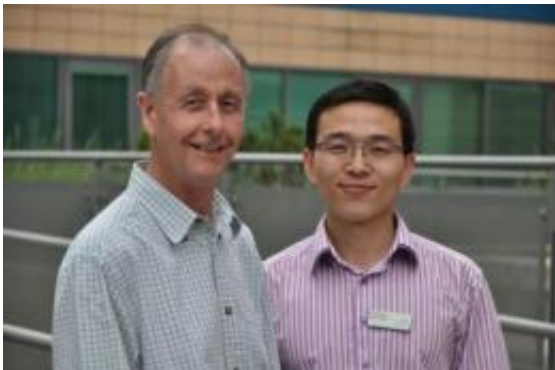


New screening test to help people with hearing loss in China

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Professor Lutman and Dr. Li are from the University of Southampton's Institute of Sound and Vibration Research. Credit: University of Southampton

The University of Southampton has developed a new hearing screening test which could help the estimated 100 million people suffering from hearing loss in China.

This new Chinese version is based on a hearing screening test developed by the University's Institute of Sound and Vibration Research (ISVR), which has already been taken by more than a million people across Europe.

The tests aim to address the fact that hundreds of millions of people worldwide have hearing loss but only a fraction obtain hearing aids that would help them to overcome [hearing difficulties](#). The percentage of

people with hearing loss using [hearing aids](#) has been estimated to be only 16 per cent in Europe, while the figure is as low as 1 per cent in China.

The availability of a telephone-based test enables individuals to obtain an objective assessment of their hearing ability and hence [guidance](#) on whether they should seek professional assistance. The tests developed at ISVR are based on listening to triple digit presentations, such as "2-5-9", against a background of noise and then pressing the corresponding numbers on the telephone keypad.

Correct responses lead to the [noise level](#) increasing, thereby making the test more difficult, while mistakes lead to the noise level decreasing, making the test easier. The overall test measures the highest noise level that is compatible with correct responses. Performance on the test reflects the main difficulty experienced in [everyday life](#) by people with a hearing loss, which is understanding what people are saying in a background of noise.

The test was developed by Professor Mark Lutman and Dr Guoping Li of the ISVR. Dr Li says: "This project will have a massive [social impact](#) in China. There are at least 100 million adults who are hearing impaired and this is the first adult hearing screening test via telephone made available in China."

Professor Lutman adds: "It is expected that widespread use of these tests in China will increase awareness of hearing problems and the availability of solutions, thereby reducing the social, health and economic burdens of hearing loss in the enormous population of China. These burdens will increase as the population distribution becomes older unless something is done to mitigate the effects of hearing loss."

The original test developed by Professor Lutman in ISVR was in English and was implemented by the Royal National Institute for Deaf people,

RNID (now re-named Action on [Hearing Loss](#)) in 2005. Subsequent tests were developed in Swiss-German and Welsh.

This most recent test in Mandarin Chinese is sponsored by Beijing Telecom, Huawei and Tongren Hospital. A corresponding test for use over the Internet is also being prepared.

Provided by University of Southampton

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