which is widely regarded as the most direct outcome of teaching methods. Furthermore, in China's education system, grades are extremely important for individual students with respect to entrance examinations at the senior high school and university levels. In this sense, this kind of assessment can serve the needs of the current educational system.

However, every coin has two sides. The fundamental purpose of school education is to teach students how to become responsible and well-rounded members of society. Society requires well-rounded talents, not individuals who are academically strong but morally deficient. That is why schools recruit teachers with strong character. However, the moral growth of students cannot be captured by academic test scores, and this represents a fundamental limitation of this assessment approach. In conclusion, teacher quality assessment still has a long way to go before it becomes more humane and less narrowly focused on academic performance.

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