

UNIT 4 TOPIC 1 INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY CHINA

Pre-knowledge

Before class, students should read Unit 4 Topic 1 to gain some basic knowledge of China's history and geography. They should also have some understanding of the political and economic systems in China as well as Chinese values.

Aim and Objectives

Topic 1 aims to provide students with some knowledge of what is happening in modern China and understanding of China's reforms. They will also know how to analyse and evaluate information they have collected in order to compare China and Western countries in different aspects such as social values and education systems.

Teaching and Learning Activities

Activity 1

Ask your students to research and write down the changes that have taken place in China's economy in the past 40 years.

Activity 2

Ask your students to study the railway map of China and answer these questions:

- A. What can you gather from the map?
- B. Why does China need high-speed trains?
- C. What impact does the high-speed railway system have on China?

Activity 3

Have your students conduct a survey on what changes have taken place in the past 40 years in terms of living standards in China. Then have them report their findings to the class.

Activity 4

Print out and have your students read the text below. Then show them the images below and have them discuss the issues raised from the text.

China's 'dockless' bike sharing could be coming to a street near you

Chinese startups want to export their bicycle-sharing revolution all around the world. The companies are rolling into the United Kingdom, the United States and beyond, aiming to disrupt existing programmes with their fleets of colourful bicycles that do not need docking stations.

One of China's largest operators, Mobike, unleashed 1,000 of its orange-wheeled bicycles in the rainy English city of Manchester in 2017, marking its first foray outside of Asia.

"Manchester will be a springboard into Europe," said Chris Martin, the company's head of international expansion.

Its big rival, Ofo, got to Europe first, launching a small fleet of its bright yellow bicycles in the English university city of Cambridge in April 2017. Ofo has also been quietly testing bicycles in Silicon Valley and San Diego.



Nissangeniss, commons.wikimedia.org, CC BY-SA 4.0



iStock.com/kool99

Activity 5

Have your students work in groups of three or four to research the Belt and Road Initiative.

They should look at these questions:

- A. What does the initiative cover? What are its aims and targets?
- B. How extensive is the initiative? How many partner countries are involved?
- C. How much in total revenue is the initiative expected to generate?
- D. What impact will it have on the regional and world economies?

Activity 6

Ask your students to research online what it is like to live in China as an expatriate. They may look at blog entries by expatriates living there.

You may share this comparison with your students:

1. Pros:

- It's deeply interesting
- If you haven't lived outside your own country before, it's a great place to get the 'I'm going outside my comfort zone' experience.

- The job pool for ex-pats is limited, so if you're interested in something that requires a foreigner (teaching, modelling, acting, etc.) then it's very easy to get a job.
- Rent is cheap – even in Shanghai (where it's not), it's still cheaper than most cities in the developed world.
- With most jobs you're making a hugely inflated salary for the work so it's easy to go, work teaching, and party like an investment banker (you get people with serious alcohol problems).
- It's interesting (again) – just walking down your street or hutong you're going to see something new and exciting (even if it's a poodle with a pink mohawk being walked by an eighty year old Chinese guy in his PJs; true story).
- You have the wonderful freedom here of not being held to the same social standard as everyone else. This can be very fun.

2. Cons:

- The pollution. When a bad day hits, you can't breathe properly, you can't think, and all you want to do is lay on your bed in front of your Swiss air purifier gagging on the slightly cleaner air emitting.
- It's dirty. Not just pollution dirty (that too), but stepping in human faeces when you walk right outside your apartment door dirty. If someone isn't specifically being paid to clean it, it's not going to get clean (even then it might not get cleaned. I lived with two university-educated Chinese people who didn't know about bacteria or germs and when 'cleaning' spread them from the bathroom to the kitchen by wiping everything down with a wet rag and no soap or other disinfectant).
- If you look Chinese (ABC, BBC, CBC, etc. or even Korean in one friend's case), you're going to get a lot of comments for not speaking Chinese fluently, not holding your chopsticks correctly, etc.
- At some point you are going to miss something (type of cheese, skin-care product, salad dressing) that you absolutely cannot get your hands on – no, not even on Taobao. Obtaining this thing will become your obsession and take over your life. (*if you live in Beijing or Shanghai then this really isn't an issue – there's even a Marks & Spencer's in Beijing now).
- If you want to work outside the teacher/foreign sector, then competition is fierce and there are tons of willing ex-pat graduates willing to do most jobs free, "for the experience". It's amazing how quickly many jobs are turning into "internships".
- At the end of the day, this is not a country you can move to and "settle down". Even if you're married to a Chinese person and start a family in China, you're still a *laowai* (foreigner) in the eyes of everyone around you and will be treated as such. This is one aspect of living in China that makes it a fun place to be for a few years, but after 5 years or so you're going to start wondering when your 'real' life is going to start and then it may be time to move on.

Activity 7

Show your students the images below. Then have them complete these tasks for each image:

- A. Describe what you see in the photograph.
- B. What changes have taken place in modern China can you see from this photograph?
- C. What foreign influences have there been on the lives of the Chinese can you see from this photograph?



iStock.com/PaulVinten



yuyan9686/Needpix



pedroserapio/Needpix



moersch/Needpix

Resources/Materials

Apart from those listed in the activities, you may also consult these resources/materials:

1. Huot, C. (2000), *China's New Cultural Scene: A Handbook of Changes*. Duke University Press Books.
2. Popcorn Idea Factory (2011), *Essentially Chinese: Chinese Stuff* (English edition). 五洲传播出版社.
3. The World Bank (2012), "China 2030: Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative Society". *The World Bank* [Online]. 27 February, 2012.
Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/781101468239669951/China-2030-building-a-modern-harmonious-and-creative-society>

Assessment

1. Collect the notes taken by your students during all group and class discussions.
2. Students are required to work in groups of three and choose an aspect of reforms in China, such as education reform, and complete a case study. They then have to present it to the class.
3. Students are required to prepare for a debate on the positive and negative impact of the rapid economic development in modern China.
4. Each student is required to write a 600-word story of him living in China in 2050.

Workbook Answer Key

1. Watch the video clips *Chinese Economic Reforms: An Interview with David Dollar* and *The policy of "reform and opening up" in early 1980s was a turning point for China* on YouTube.

Prepare some notes for a class/group discussion on why China had to start its economic reforms in the early 1980s.

Students should consider these points:

- The state of China's economy before 1978
- The living standards of the Chinese before 1978
- The desire of the Chinese for economic reforms

2. Who led the economic reforms in China? What did he advocate and how did the economic reforms start in China?

Students should consider these points:

- Deng Xiaoping advocated mobilising all the positive factors to develop the national economy.
- He provided incentives to those who dared to be rich ahead of others.
- The reforms were started in those regions which were then relatively developed economically.
- There were no political reforms.

3. What significant changes have taken place in Chinese society since the start of its economic reforms?

Students should consider these points:

- China's Gross Domestic Product
- The standards of living in China
- Construction in the cities and development in the rural regions
- Progress in military might
- Advancements in science and technology
- China's position in the world

4. Choose and find out more about one aspect of daily life of the people in modern China. One aspect could be their cost or standard of living. Write down the changes that have taken place in the aspect you have chosen and what caused the changes.

Students should consider these points:

- Either the cost or standards of living
- Comparison in the cost or standards of living between China and the United States
- Labour costs
- The volume of the market
- Marketing strategies such as quick returns with small margins

5. Internet Search + Pair work

We have learnt about the various people whom the Chinese idolised over the past 40 years. With a partner, choose and read up on two of them. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the backgrounds of these two persons, how they became idols and the extent of their influence.

Students may consider these people:

- Movie stars: Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Zhang Ziyi
- Sports stars: Yao Ming, Liu Xiang
- Singers: Jay Chou, Faye Wong, Wang Feng
- Dancers: Dai Ailian, Jin Xing

6. Internet Search

Find out more about the attitudes of the young in China towards love and marriage. Write down how these attitudes differ from those of their parents.

Students should consider these points:

- The impact of new marriage laws and family planning policies (since 1979)
- Free love and marriage versus arranged love and marriage
- High rates of divorce versus zero rate of divorce
- “Naked marriage” and “flash marriage” versus formal traditional marriage
- Homosexual versus heterosexual

7. Internet Search

Find out and write down 10 achievements China has had since its economic reforms were launched in the table below. These achievements may come from different areas.

Area	Achievement	Year
Economy	China became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on 11 December 2001.	2001
Hydrology	The diversion canal of the Three Gorges Dam is completed. The canal serves as a route for the water of the Yangtze River to flow along while the dam undergoes its second phase of construction. The cut-off operation is the hardest in the world in terms of water conservation and hydropower engineering.	2002
Aerospace	China becomes the third country to ever send a human being into space when Yang Liwei (杨利伟) spends 21 hours in orbit on China's first manned spacecraft.	2003
Science	Pharmacist Hon Lik (韩力) invents the modern electronic cigarette, which produces a smoke-like vapour that can be inhaled and provides a vehicle for nicotine delivery into the bloodstream via the lungs.	2003
Petroleum Exploration and Development	Baoji Oilfield Machinery successfully develops China's first ultra-deep drilling rig with independent intellectual property rights. This is the first 12,000-m land AC variable frequency electric rig developed in the world.	2007
Medicine	China produces the world's first approved swine flu vaccine.	2009
Medicine	Tu Youyou (屠呦呦) is awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine for her earlier work in discovering artemisinin and dihydroartemisinin, which are used to treat malaria. Her discovery helped save millions of lives around the world.	2015
Aviation	The C919, China's first domestically developed large passenger aeroplane, rolls off the assembly line in Shanghai, marking a new milestone in China's aviation history. It is aimed at competing with Airbus 320 and Boeing 737 globally.	2015
Information and Technology	The Sunway Taihu Light (神威 • 太湖之光) ranks number one on the TOP500 list, becoming the fastest supercomputer in the world.	2017
Transport	The newest version of the China Standard bullet train Fuxing (复兴号) debuts on the Beijing-Shanghai line on June 26. It is designed solely by the Chinese and made in China.	2017

8. Group Discussion

In a group of three or four, find out more about the changes in housing in China since the economic reforms were launched. You may, for an example, compare a house in the 1980s with the one in present age and look at the changes in the living space, interior designs, furniture. etc. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation to share your findings with your classmates.

Students should consider these points:

- Housing conditions in the 1980s
- The main changes in housing over the past 40 years
- What the changes in housing in China signify
- Your reflections

9. Read the article *This is My Chinese Dream* on <http://money.cnn.com/gallery/news/2014/06/10/Chinese-dream/index.html>. Based on their story and your own understanding, write down what the Chinese Dream encompasses.

Suggested video: *Isabel Hilton: Xi Jinping's China Dream – BBC Newsnight*

Published by BBC Newsnight on 18 October, 2017

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3erBIDTZQdg>

Students should consider these points:

- What dreams they have
- The connection between their stories and the Chinese Dream
- What Xi Jinping's China Dream includes
- The differences between the Chinese Dream and the American Dream
- Their reflections on the video clip

10. Watch the video clip *How China Became the World's Second Largest Economy* on YouTube. Prepare some notes for a class/group discussion what China's fastest growing economy means to the world and the challenges that China is facing.

Students should consider these points:

- How China develops its economy
- China's contributions to the world economy
- China's roles and functions in the order of the world
- The problems that exist in China
- How China meets the challenges and problems it faces

Note: All URLs listed herein were ascertained to be accessible on 10 September, 2020.