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Confidence in Chinese milk turns sour

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Contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading / Listening	7
Student Survey	8
Discussion	9
Language Work	10
Writing	11
Homework	12
Answers	13

21st September, 2008

THE ARTICLE

Chinese consumers are losing confidence in their country's dairy industry after the latest tainted milk products scandal. Almost 6,500 babies and children have become ill and four have died. Several hundred infants now have extreme kidney failure. Many parents are furious and upset that their young children need operations to remove stones from their kidneys. The reason for this tragedy is milk powder makers adding a poisonous plastic compound to their products. The country's biggest dairy company, the Sanlu Group, admitted finding the deadly melamine chemical in its baby powder. Melamine increases the level of protein in milk. The same chemical has also been found in liquid milk. Supermarkets are clearing their shelves of domestic milk products.

The Chinese government has ordered emergency checks on all dairy products. It found ten per cent of the items it tested contained melamine. Officials have promised consumers that they will punish those responsible for the scandal. China's news agency Xinhua reported: "Local authorities should rectify the dairy industry so as to bring a fundamental change to the dairy market and products." The crisis has spread beyond China's borders, with Malaysia, Singapore and Japan banning Chinese milk imports. Starbucks coffee chain in China has reacted quickly. Hundreds of its coffee shops have stopped serving drinks with milk, which is affecting its business. A company spokesman said this was a precaution "due to the serious nature" of the situation.

WARM-UPS

1. MILK: Walk around the class and talk to other students about milk. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

losing confidence / dairy industry / milk products / being upset / tragedy / chemicals / emergency checks / punishments / crisis / quick reactions / taking precautions

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. CONFIDENCE: Do you always trust the goods and services you buy? Complete this table with your partner(s)? Change partners and share your ideas.

Goods / Services	Level of confidence	Bad things you've heard
Dairy products		
Computer goods		
GM food		
Banks		
Used car sellers		
English schools		

4. CHINESE PRODUCTS: Students A strongly believe that Chinese products can be trusted; Students B strongly believe they cannot. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

5. TASTY HEADLINES: With your partner(s), write a headline using these adjectives used for describing taste. The headlines should be about real (non-food) news. Change partners and share your headlines. What are the stories behind the headlines?

- bitter _____
- sweet _____
- spicy _____
- fishy _____
- tangy _____

6. CONSUMER: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'consumer'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Chinese milk is going bad very quickly because of global warming. | T / F |
| b. Nearly 6,500 children died because of milk products in China. | T / F |
| c. Many children need operations after the milk damaged their kidneys. | T / F |
| d. Supermarkets are emptying their stores of Chinese milk products. | T / F |
| e. China's government hasn't started testing milk products yet. | T / F |
| f. Chinese authorities said it will punish all wrongdoers in the crisis. | T / F |
| g. The milk scandal has so far stayed within China's borders. | T / F |
| h. Starbucks coffee shops in China continue to sell coffee with milk. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. confidence | a. toxic |
| 2. tainted | b. basic |
| 3. infants | c. trust |
| 4. poisonous | d. lethal |
| 5. deadly | e. safety measure |
| 6. checks | f. responded |
| 7. rectify | g. examinations |
| 8. fundamental | h. damaged |
| 9. reacted | i. correct |
| 10. precaution | j. young children |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Chinese consumers are losing | a. change |
| 2. Many parents are furious | b. confidence |
| 3. a poisonous plastic | c. the items it tested |
| 4. Melamine increases the level | d. nature of the situation |
| 5. Supermarkets are clearing | e. and upset |
| 6. ten per cent of | f. their shelves |
| 7. they will punish those | g. of protein in milk |
| 8. bring a fundamental | h. reacted quickly |
| 9. Starbucks coffee chain in China has | i. compound |
| 10. a precaution due to the serious | j. responsible |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Chinese consumers are _____ confidence in their country's dairy industry after the latest tainted milk products _____. Almost 6,500 babies and children have become ill and four have died. Several hundred _____ now have extreme kidney failure. Many parents are furious and upset that their young children need _____ to remove stones from their kidneys. The reason for this tragedy is milk powder makers _____ a poisonous plastic compound to their products. The country's biggest dairy company, the Sanlu Group, _____ finding the deadly melamine chemical in its baby powder. Melamine increases the _____ of protein in milk. The same chemical has also been found in liquid milk. Supermarkets are clearing their _____ of domestic milk products.

level
operations
infants
shelves
losing
admitted
scandal
adding

The Chinese government has ordered emergency _____ on all dairy products. It found ten per cent of the _____ it tested contained melamine. Officials have promised consumers that they will punish those _____ for the scandal. China's news agency Xinhua reported: "Local authorities should rectify the dairy industry so as to bring a fundamental _____ to the dairy market and products." The crisis has spread _____ China's borders, with Malaysia, Singapore and Japan _____ Chinese milk imports. Starbucks coffee chain in China has reacted _____. Hundreds of its coffee shops have stopped serving drinks with milk, which is affecting its business. A company spokesman said this was a precaution "due to the _____ nature" of the situation.

change
quickly
items
banning
checks
beyond
serious
responsible

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

Chinese consumers are losing _____ country's dairy industry after the latest tainted milk products scandal. Almost 6,500 babies and children have become _____ died. Several hundred infants now have extreme kidney failure. Many parents are _____ that their young children need operations to remove stones from their kidneys. The _____ tragedy is milk powder makers adding a poisonous plastic compound to their products. The country's biggest dairy company, the Sanlu Group, _____ the deadly melamine chemical in its baby powder. Melamine increases the level of protein in milk. The same chemical _____ found in liquid milk. Supermarkets are clearing their shelves of domestic milk products.

The Chinese government has ordered emergency _____ dairy products. It found ten per cent of the items it tested contained melamine. Officials have promised consumers that they _____ responsible for the scandal. China's news agency Xinhua reported: "Local authorities _____ dairy industry so as to bring a fundamental change to the dairy market and products." The crisis _____ China's borders, with Malaysia, Singapore and Japan banning Chinese milk imports. Starbucks coffee chain in China _____. Hundreds of its coffee shops have stopped serving drinks with milk, which is affecting its business. A company spokesman said this was a precaution "due to _____" of the situation.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'consumer' and 'confidence'.

consumer	confidence

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• losing• 6,500• furious• poisonous• admitted• shelves	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• emergency• punish• rectify• spread• quickly• nature
---	--

STUDENT MILK SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about milk in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the phrase 'consumer confidence'?
- c) Do you worry about the safety of the things you buy?
- d) Have you avoided buying food from other countries?
- e) Have there been food safety scares in your country?
- f) What kind of compensation should the parents receive?
- g) What punishment should the dairy companies get?
- h) Why are dairy companies putting poisonous compounds in milk products?
- i) Do you think this crisis badly affects China's image?
- j) What do you think Starbucks thinks about this crisis?

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CONSUMER CONFIDENCE DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What companies do you have a lot of confidence in?
- c) Would you avoid a company forever if it broke your confidence?
- d) Would you trust Chinese dairy products?
- e) What "fundamental change" needs to take place in China's dairy industry?
- f) Have you lost confidence in banks and financial services recently?
- g) Do you think Starbucks in China should sue the dairy industry?
- h) How long will it take to restore confidence in Chinese milk products?
- i) What must the industry do to restore confidence and public trust?
- j) What questions would you like to ask the bosses of the dairy companies?

LANGUAGE

Chinese consumers are (1) _____ confidence in their country's dairy industry after the latest tainted milk products scandal. Almost 6,500 babies and children (2) _____ become ill and four have died. Several hundred infants now have extreme kidney failure. Many parents are (3) _____ and upset that their young children need operations to remove stones from their kidneys. The reason for this (4) _____ is milk powder makers adding a poisonous plastic compound to their products. The country's biggest dairy company, the Sanlu Group, admitted (5) _____ the deadly melamine chemical in its baby powder. Melamine increases the level of protein in milk. The same chemical has also been found in liquid milk. Supermarkets are clearing their shelves (6) _____ domestic milk products.

The Chinese government has ordered emergency checks (7) _____ all dairy products. It found ten per cent of the items (8) _____ tested contained melamine. Officials have promised consumers that they will punish those responsible for the scandal. China's news agency Xinhua reported: "Local (9) _____ should rectify the dairy industry so as to bring a fundamental change to the dairy market and products." The crisis has spread (10) _____ China's borders, with Malaysia, Singapore and Japan banning Chinese milk imports. Starbucks coffee chain in China has reacted quickly. Hundreds of its coffee shops (11) _____ stopped serving drinks with milk, which is affecting its business. A company spokesman said this was a precaution "due (12) _____ the serious nature" of the situation.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. | (a) losses | (b) lost | (c) losers | (d) losing |
| 2. | (a) now | (b) have | (c) soon | (d) are |
| 3. | (a) furious | (b) fury | (c) furiously | (d) furry |
| 4. | (a) tragedies | (b) tragic | (c) tragedy | (d) tragically |
| 5. | (a) finder | (b) found | (c) finding | (d) find |
| 6. | (a) out | (b) of | (c) down | (d) up |
| 7. | (a) on | (b) by | (c) at | (d) to |
| 8. | (a) one | (b) we | (c) they | (d) it |
| 9. | (a) authors | (b) authorities | (c) authorize | (d) authority |
| 10. | (a) beneath | (b) behind | (c) besides | (d) beyond |
| 11. | (a) has | (b) are | (c) have | (d) did |
| 12. | (a) to | (b) for | (c) of | (d) by |

WRITING:

Write about **milk** for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

[illegible]

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about the milk scandal in China. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. CONSUMER CONFIDENCE: Make a poster about some companies that lost the trust of consumers because of poor products or goods. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. FURIOUS: Write a magazine article about the scandal. Include imaginary interviews with the boss of a milk products company and a family affected by the poison.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. DIARY / JOURNAL: You are a consumer. Write your thoughts about the companies you encounter in one day in your life. How much do you trust these companies? Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson.

6. LETTER: Write a letter to the boss of one of the Chinese milk product companies. Ask him/her three questions about the scandal. Make three suggestions on what he/she should do to rectify the situation and restore consumer confidence. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. T d. T e. F f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. confidence | a. trust |
| 2. tainted | b. damaged |
| 3. infants | c. young children |
| 4. poisonous | d. toxic |
| 5. deadly | e. lethal |
| 6. checks | f. examinations |
| 7. rectify | g. correct |
| 8. fundamental | h. basic |
| 9. reacted | i. responded |
| 10. precaution | j. safety measure |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Chinese consumers are losing | a. confidence |
| 2. Many parents are furious | b. and upset |
| 3. a poisonous plastic | c. compound |
| 4. Melamine increases the level | d. of protein in milk |
| 5. Supermarkets are clearing | e. their shelves |
| 6. ten per cent of | f. the items it tested |
| 7. they will punish those | g. responsible |
| 8. bring a fundamental | h. change |
| 9. Starbucks coffee chain in China has | i. reacted quickly |
| 10. a precaution due to the serious | j. nature of the situation |

GAP FILL:

Confidence in Chinese milk turns sour

Chinese consumers are **losing** confidence in their country's dairy industry after the latest tainted milk products **scandal**. Almost 6,500 babies and children have become ill and four have died. Several hundred **infants** now have extreme kidney failure. Many parents are furious and upset that their young children need **operations** to remove stones from their kidneys. The reason for this tragedy is milk powder makers **adding** a poisonous plastic compound to their products. The country's biggest dairy company, the Sanlu Group, **admitted** finding the deadly melamine chemical in its baby powder. Melamine increases the **level** of protein in milk. The same chemical has also been found in liquid milk. Supermarkets are clearing their **shelves** of domestic milk products.

The Chinese government has ordered emergency **checks** on all dairy products. It found ten per cent of the **items** it tested contained melamine. Officials have promised consumers that they will punish those **responsible** for the scandal. China's news agency Xinhua reported: "Local authorities should rectify the dairy industry so as to bring a fundamental **change** to the dairy market and products." The crisis has spread **beyond** China's borders, with Malaysia, Singapore and Japan **banning** Chinese milk imports. Starbucks coffee chain in China has reacted **quickly**. Hundreds of its coffee shops have stopped serving drinks with milk, which is affecting its business. A company spokesman said this was a precaution "due to the **serious** nature" of the situation.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d 2 - b 3 - a 4 - c 5 - c 6 - b 7 - a 8 - d 9 - b 10 - d 11 - c 12 - a