TEACHING READING IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF A GRADE 10 CLASS IN TAIYUAN CITY, CHINA

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TEACHING READING IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF A GRADE 10 CLASS IN TAIYUAN CITY, CHINA

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A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Applied Linguistics in the Faculty of Arts at the University of the Western Cape

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Declaration

I declare that **Teaching Reading in English as a Foreign Language: a Study of a Grade 10 Class in Taiyuan City, China** is my work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

LI GAO

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Abstract

Since economic reform started in China in 1978, the educational objectives for English language teaching have undergone many changes. In secondary school, reading and writing abilities have become increasingly important, not only in assisting students to study and work in English language contexts, but also in setting up the foundation for further English learning at university level. Thus, new materials have been devised and new teaching methods have been used. However, in practice, the English reading skills of many learners do not seem to have improved and learners have difficulty in achieving the syllabus goals set for reading. This study investigates the factors which influence the development of reading skills by learners in one Grade 10 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class in Taiyuan, a city in China.

Using recent developments in interactive reading theory, it explores the kinds of reading skills and strategies taught in an EFL classroom, the language learning theories that seemed to underlie these approaches and teachers' and learners' perceptions of their usefulness. The study also examines the suitability of the texts set for the grade in terms of the language level of learners and the kinds of processing strategies used by learners in Chinese and English. The study is predominantly qualitative, using interviews and classroom observations, although quantitative analysis of questionnaire responses is used to compare reading strategies used in Chinese and English.

The findings of this study revealed a complex mix of factors affecting learners' ability to become fluent readers in English. First, the reading texts in the textbook frequently did not enable learners to draw on their content or linguistic schemata. Little attempt was made to build such schemata where they were absent. There was little development of pre-reading or while-reading strategies and the kinds of activities created for post-reading were insufficient to develop efficient bottom-up processing or to encourage engagement with the text as a whole rather than on word or sentence level. There was no attention paid to developing metacognitive awareness of strategy use. Assessment through the examination paper was similarly decontextualised and limited to grammar and

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vocabulary. Therefore the development of sound interactive reading skills and strategies was not well supported.

In addition, the teacher did not have sufficient training in the implementation of interactive approaches and tended to fall back on more traditional methods when trying to help learners understand a text. Learners felt that they were not given enough training in developing appropriate strategies.

A comparison of learners' reading strategies in Chinese and English showed that learners tried to transfer successful L1 strategies wherever possible, but that these were often hindered by their level of L2 proficiency. There was a need to develop language-specific L2 strategies. Moreover, the absence of training in metacognitive strategy use limits learners' ability to become independent readers. All these factors together undermine the development of effective EFL reading skills and strategies and contribute to learners' struggles to meet the syllabus goals for English in Grade 10.

In conclusion, some recommendations to improve the teaching of EFL reading in Grade 10 are put forward. These findings and recommendations may be of use in refining current approaches to teaching reading in a foreign language in secondary schools in China.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

This study examines the extent to which English language reading skills taught in one Grade 10 class in China equip learners for a changing world. However, the development of foreign language teaching in any context cannot be separated from the particular socio-historical background in which it evolves. This introduction provides a brief overview of the history of English language teaching in China.

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can be seen to have moved through three main phases in the last century: the New Government period from 1919 to 1949, the Socialist Revolutionary period from 1948 to 1978, and the Open Door period from 1978 to the present day, each of which corresponds to major shift in Chinese political and economic history.

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English education during the New Government period from 1919 to 1949

In 1919, the 'May Fourth Movement', a political and literary student movement, opposed Japanese territorial aggression in China. This was the point when the Western idea of democracy was integrated into Chinese culture and China's economy became more open to the Western world (Chow, 1960). This increased contact between Chinese and the English speaking world meant that English gained in importance as the language of business, commerce, finance, and education.

Many Chinese students subsequently travelled overseas to learn advanced science and technology and returned home to propagate the knowledge they had learnt abroad. Meanwhile, foreign scholars or missionaries also travelled to and taught in China, for example, John Dewey lectured for two years in Chinese universities. Keenan (1977), states that Dewey advocated a child-centred curriculum, and emphasized the growth of

the child rather than an exclusive focus on the subject matter. This had a great impact on those using traditional methods in which the teacher was the centre of the class.

In 1922, a new educational system, modelled on the American system, was set up. It consisted of six years of primary education, six years of secondary education, and four years of higher education.

According to Fu (1986), the goals and requirements of English education in Chinese secondary schools were as follows: at the level of the middle school, students should communicate in simple daily English; set an important beginning for further language learning; get more language experiences, and improve their interest in knowing foreign countries. At the high school level, students should use English in practice, and develop their language experience. Contemporary English literature should be integrated into language learning process; students should grasp specialised knowledge through English as a medium; students should improve their interest in knowing foreign countries while learning English. At the college level, English should be learnt in the first two years without a link to students' majors, in order to prepare them for studying abroad or getting jobs through improved reading and translation abilities.

In mission schools, the English curriculum was not unified. In order to attract better students, many mission schools changed the orientation of English study from cultivating converts to true learner-centred learning, for example, students were no longer forced to attend religious services (Li, 1977).

At that time, two main approaches to teaching English were used in secondary schools.

One was the Grammar-Translation Method, which consisted largely of translating sentence-level texts from Chinese to English, and was the same method as for learning classical Chinese (Dzau, 1990). Another approach was the Direct Method, in which material was first presented orally through dialogue or with actions or pictures. Classroom instruction was conducted only in the target language, and grammar was taught inductively (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

During this period, the materials used in government schools were written in English. These books concentrated on students' interests including idiomatic English, short stories, poems, and so on. There were many grammar textbooks as well. On the other hand, the language teaching materials used in mission schools were original English readers (Yang, 2000); other courses such as Chemistry and Maths taught in mission schools also used original English textbooks (Fu, 1986).

English teaching during the Socialist Revolutionary period from 1948 to 1978

The second phase in English language teaching began with the communist victory in 1949, which led to the establishment of a new government and a new educational system. The Soviet Union assisted China in a number of areas, particularly in economics and education, and supplied educational structures, curriculum, pedagogy, and teaching materials to China. Thus, in the 1950s, teaching Russian as a foreign language became the most important subject at schools and universities (Yang, 2000). Consequently, English teaching was restricted to some specialized institutes for training foreign language teachers, translators, and interpreters (Zhang, 1984).

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In 1966, English language teaching stopped altogether as a result of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution during which Chairman Mao decreed that students would get more effective education when they took part in labour and production, rather than just studying at school (Chen, 1981).

It was only in the 1970s that English returned to the school curriculum when China resumed relations with the West and regained its legal position in the United Nations after a visit by the then United States President, Richard Nixon, in 1972. However, it was not viewed as a tool for intellectual and academic development, nor was it seen as a gateway for China's interaction with the other nations. Rather, it was used as a weapon for preaching political dogma (Price 1979): English texts used in the school were not for teaching language but for spreading the Maoist political views (Yang, 2000). During the

early part of this period, Grammar-Translation Method and the Direct Method continued to be the main teaching methods in the school, with some use of the Audiolingual Method as well. In the 1960s, reading skills began to receive more attention in English teaching at schools (Fu, 1986).

Translated versions of new national schoolbooks were used as English materials, such as Xu Guozhang English (Fu, 1986). The texts were chosen from Chinese readings, because they were about the moral-political principles of China (Price, 1979). In each text, the main drills emphasized the practicing of grammatical structures, word usage and sentence/ passage translation (Xu, 1989).

The objectives for English by the end of secondary school were to master about 3000 words, to read some easy English books and newspapers, and to communicate in simple basic English. Learners in college should be able to read specialized English materials for application specifically to their majors, and should partake in fairly complex conversations (Fu, 1986).

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Though educators tried to improve English teaching through the revision of teaching methods, materials, and curriculum during this period, the quality of English education was still low. Students still read word by word. Their reading speed was limited to about 50-80 words a minute (Dzau, 1990).

English teaching during the Open Door period from 1978 to 2005

The third phase is the so-called 'Open Door period' which began with the death of Chairman Mao in 1976. China then entered into a new period of economic development during which the Chinese government realized the importance of education and increasingly focused attention towards teachers with Western background and training. Foreign languages were used as tools to learn cultural and scientific knowledge, and to

foster international relations. The importance attached to foreign languages has continued to grow such that, currently, English is one of the three core subjects in secondary school. By 1992, in China, about 97% of 320,000 full-time foreign language teachers in secondary schools taught English language (Ross, 1992).

In 1982, the English syllabus in secondary school required learners to develop the four skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It emphasized that reading would be taught after learners had grasped the basic grammatical structures (Dzau, 1990**).** In 1987, the syllabus was improved; it focused on meeting diverse learner needs, and used an approach informed by the notion of 'communicative competence'. Later versions of the syllabus in the 1990s placed greater emphasis on developing learners' ability to use English for thinking and learning (Ross, 1993).

In 1985, the College English Syllabus saw a greater focus on social and academic needs. (College English Syllabus, 1985), a development which continues to the present day. In the 1990s, the kinds of English textbooks used became more varied and were often combined with audio or video tapes. Some materials emphasized the culture of western countries, such as food, festivals, sports and so on, while others aimed to develop specialised-technical talents such as interpreter. In secondary schools, however, English materials still focused predominantly on improving grammar skills (Yang, 2000).

Since China joined the World Trade Organisation in 1999 and the 2008 Olympic Games bid succeeded, there is even greater enthusiasm about learning English. English continues to be of considerable importance in the areas of trade and commerce, as well as in academic study. It is within this context that the present study was conceived.

1.2 Statement of the problem

As discussed above, it is clear that the educational objectives for English language teaching have undergone many changes over the last decades. In secondary school,

reading and writing abilities have become increasingly important, not only in assisting learners to study and work in English language contexts, but also in setting up the foundation for further English learning at university level. Thus, new materials have been developed, and new teaching methods have been used. However, in practice, many learners' reading abilities do not seem to have improved, and learners have difficulties in achieving the syllabus goals set for reading.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main aim of this study is, therefore, to investigate the reading skills and strategies taught and used in one EFL classroom in China, as well as the factors that promote or hinder the acquisition of these skills and strategies. The specific questions underpinning this study are as follows:

1. Major Research Question of the Study
   1.1 Why do Chinese learners of EFL at secondary school level have difficulty in achieving the syllabus goals set for reading?
2. Sub-Research Questions
   2.1 What kinds of skills and reading strategies are taught in reading English as a Foreign Language and for what purposes?
   2.2 How is reading comprehension assessed?
   2.3 What language learning theories seem to underlie these approaches to reading skills development and assessment?
   2.4 What are the teachers' and learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of these approaches?

In order to further explore the problems of teaching and learning reading strategies, I will compare the reading strategies used by learners in English and Chinese, and evaluate the suitability of the texts set for Grade 10 in terms of the language level of learners, the content, genre, and kinds of strategies developed.

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1.4 Significance of the study

The findings from this research could be useful to curriculum and syllabus designers; teachers who are interested in rethinking their approach to teaching reading in English in China; materials designers who will develop EFL textbooks for secondary schools in China; learners who are L2 or EFL learners with an interest in improving their reading skills.

1.5 Delimitation of the study

The study is limited to an analysis of reading strategies in one Grade Ten class at secondary level in 2005. Given the limitations of a mini-thesis many factors which have an effect on reading success were excluded from the study. Examples of these are individual factors such as age, gender, educational background, learning style and motivation, and social factors such as community attitudes to language.

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1.6 Structure of the study

Chapter 2 will cover the theoretical framework and literature review. It will deal with debates surrounding the concept of reading and how it should be taught in a foreign language. Specifically, emphasis is put on theories of the comprehension of text as a process that involves interaction between the reader's background knowledge (top-down) and the text itself (bottom-up), and the skills/strategies involved in these processes, as well as recent thinking on developing metacognitive strategies. Chapter 3 will describe and reflect on the qualitative design and the methods used to collect the data. The data collected will be presented and analysed in Chapter 4, and the conclusions presented in Chapter 5. This chapter will also feature recommendations arising from the findings of this study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the history of English education in China was briefly reviewed. Three periods were covered, namely; the new government period, the socialist revolutionary period, and the open door period, and the accompanying shifts in views of reading were briefly discussed. This chapter examines developments in research into reading, especially reading in a second or foreign language, with a particular emphasis on more recent views in which reading is understood as an interactive process of meaning making. A modified version of these interactive theories provides a theoretical framework for the study, which investigates the difficulties that Chinese learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have in developing reading skills.

Generally speaking, reading comprehension is the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately (Grabe & Stoller 2002). However, there is ongoing debate as to exactly what processes are involved in this highly complex activity and the nature of their interaction. Although reading research is said to have started in 1886 when Emile Javal published his first paper on seeing and naming letters versus words (Paulson & Goodman, 1999), research that aims to build clear models of the reading process is only just over forty years old. The next section gives an overview of the history of reading research, with particular emphasis on reading in a second or foreign language. A set of strategies for effective foreign language reading are then drawn from this review for data analysis purposes.

2.1 Audio-lingual theory：Reading as a decoding process

From 1965 to the present, the psychological study of mental processes has greatly influenced views on the teaching of first language reading. One of the earliest such influences was behaviourism which led to an understanding of reading as a passive

activity which involved decoding the author's intended meaning from patterns of written representation (Lado, 1964). In second or foreign language learning, audiolingual approaches, perhaps the most influenced by behaviourism, considered reading as subordinate to oral language skills development: mastering sound-symbol relationships and oral dialogues were considered as the first step in the development of reading proficiency (Carrell, 1988). Accordingly, as Richards and Rogers (2001) state, 'language was taught by systematic attention to pronunciation, and by intensive oral drilling of its basic sentence patterns' (p.52).

Later audio-lingual theorists recognised the importance of the role of background knowledge and culture-specific knowledge in the reading process, but 'persisted in their methodological and instructional focus on decoding, or bottom up processing' (Carrell, Devine & Eskey, 1988: 2). Audio-lingual approaches became less popular with teachers when they realized that oral proficiency did not automatically produce reading competency. Subsequently, researchers began to recognise that writing was not simply spoken language written down (Richards & Rogers, 2001). By the beginning of the 1970s, reading researchers were calling for the teaching of reading in its own right, rather than merely as a reinforcement for the teaching of oral skills.

2.2 Psychological Theory: Reading as psycholinguistic 'guessing game'

In the late 1970s, a new theory of reading, the psycholinguistic theory was developed. Part of this theory has its roots in schema theory, from within cognitive psychology. According to schema theory, '…a text only provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge'(Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983:556).

This implies that without previously acquired knowledge, any text, either spoken or written, will not by itself have any meaning for the reader. Previously acquired knowledge is defined as the reader's background knowledge, and previously acquired

knowledge structures came to be known as ‘schemata' (Bartlett 1932; Adams and Collins 1979; Rumelhart 1980).

Head (1926) was the first to use the term ‘schema’. He argued that cognitive processing was affected by previously stored information or events. Rumelhart (1980) and Mayer (1992) recognized that information entering working memory was integrated into schemata into a meaningful framework. For Rumelhart (1980) these schemata are the ‘building blocks of cognition’ which can help learners ‘interpret the printed words, recover information from memory, organize goals and sub-goals, distribute resources, and guide the flow of the processing systems’ (p. 34).

The implications of schema theory for understanding the reading process were elaborated by Goodman (1971). He described reading as a ‘psycholinguistic guessing game’, during which the ‘readers use their background knowledge to reconstruct a message which has been encoded by a writer’ (p.135). In contrast to audio-lingual approaches, Goodman (1973) asserted that it was not necessary for the reader to use all the textual cues but rather to be able to make correct predictions. In this way, less confirmation through the text was required. He emphasized that reading is not primarily a process of picking up information letter by letter and word by word, but a selective process. Clarke and Silberstein (1977) similarly asserted that ‘more information is contributed by the reader than the print on the page’ (p.136-137).

Goodman’s (1971) model greatly influenced the development of the ‘top-down model’ of reading which emphasized the role of the reader’s prior experience or background knowledge. In this model, a text does not have meaning in itself but rather provides directions for readers as to how they should recover or create meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge. Thus, Goodman’s model as basically a ‘concept-driven, top-down pattern’ in which ‘higher-level processes interact with, and direct the flow of information through lower-level processes’ (Stanovich 1980: 34).

Research into this model in EFL reading found that background knowledge could be an important variable, for example, Coady (1979) noted that learners with a western background of some kind learnt English faster on average than those without such a background.

To sum up, a top-down view of reading holds that the reader participates actively in the reading process, making predictions and processing information on the basis of prior experience or background knowledge (Carrell, 1988).

However, as Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) argue, researchers within this psycholinguistic tradition emphasized the use of higher level skills to predict meaning through context or prior knowledge and de-emphasised lower level skills such as identifying lexical and grammatical forms fast and accurately. On this point, Stanovich (1980) argued that if we only use top-down approaches to reading, we may be left with a limited understanding of the text. He also pointed out that generating hypotheses in the way suggested by Frank Smith and others would probably be more time-consuming than decoding would be (Stanovich, 1980). A further criticism is that in extreme interpretations of a top-down model, there is a question about 'what a reader could learn from a text if the reader must first have expectations about all the information in the text' (Grabe & Stoller 2002: 32).

It seemed then that top-down and bottom-up processing occur simultaneously at all levels. From these ideas arose interactive models of reading. In the next section, I will discuss reading as an interactive process.

2.3. Reading as an interactive process

From the mid-70s, Rumelhart and Ortony (1977); Rumelhart (1980) and Stanovich (1980) tried to solve some of problems discussed above by creating interactive models of reading. 'Interactive' meant giving equal weight to both top-down and bottom-up processes. Interactive approaches therefore understood the comprehension of a text as a process that involved interaction between the reader's background knowledge (top-down)

and the text itself (bottom-up). Normally, top-down and bottom-up processes would work together to make sure that accurate and rapid information was acquired. From this understanding, Stanovich (1980) proposed what he called an 'interactive compensatory model'. In this model readers would process texts by using information simultaneously from many different sources of knowledge, both bottom-up and top-down. These sources of knowledge included lexical, syntactic, semantic and discoursal (Nunan, 1995).

Top-down processes

As described above, a top-down model holds that readers infer text information through a series of expectations (Grabe & Stoller, 2002), making hypotheses and taking in just enough visual information to test their hypotheses (Goodman, 1967; Smith, 1971). The importance of readers' background knowledge or existing schemata is stressed. In this regard, it is necessary to make a distinction among what Carrell (1983b) calls 'formal' schemata, 'content' schemata, and linguistic schemata. Formal schemata refer to background knowledge of the formal, rhetorical or organizational structures of different types of texts while content schemata relate to background knowledge of the content area of a text, and linguistic schemata contain the reader's knowledge of phonics, grammar, word attack skills, letter recognition, and vocabulary, a source of knowledge which aids bottom-up processing.

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Bottom-up processes

Bottom-up processing is concerned with how readers select information from the printed page (Gough, 1972). In an extreme view, readers understand the information in a text through processing letter-by-letter, word-by-word and sentence by sentence (Grabe & Stoller, 2002) without necessarily linking it to their background knowledge.

Interactive models

Interactive models combine both perspectives and see readers as building textual meaning from the smallest units to the largest, 'modifying pre-existing background

knowledge and current predictions on the basis of information encountered in the text' (Carrell, 1998: 101).

For many years researchers and practitioners have worked with interactive models, taking useful ideas from both perspectives, for example, emphasising fast, efficient word recognition but acknowledging background knowledge, and predicting and inferencing as important for text comprehension. However, as Grabe and Stoller (2002) point out, such approaches lead to 'a self-contradictory model', because, 'the key processing aspects of bottom-up approaches – efficiently coordinated automatic processing in working memory such as automatic word recognition – are incompatible with strong top-down controls on reading comprehension' (p. 33). In other words, automatic processing needs to operate without a lot of interference from background knowledge or inferencing (ibid).

As a result, researchers reworked such models into 'modified interactive models'. Here a number of processes, especially automatic processes, such as letter recognition, are carried out primarily in a bottom-up manner with little interference from other processing levels or knowledge resources (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Word recognition, for example, may involve information from letters, letter-shapes, phonology and whole word orthography, but almost no information from context or background knowledge as this would take too much time and affect fluent reading. As a result of these developments, Stanovich and Stanovich (1999) could state at the end of the twentieth century that twenty years of empirical research have 'largely resolved …debates in favour of the bottom-up models' (p. 29).

Accordingly, recent approaches especially in second and foreign language teaching, emphasize the importance of reinforcing 'bottom up' language decoding skills, namely, grammatical skills and vocabulary development, while also stressing that linguistic forms should be contextualised in 'situations of natural use' (Hedge, 2003: 159). In particular, Koda (2005) has found that word recognition is critical in text meaning construction, but that 'successful semantic processing depends on both efficient access to stored word information and contextually appropriate meaning selections' (p. 35).

Interactive models in second and foreign language reading

Over the years, work on reading in a second or foreign language, such as that mentioned above, has thrown up several issues in relation to interactive models. A large number of additional variables such as the grammatical nature of a language, the orthographic nature of a language, sociocultural variables for both text and reader came into play (Bernhardt, 2005).

One of the most important research questions was that posed by Alderson in 1984 'Is second language reading a language problem or a reading problem?' Here Alderson identifies two significant variables, L1 reading ability and L2 proficiency, as the main factors influencing L2 reading ability. As Koda (2005) points out, two well-known hypotheses underlie this question: 'developmental interdependence' (Cummins, 1979, 1986) which suggests that first language reading ability is the major factor in the development of L2 reading skills; and 'linguistic threshold' (Clarke, 1980; Yorio, 1971) in which knowledge of L2 is the main source of variation in performance levels. Here Clarke's short-circuit hypothesis (1980) suggested that a reader's limited control over the second language 'short-circuited' his/her system and caused him/her to 'revert to poor reader strategies when confronted with a difficult or confusing task in the second language' (p. 120). More recent research shows that L2 knowledge explains 30% to 40% of L2 reading variance in this way (see for example, Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Bernhardt, 2005; Carrell, 1991) while L1 literacy levels account for 14% to 21% (Bernhardt, 2005).

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Koda (2005) following the 'simple view of reading' as developed by Gough and Tunmer (1986) proposes a third significant factor in explaining reading ability differences: decoding competence. Second language research on decoding efficiency suggests that L1-L2 orthographic distance is at least partly responsible for differences in decoding competence. For learners with L1 backgrounds that are orthographically distant from the L2, proficiency in the L2 may be a better predictor of L2 decoding efficiency whereas in

those learners whose L1 is orthographically similar to the L2, L1 decoding competence is likely to be a strong factor (Koda, 2005).

As far as orthographic differences across languages are concerned, it is claimed that the extent to which the alphabet of a language is opaque or transparent makes a difference in word recognition, fluency and reading rate as well as transfer (Geva & Siegal, 2000; Taft &Zhu, 1995). This is known as the 'Orthographic Depth' hypothesis (Katz & Frost, 1992), and is of particular relevance to this study as English is considered very opaque for an alphabetic language and Chinese also very opaque, although not alphabetic (Elley, 1992; Oney, Peter & Katz, 1997). In English each symbol represents a letter whereas in Chinese, an ideographic language, each symbol represents a unit of meaning, a word, or a morpheme. Consequently, the difficulties for speakers of either language learning to read in the other are magnified.

Three elements therefore contribute significantly to successful second language reading comprehension: L1 reading, L2 proficiency, and L2 decoding (Koda, 2005). Yet, there are also several other factors that are involved. These include reading mode (scanning, skimming, comprehending or learning) which varies according to purpose (Carver, 2000) and changes the nature and degree of L2 linguistic knowledge needed to understand a text successfully (Koda, 2005). Taillefer (1996) showed that the importance of L2 proficiency increases along with the difficulty of the task.

As Bernhardt (2005) points out, existing models of L2 reading do not effectively capture 'the interactivity and simultaneity' of all these factors (p.138). Accordingly, building on Stanovich (1980) she proposes a three-dimensional compensatory model based on the concept of 'compensatory processing'. In this way, she tries to model 'how knowledge sources assist or take over for other knowledge sources that are inadequate or non-existent' on a synergistic and interactive way and to argue that the second language reading process is a 'juggling or switching' cognitive process (Bernhardt, 2005:140). An example of these compensatory processes is how the higher the literacy level in the L1, the more it is available to support inadequate second language processes.

In addition to the linguistic and processing issues raised above, Grabe and Stoller (2002) mention two other major differences in L1 and L2 reading contexts. These are, first, socio-cultural and institutional differences such as different attitudes to literacy, different ways of organizing discourse and texts, and different expectations of L2 educational institutions, and second, individual and experiential differences such as students' proficiency levels in L1 reading skills and motivations for reading in the L2. However, these two sets of factors are beyond the scope of this thesis.

2.4 Transfer of reading skills and strategies

One of the key problems in EFL and ESL reading is thus the transfer of L1 linguistic, strategy and content knowledge and whether this transfer is positive or negative (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). 'Transfer' refers to the idea that L2 readers will use their L1 knowledge and experiences to help them with L2 tasks. In the case of reading, transfer can take place with phonological knowledge, topical knowledge, general background knowledge, problem-solving strategies and inferencing skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2002: 52) or basic reading purposes and metacognitive knowledge, including strategies, inferences, motivation, and attitudes (Koda, 2005).
For Bernhardt (2005), the central question is not *if* language and literacy skills transfer but rather '*how much transfers*, *under what conditions* and *in which contexts*' (p. 138, emphasis in original).

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In order to understand the notion of 'transfer' mentioned above, it is necessary to explore the notions of reading 'skills' and reading 'strategies' in more depth. These concepts will first be defined.

For Urquhart and Weir (1998) a reading **skill** is 'a cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with written texts' (p. 88). Skills are deployed unconsciously once they have reached the level of automaticity (ibid.). Reading skills relate to comprehension rather than decoding which is generally considered a separate component

or skill. Reading **strategies**, on the other hand, can be defined as conscious, purposeful responses to difficulties encountered when reading a text (Urquhart & Weir, 1998). Learning, and more specifically, reading strategies have only become an area of focus in research within the last twenty five years (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) and many researchers still use the terms ‘skills’ and ‘strategies’ interchangeably. For Cohen (1998) the element that distinguishes strategies from other processes is that of consciousness. Examples are flexibility of reading rate, paraphrasing, using extra-textual content and ongoing self-evaluation (Sarig, 1987). Urquhart and Weir (1998) suggest that another way to distinguish skills from strategies is to see skills as text-oriented and strategies as reader-oriented. Either way, one of the goals of reading instruction, especially in more recent approaches to L2 reading, is to make unconscious processes conscious, to develop appropriate strategies and to encourage the reader to reflect on the effectiveness of his/her reading skills and strategies.

A particular interest in this study is the extent to which learners transfer skills and strategies from one language to another. Two hypotheses that Alderson (1984) derived from his question ‘is SL reading a language or a reading problem’? above, and that are of significance for this study are the following:

- one, that ‘poor foreign language reading is due to incorrect strategies for reading that foreign language, strategies which differ from the strategies for reading the native language’; and
- two, that ‘poor foreign language reading is due to the reading strategies in the first language not being employed in the foreign language, due to inadequate knowledge of foreign language. Good first language readers will read well in the foreign language, once they have passed a threshold of foreign language ability’ (Alderson 1984: 4).

When L2 students are asked to read material that is difficult for them, they will rely on any resources available to try to make sense of the text. However skills transfer may not always be easily accessible as a resource for L2 students and may at times be counter-

productive (Anderson, 1995). For example, learners' linguistic knowledge in a second language mean that many reading strategies proposed for first language may not be appropriate for second language. One such example is sounding out a word to discover its meaning as L2 students do not have a large store of words in their heads to be matched with the sounded-out word (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). The same authors suggest that knowledge of discourse organisation may be important for students who read L2 texts in more advanced academic settings. Presumably the transfer of knowledge about the structure of particular genres or text types may either assist or hinder L2 comprehension.

Consequently, it is important to explore which L1 skills and strategies might act as positive support for L2 reading and how they can be reinforced through direct instruction.

Garcia (2000) further points out that L2 reader often develop a greater metalinguistic awareness of the L2 unlike L1 readers whose knowledge of their language tends to be more tacit. In these cases, students may reflect on the linguistic resources (vocabulary, morphology, grammar, and discourse knowledge) that they use to assist them and this can enhance language learning (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Similarly, many L2 learners develop greater metacognitive awareness of the strategies they use while reading and can use this knowledge to 'enhance their reading, provide strategic support or understand their own comprehension failure' (ibid., p. 45). Cohen (1998) describes metacognitive strategies as dealing with 'pre-assessment and pre-planning, online planning and evaluation and post-evaluation of language learning activities and of language use events' (p.7). For him, such strategies allow learners to control their own cognition by coordinating the planning, organising, and evaluating of the learning process.

Reading strategies form part of a broader range of language learning and language use strategies defined by Cohen (1998) as 'the processes selected by learners and the action taken to learn the language further through the storage, retention, recall, or application of information about that language' (p.4). Their aims are to improve the learning of a second language, the use of it, or both. He raises several problematic issues to do with learning strategies in reading: one of these is the difficulty of distinguishing between high and low

level strategies, another the differing criteria for classifying language learning strategies and for interpreting which strategy is being used when. As an example: strategies have been differentiated according to cognitive, metacognitive, affective, or social (Chamot, 1987; Oxford, 1990), but the distinctions are not clear, for example, text summarization may be explained as cognitive or metacognitive (Cohen, 1998, p.12-13).

Of importance for this study is the way in which Cohen (1998) points to the broadening of the concept of *strategic competence*. He describes how early references to strategic competence put the emphasis on compensatory strategies, that is, strategies used to compensate for a lack in some language area (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale 1983), and how Bachman (1990) and later Bachman and Palmer (1996) provided a broader theoretical model. These authors see strategic competence as 'a set of metacognitive components, or strategies, which can be thought of as higher order executive processes that provide a cognitive management function in language use' (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p.70). For them, the areas of metacognitive strategy use include the following:

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- A goal-setting component in which learners identify tasks and decide what they are going to do,
- An assessment component whereby the speakers (listeners, readers, writers) determine what is needed, what one has to work with, and how well one has done,
- A planning component whereby the respondents decide how to use their knowledge of the topic and their language knowledge. (Cohen,1998:14)

As Cohen argues, a great deal that is contained in this framework is non-compensatory, for example, determining the language needed to perform the given task, strategies for planning how to accomplish the task, and self-assessment strategies carried out after the task.

Literature indicates that higher-proficiency learners may be using metacognitive strategies than lower-proficiency learners and use these strategies more effectively (Cohen, 2000). This is corroborated in relation to reading by Koda (2005) who opined

that ‘metacognition – the explicit understanding of one’s own cognitive capabilities – plays a central role in the spontaneous use of strategies to regulate reading behaviours during comprehension’ (p.221). In one of many studies of L2 reading strategies, Schoonen, Hulstijn and Bossers (1998) studying L2 readers in Holland at grades 8 and 10 found that, within metacognitive knowledge, ‘knowledge of text characteristics, knowledge of reading strategies, and, to a lesser extent, knowledge of reading goals […] appear to be more important domains’ (p. 98).

Despite the promise of better comprehension through the use of appropriate reading strategies, many questions remain. Bernhardt (2005) asks, for example, whether strategic knowledge can compensate for weaknesses in syntax and whether these elements in turn can be ‘overwhelmed by vocabulary knowledge and so forth’(p. 142). It is clear that much further research is necessary.

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2.5 Developing reading skills and strategies: implications for EFL teaching

As modified interactive models are still widely used as the basis for pedagogical principles in teaching EFL reading in China, this section will focus largely on the guidelines offered by such models. However, it will also include more recent perspectives on strategy training.

Urquhart and Weir (1998) feel that skills are probably still the best means of structuring reading syllabi. However, there is still little consensus on taxonomies of skills (Williams & Moran, 1989) and on whether or not they can be placed in a hierarchy. The taxonomy created by Munby (1978) has been highly influential and included skills such as skimming, scanning and recognising indicators in discourse, which can be seen as associated with interactive models of reading. More recently, Grabe (1991) proposed a taxonomy which included ‘metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring’ (p. 377). Examples of these are pre-reading (planning) strategies, while-reading (monitoring) strategies and post-reading (evaluation) strategies.

Different skills and strategies are associated with the different aspects of interactive models. For the purposes of teaching and developing reading skills, contemporary reading tasks can be done through a three-phased procedure (Laviosa, 1994). The phases are pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. These phases can be seen to move from a predominantly top-down focus to a predominantly bottom-up process to a final stage where the two are more evenly integrated.

Pre-reading

This phase helps to activate or create appropriate schemata to help learners understand the text. Laviosa (1994) recommends six activities in this phase (p. 239-40). These are:

a) oral discussion: a large or small group of students discuss what they may already know on the topic; students are encouraged to make guesses about what information the text contains and to think of questions that the text might answer;
b) brainstorming to generate issues or concepts which probably occur in the text;
c) looking at visuals (for example, headlines, titles, charts, pictures) and other contextual aids which are provided with the text, so that students guess what information the text contains;
d) predicting or hypothesizing what might come next in the text through reading the title or the first line of this text
e) previewing vocabulary items in context; and
f) skimming the text through reading the first line of each paragraph and the last paragraph or conclusion. This helps students get a general idea of the passage.

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To these activities, Drucker (2003) has added that teachers can also relate the passage students are going to read with/to something that is familiar to them. This should be followed by a brief discussion of questions that will engage the students, and an overview of the section they are about to read. The teacher can select the text, introduce the characters, and describe the plot. Finally, the teacher directs the students to read the story,

and look for particular information. Abraham (2002) points to the importance of also identifying text structure in an interactive approach.

While-reading

According to Laviosa (1994), in while-reading, students read the text in detail and answer specific questions. While-reading begins with a general or global understanding of the text, and then moves on to smaller units such as words, sentences or paragraphs.

Post-reading

Laviosa (1994) suggested two main activities here:

a) comprehension questions should be asked to check if students understand main points, make sure of the main ideas and supporting details, and identify words or phrases which refer to the culture of the target language.

b) students discuss the text critically and make personal comments on the text.

Later writers such as Haller (2000) suggest a wider range of post-reading activities, for example, matching exercises, cloze exercises, cut-up sentences, and comprehension questions, which can help learners to improve reading comprehension.

Kidane (1998) has summarized the three steps of teaching reading as follows:

Table 2.1 : A summary of the three steps of teaching reading (Kidane, 1998: 19)

STAGE I	ACTIVITIES	OBJECTIVES
Pre-reading		
1	Setting the text	To consider the relevance of the content and language level
2	Providing a purpose	To show the reason for reading, and determine the speed of reading

3	Introduce the text	To make learners feel interest through introducing the text. To guide students in the right direction
4	Activating prior knowledge	To interact with the text and understand it
5	Pre-teaching vocabulary	To lessen the problem in grasping or comprehending the text
STAGE II While-reading		
Silent reading	Reading for gist	To understand the general purpose of the text
	Reading for details	To understand the details of ideas. To infer meaning of new words from the context
STAGE III Post-Reading		
	Asking questions after reading	To evaluate the text To achieve global understanding of the test To relate the text with learners' knowledge, experience, interests or views To encourage the students to imagine themselves in the text To summarise texts

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This summary is representative of many of the guidelines given to EFL teachers. It does not however, relate specific strategies to particular objectives nor mention activities such as identifying discourse organisers or previewing text structure. it is also silent on metacognitive strategies, an issue which is taken up below.

2.6 Developing strategic readers: focus on metacognitive strategies

The goal of strategy training is to explicitly teach students how, when, and why strategies can be used to help them learn and use a foreign language (Cohen, 1998). In general, the training aims at improving reading comprehension are 'instilling a self-regulatory reading mode through explicit, step-by-step demonstrations of good reading behaviours. Three approaches are modelled: cognitive strategies(used during text-information processing), metacognitive strategies (using in monitoring and regulating the reading), and test-taking strategies' (Koda, 2005:220). In this way, students can become more self-reliant (Oxford, 1990).

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A focus on metacognition therefore helps in people thinking about what they are doing while reading. Klein *et al*. (1991) state that strategic readers attempt the following while reading:

- Identify the purpose of the reading before starting to read.
- Identify the type of text before reading
- Think about the general character and features of the type of text. For instance, they try to locate a topic/sentence and follow supporting details towards a conclusion
- Choose either to skim, scan, or read in detail
- Make continuous predictions about what will occur next, based on information obtained earlier, prior knowledge, and conclusions obtained within the previous stages.

The goal of strategy instruction would thus be to make these strategies conscious and to help learners evaluate which ones work best for particular tasks. In strategic reading,

good readers adjust their reading behaviours on an ongoing basis as text difficulty, task demands, and other variables change (Koda, 2005). Several current metacognitive models have been developed for identifying, developing and teaching strategies. All include, at least, planning, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluating (Anderson, 2002; Chamot, 1994; Chamot *et al*., 1999; NCLRC, 2003).

For Chamot (2005), metacognitive models of language learning strategies can offer a way to think about language learning strategies 'from the perspective of the learner and the teacher, rather than from that of the researcher' (p. 125). Moreover, Cohen (1998) points out that another 'potentially beneficial shift in teacher roles is from that of being exclusively the manager, controller, and instructor to that of being a change agent – a facilitator of learning, whose role is to help their students to become more independent, more responsible for their own learning' (p. 97).

More recent compensatory models of second or foreign language reading have not yet yielded clear guidelines for reading teachers. Bernhardt (2005), for example, says only that instruction should accommodate literacy variables, language variables, affective, social and strategic variables (p. 142) but there are few suggestions on how to do this in a way that encourages compensatory processing. Strategy training would seem to be a key tool under these circumstances.

In addition, more recent understandings of the reading process do not seem to have penetrated beyond the 'centre' in English language teaching. This illuminates one of the many problems created by the uneven spread of knowledge together with the ever-increasing need for English in the developing world. For this and other reasons, it would seem important that reading strategy instruction in foreign language learning should be accompanied by a critical awareness of language in its social, political, cultural, historical, and economic context.

2.7 Critical pedagogy

Although in China grammar-translation approaches in language teaching have shifted to more communicative approaches, there is little change in terms of the outcomes of foreign language education in our society. Students often fail to develop even a minimal level of competence in the target language. The failures in language teaching and language learning cannot be explained solely as matter of methodology (Reagan & Osborn, 2002). Therefore, it is important to look critically at the social, political, cultural, historical, and economic context in which foreign language education takes place. She argues that in studying the target language, learners could gain awareness of 'shared and different realities that exist in the world, and develop tolerance and understanding of linguistic and other types of diversity' (Reagan & Osborn, 2002:2).

Lessow-Hurley (1996) points out that 'culture is something we all have, but often have difficulties in perceiving. Culture, like language, is dynamic, changing to meet the needs of the people it serves' (p. 95). Kramsch (1993) argues that one of the problems is that in teachers' guidelines it is often stated that language teaching consists of 'teaching the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), plus culture. This dichotomy of language and culture is an entrenched feature of language teaching around the world' (p. 8). For her, 'cultural awareness must be viewed both as enabling language proficiency, and as being the outcome of reflection on language proficiency' (ibid., p. 8)

The foreign language educator thus has a very complex task, which is not only to teach students the linguistic basics of the target language, but also to provide them with an introduction to the cultures, literatures, and the worlds of the speakers of the target language (Reagan & Osborne, 2002).

2.8 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has reviewed some of the models of the reading process for first and second languages as well as some of the implications for instruction. Most recent understandings view this process as one of 'multilayered relationships among component skills' (Koda, 2005:19) but recognise that 'bottom-up' decoding plays a much larger part than believed in early interactive models.

In the next chapter I will describe and discuss the research design and methods used to investigate teachers' and learners' understanding and experiences of this process.

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Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, theories of reading were discussed, with special emphasis on recent developments in interactive approaches, and their applications in the teaching of reading strategies. In this chapter, I will explore the research methodology which I used to investigate the experiences of learners and their teacher in one Chinese secondary school.

To understand the factors that affect the learners' development of reading skills more fully, I undertook five months ethnographic study at a High School from 10th of October in 2005 to 15th of February in 2006. I carried out classroom observation for three months, and did interviews and questionnaires in the other two months. I focused on twenty-seven learners and their teacher in one class at Grade 10 level. The teacher who was interviewed told me that in China the foundation of English language learning should be formed in Grades 10 and 11 while review of the whole study of English in high school should take place in Grade 12. I chose Grade 10 level because this grade marks the beginning of secondary school in China and serves as the foundation for developing reading strategies in English as a foreign language. Leaving middle school, learners face a series of new reading skills and strategies in an unfamiliar setting, high school. I hoped to gain some insights into their reading difficulties at this critical juncture.

In order to investigate teachers' and learners' practices and beliefs about reading in a foreign language, I have used methods associated with qualitative research such as participant observation and interviews. I also used videotaping on a few occasions so that I could form a more holistic picture of classroom interactions. Banister *et al*. (1994) define qualitative research as an interpretive study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the meaning that is made.

There are several aspects of qualitative research which influence this study: that it is an inductive approach; that it reveals the insider perspective; and that it explores the interpretive world of participants in a holistic way. I will elaborate each of these in turn.

Firstly, inductive approaches emphasize 'developing insights and generalizations out of the data collected' (Neuman, 2000:122). Since the aim of this research is to investigate teaching reading in English as a foreign language, I wanted my understanding of the issues involved to emerge out of teachers' and learners' views rather than to impose on them a pre-determined set of questions. This emphasis on the 'insider perspective' is a second key aspect of qualitative research. It is considered by Nunan (1992) to be the most appropriate approach to researching language teaching and learning because it is concerned with understanding human behaviour from the actor's own frame of reference (p. 4). Through qualitative research, one can seek the beliefs and theories underlying the behaviours of teachers and learners in a reading class, and discover their perceptions of the difficulties of such reading. Thus, qualitative research is an attempt to capture the meanings that participants make of their daily lives. It is in this sense that qualitative research can be said to explore the interpretive world of participants.

The final aspect of qualitative research is its holistic nature: through rich 'thick' description, it attempts to provide contextual understanding of the complex interrelationship between the causes and consequences of human behaviour (Anderson, 1993; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). In this study, this methodology helped to explore the connections and gaps between the teaching and learning of reading in order to understand why learners struggled to meet the syllabus gaols for reading.

However, in its focus on the insider perspective, qualitative research can be considered too subjective. In order to counteract this subjectivity, I also used an element of quantitative research. Quantitative research assumes the existence of facts, which are 'somehow external to, and independent of the observer or researcher' (Nunan, 2003: 4) and investigates the causes of social phenomena 'without regard to the subjective states

of the individual' (Nunan, 1992:4). Meanwhile, Nunan (1992) also mentions that data are considered to be 'hard' and replicable (p 4). Here I used a written questionnaire to elicit participants' self-reports on the strategies used to make sense of text in Chinese and in English. This method enabled a higher degree of control and objectivity, and in a larger study might have offered greater generalisability. I therefore feel that this mix of methods, combining aspects of qualitative and quantitative research, was helpful in illuminating different dimensions of my research problem.

Before expounding on the research tools used, I will discuss subject selection and research setting.

3.2 Site and subject selection

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The research site is located in a high school in Taiyuan city in China. When I first visited the school before deciding on a site, the principal told me that the learner profile was a mix of children of farmers, urban workers, and teachers, and that the teachers had all graduated from Taiyuan Education Institution. Almost all the teachers live in flats provided by the school. I explained the objectives of the research study to him and he then said he would conduct me around the school.

At that moment, the principal's phone rang. He then left me and I had an opportunity to look around by myself. I heard sounds from one of the classrooms and I looked through the window to see learners reading together in English. It seemed that they were intoxicated with the texts. The teacher was walking around in the classroom with his book. It seemed that he tried to help learners deal with some problems. At that moment, I was interested in this school. I felt I could get valuable data here.

The principal returned and we started out tour. In this school, the classrooms and administrative blocks are set on each side of the playground. We went first to the classroom block which has fifteen classrooms for middle school learners located on the first and second floor and fifteen classrooms for high school learners on the third and

fourth floor. The library is in the left hand corner of the first floor; on the opposite side on this floor is the language phonetics classroom. In every classroom, there is a television set and a tape-recorder. On the wall, there are slogans which encourage learners to study hard and try to help them to shape up their outlook on life and the world in general.

Then, we went to the administration building consisting of two floors. The first floor is the administration offices, while the second floor is the teachers' offices. In each office there are four desks and two wardrobes. The desks were full of homework books, notebooks and examination papers. When I went there, the teachers were all in the class.

Lastly, we went into the learners' residence at the back of the school. This is for learners who live far from school: the school day normally begins with a morning reading class from 7:00 - 7:30 am, thus making it more logical to live in school, than travelling from home. It consisted of four floors. In each room, there are eight beds. In the middle of the room, there is a long desk with a lot of books and papers.

After that, the principal helped me to make an appointment with the teacher; he said I could have a presentation on my research in class so I could openly explain what my research was about to the teacher and learners. It was a good chance for me to set up relationships with all the participants and to gain their trust and help with my research.

Next day, I went to the school early and waited until the teacher had a break. When I walked into class, I felt nervous, because the learners were looking at me strangely. It seemed that no one had ever visited them or done any research in their class.
I was introduced to the teacher and learners as a person from University of the Western Cape in South Africa who was interested in teaching reading in English as a foreign language. I said greetings to all of them with a smiling face. I showed them my student card of University of the Western Cape, and some pictures I had taken of this university. At that time, I saw they were relaxing and becoming more friendly towards me. I told them I would conduct my research with all the learners in their class. I explained the aim of my study to them and told them what I would do in class and after class, that is, to

observe their classes, to interview them and ask them to answer a questionnaire. I also told them I was born in Taiyuan city and that I was educated in our home town until graduation from university. As time went on, we communicated friendlily and happily and I slowly gained their trust.

After visiting this school, I felt that the school was suitable for the purpose of the research because it provided an example of a typical high school for a medium-sized city in China. A second reason was ease of accessibility from the house where I was staying. I consider it a stroke of luck to have been granted permission by the Ministry of Education to carry out my research in Number Two School.

Profile of the English teacher

The teacher was a married woman in her early forties. She obtained a Bachelor of English education degree from Taiyuan Education Institute in 1988 and had over eighteen years experience teaching in this school.

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The learners

There were 27 learners in this class, 12 males and 15 females. They were all 17 years old and had come from different middle schools.

3.3 Data collection methods and instruments

Fieldwork for this research took place five months from 10th of October in 2005 to 15th of February in 2006, using classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and document analysis. This mix of tools assisted with triangulation of the data in order to try and ensure greater validity of interpretation. The concept of triangulation or the use of multiple methods encourages researchers to approach their

research questions from different angles, and enables a more rounded, multi-faceted exploration of the problem under consideration (Chaudron, 2003; Mason & Bramble, 1989).

In the next sections I describe my use of each of these research tools.

3.3.1 Classroom observation and related procedures

In qualitative research, classroom observation is recommended in place of experiments and surveys as a source of data. As Nunan (1992) points out '[as] language classrooms are specifically constituted to bring about learning, it is not unreasonable to collect data about what goes on there, as a means of adding to our knowledge of language learning and use' (p. 91). Vierra and Pollock (1988) argue that one of the most important phases of qualitative research is the initial observation. Questions that arise during this phase of the research can guide the development of the semi-structured interviews and other tools. In addition, the researcher gains a wider understanding of the problem under consideration by observing the range of factors in everyday classroom contexts that may have an impact.

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My goal in observing this class was to describe the teaching and learning of EFL reading skills and strategies and to identify some of the factors which might affect its success. I spent three months observing in this class. Normally, we have two terms in the time of a school year. The first term is from September 1st to January 15th in a new year. After an examination in the middle of a school year, there is a one-month winter holiday. The second term is from the middle of February to the middle of July. After the examination for entering the next grade, there is a holiday for two months.

After the first two weeks, I created an observation scheme based on the daily activities I observed. Such schemes enable the observer to describe classroom activities as precisely as possible (Nunan, 2003). In order to try and have a more holistic picture of what was happening in reading classes, I videoed 4 classes. I wanted to check whether the teacher

taught these skills and how they were put into practice. The skills concerned were: skimming, scanning, and reading for thorough comprehension. Koshy (2005:103) mentions that 'video recordings are very useful when it comes to collecting accurate information on student participation and attitudes'. On the other hand, video recording means that 'only events in the line of the camera can be recorded limiting the range of possible observations' (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006:13). While video helped me to get a sense of emerging patterns, I was concerned that there might be important interactions or other elements in the class that were not captured by this means.

Therefore, through these observations and recordings, there were aspects that could not be captured, for example, whether learners were using skills and strategies unconsciously or consciously and how they felt about the kinds of tasks being taught. I hoped that interviews and questionnaires would help me understand more about these issues.

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3.3.2 Interviews

I interviewed eight learners out of the twenty-seven, six female learners and two male learners. The learners I interviewed were selected by their teacher according to their examination results to try and get a spread of good, average and poor students in order to assess whether differences in findings emerged according to their reading levels.

Cohen and Manion (1980) describe an interview as 'a two person conversation, initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information, and focused by the interviewer on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation' (p. 241). In relation to qualitative research, Kvale (1996) defines interviews as 'attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their lived world, prior to scientific explanations' (p.1).
Sewell (1998) points out the advantages of this method, saying that interviewees may feel more relaxed and candid because they can describe what is important to them in their

own words, rather than being restricted by preset categories. Thus, interviewers can produce in-depth data, which is not possible with questionnaires (Gay, 1981:166).

A further advantage of interviewing according to Sewell (1998) is its flexibility. It enables interviewers to explore interesting or unexpected ideas or themes raised by participants, to ask for more details and to make sure that interviewees are interpreting questions the way they were intended

I chose semi-structured interviews which 'explore in-depth information and allow elaboration within limits' (Cohen & Manion, 1980:167). Johnson (2002) cited in Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004 defines an in-depth interview as a 'face to face interaction between an interviewer and information, which seeks to build the kind of intimacy that is common for mutual self-disclosure' (p. 103).

My interviews were aimed at eliciting vital information from the teacher and learners about the difficulties of using reading strategies and reading materials. Semi-structured interviews enabled this kind of disclosure: teacher and learners were able to put forward their suggestions, describe their teaching and learning background, discuss their thoughts related to reading materials, and talk about their reading strategies in teaching and learning processes relatively freely. As a result, it seems that semi-structured interviews gave the interviewee 'a degree of power and control over the course of the interviews' (Nunan, 2003:150).

With the semi-structured interview, I prepared a set of flexible questions which aimed to ask the participants to develop their ideas and speak more widely on , for example, questions about what kind of materials they read; which language they use while reading; and how they read. The answers were open-ended so that participants and I could discuss some questions in more detail. If anyone had difficulty in answering the question, or provided a brief response, I could use cues to encourage them to further consider this question.

Normally, in the interview process, there are two ways to record data: using a tape recorder, and written notes. My preference was to record interview data with a tape recorder because it would be more reliable than hurriedly written notes, and so make it easier for me to focus on the interview. Patton in fact states that a tape recorder is 'indispensable' (1990: 348). Participants' consent was sought to allow the recording of the whole interview process; they all obliged and were helpful. The language of interviews with learners was English, but, I spoke initially in English, and then translated into Chinese. The aim was to help them to feel confident about what they wanted to say. (See Appendices G and I).

Interviews nevertheless have some disadvantages. Firstly, conducting a qualitative interview is intensive and time consuming. After the interview, researchers collate, analyze and interpret the data. In this particular case, I recorded interviews using a tape-recorder, then listened to the tape several times, transcribed the recording and later categorized findings into different themes. This took a substantial amount of time.

Secondly, time and venue can be uncontrollable, and the participant is restricted to a specific time and place (Gay, 1981). I interviewed learners in the teacher's office, because it was too noisy to talk with them and record in the classroom. They were interviewed one at a time after each class because their classes were all through the day. I tried to conduct the interview at lunch time, but could not, because some of them went home, while some went to the residence to take a nap.

Third, using qualitative interviewing may be more 'reactive to personalities, moods, and interpersonal dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewee than methods such as surveys' (Sewell, 1998). In my research, for example, one of the boys tried answering questions as quickly as possible, albeit incorrectly; one question was on how the teacher presents a reading lesson in the English class. He replied saying he did not like his Math teacher which indicated that he felt impatient with answering the questions posed. I tried controlling the situation, by attempting to calm his racy mind.

Fourth, 'this method also shows us that it is more subjective, because the researcher decides which quotes or specific examples to report' (Sewell, 1998). A final potential disadvantage is raised by Gay (1981) who points out that the researcher generally chooses only a few subjects to be interviewed, so the samples involved are small. In this study. I interviewed only eight learners out of the twenty-seven so the data obtained in this way cannot be said to represent the full sample of learners or of Chinese EFL learners more broadly.

In order to try and overcome some of the limitations of interviews discussed above, I used a questionnaire as well.

3.3.3 Questionnaires

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After conducting the interviews, questionnaires were distributed to all learners in this class to try and collect a broader range of data for the study. Questionnaires were designed to elicit learners' self-reports on the differences in their use of reading strategies in English and Chinese (see Appendix K). The questions in the questionnaire were divided into four parts to reflect a modified interactive model of reading and focus on strategies associated with each aspect: pre-reading, while-reading, word recognition, and post-reading. All twenty-four questions were closed questions because 'responding to closed questions is easier to collate and analyze…' (Nunan, 1992:143) and I wanted to be able to identify patterns.

Twenty-seven (27) learners received the questionnaires after which all were handed back to me. The teacher assisted learners with understanding the questionnaire as it was in English and learners could not answer easily because of their minimal understanding of the language. First, she organized a time for learners to answer the questions in the class, after which she did a step-wise translation of the questions into Chinese. While this may have affected the validity of the process as her interpretation of some questions may affected learners' responses, overall I feel that the pattern of responses is trustworthy.

I feel that the language, grammar and structuring of the questions in the questionnaires were appropriate and should not have posed any problems to the learners as their levels of proficiency in English were taken into consideration while the questions were being structured. Nevertheless, if I had been able to do this part of the data collection again, I would have translated the questionnaire into Chinese. Also, although Cohen (1998) points out that it is sometimes hard to distinguish whether a strategy is cognitive or metacognitive, I would have included a greater focus on non-compensatory metacognitive strategies such as pre-assessment of tasks and post-task evaluation of success.

3.3.4 Document analysis

The final tool used was document analysis. One of my main aims was to explore the experiences of learners and the teacher with EFL reading. In order to deepen my understanding of learners' experiences, I needed to analyse the kinds of reading practices that were encouraged by the textbook and the extent to which they matched the kinds of assessment tasks in the final exam.

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Firstly, the textbook was analyzed using a checklist created from a combination of Nuttal's (1996) and Klein *et al*.'s (1991) criteria, selecting those elements which seemed most applicable to this study:

Checklist for Grade 10 textbook and examination analysis

1. To what extent are learners' interests reflected in the selected texts (suitability)?
2. What is the extent of the target audience's familiarity with the texts?
3. To what extent does the textbook develop skills in top-down reading processes?
4. Do the reading passages themselves provide the necessary background for the text?

5. To what extent do the tasks in the textbook activate learners' background knowledge?
6. To what extent does the textbook develop skimming and/or scanning skills?
7. To what extent does the textbook develop bottom-up reading processes?
8. Does the textbook give practice in vocabulary teaching?
9. Does the textbook develop skills such as inferring meaning from context, semantic mapping and word recognition exercises?
10. Does the textbook encourage metacognitive strategies? For example, pre-assessment and pre-planning, ongoing planning and evaluation and post-evaluation of the usefulness of language learning activities or strategy use.
11. To what extent are the pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading phases adequately used?

The same analysis was applied to the final examination.

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3.4 Data analysis methodology

Patton (1987) states that analysis is the process of bringing order to the data by organizing data into patterns or categories. According to him, a qualitative researcher analyses data by organizing it into categories, generally on the basis of themes, concepts or similar features and then examining the relationships between them.

Before analysing the data from the observation and the interviews, I transcribed the videoed observation and the interviews as verbatim transcription provides the best basis for analysis (Merriam, 1988). Then, I categorized responses into different groups and analyzed them separately, for example, pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. I also looked for emerging themes that would help me answer my research questions. In this way, the data were gathered into components of meaning or codes (Krippendorf, 1980).

The data from the questionnaires were subjected to comparative analysis. I quantified the responses to each question and then worked out what percentage this total was of the sample. I then compared responses for reading in Chinese and in English. I looked for patterns of transfer of strategies from Chinese to English. Looking at these patterns together with the data form observation and interviews would help me understand whether this transfer was positive or negative.

Documents, in this case the textbook and final examination, were analysed with the checklist described under 3.3.4. I looked for the presence or absence of certain types of tasks to aid the discovery of reasons why the teacher might not be able to develop certain reading strategies.

Through interpretation and analysis of observations, interviews, questionnaires and documents, I hoped to gain further insights into why learners struggle to become fluent readers in English and to suggest possible strategies for improving the teaching of reading in EFL classrooms in Chinese secondary schools. A detailed presentation of the data follows in the next chapter.

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3.5 Reliability and validity of data

The reliability of a research instrument refers to the extent to which the instrument produces the same results on repeated tests (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). It involves the consistency of a test score when the test is repeated. A measuring instrument or procedure is considered reliable if the instrument produces the same results whenever the test is repeated. In this study, reliability can only be evaluated in relation to the quantitative aspect of my data. Questionnaires were sent to twenty-seven learners in this class, and a 100% feedback was obtained. In order to increase reliability, questionnaires were later discussed with a group of learners to make sure that my interpretation of their answers was reasonable.

Validity in qualitative research has to do with trustworthiness (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1998). In order to help achieve this, several classroom observations and all interviews were recorded, because this makes possible repeated listening to or viewing of the tapes, to catch every word from participants and to transcribe the words accurately. Video recording also helps catch important expressions, gestures, and other kinds of body language which may carry meaning and enrich the interpretation of the processes being studied.

A further point in relation to power and validity of research findings is that my presence in the classroom was for the most part non-participatory and learners seemed to accept me as part of their class. I was not viewed as a teacher or a person in authority.

Triangulation through four methods of data collection also played a role in ensuring trustworthiness. Cohen and Manion (1989) assert that multiple data sources increase the validity of research findings as the different methods of data collection can complement each other's shortcomings.

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3.6 Ethical considerations

Banister *et al*. (1994) state that if researcher and participants respect and trust to each other, good research is possible so that the interaction is joined by open and honest. In order to build trust and set the conditions for open interaction, the willingness of the teacher and learners to participate in this research was sought. The aims of the research were explained to them and they were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

To obtain the formal consent of the participants for my study, consent forms translated into Chinese were sent to the parents of each learner and a separate one was signed by the teacher. The forms included the right to privacy, the freedom to terminate participation, and the right to access information. Following Banister *et al*. (1994) the forms also included an explanation of the purpose of the research, the number of participants, what

was involved, how it was to be conducted, and what would happen to the materials collected.

In addition, the teacher was informed that she had the right to stop the video process any time she felt uncomfortable with it. Learners were told that they need not answer all the questions in questionnaire or continue talking about an issue that might become uncomfortable for them during the interview. They also could ask for the tape recorder to be switched off whenever they felt uncomfortable with it.

The findings of this study will be communicated to participants in an accessible format, which includes, having access to the final thesis, and the transcripts of the video recordings, tape recordings and interviews as one way of reducing the power of the researcher is to make it clear to people that the material is owned by them and they have access to it. The Model Tribal Research Code for American Indians (1999), states that the researcher should tell people how confidentiality will be protected and where the raw data will be deposited and stored at the completion of the project. For confidentiality, the school's, teacher's, and learners' names have not been used.

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Finally, participants were informed that the benefits of the research might be to shed some light on the difficulties that Chinese EFL learners at secondary school level have in achieving the goals set for reading by the syllabus.

In summary, the aim of the research was explained to participants, and they were informed that they could copy the full document if needed. They were informed that they could withdraw freely from participation at any time, that they could contact me freely; and that they could make further comments.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described my research design and clarified the research instruments which were used to gather data. Data analysis techniques were discussed, as well as

issues relating to data reliability and validity. The next chapter will present my data analysis, interpreted within the theoretical framework provided in chapter 2.

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Chapter 4 Presentation and analysis of data

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research design and methods of data collection for this study. This chapter presents and analyses the findings from my analysis of the textbook and examination, as well as from classroom observations, interviews and questionnaires. The textbook and examination analyses are presented first as a way of contextualising the challenges facing the learners and the teacher.

4.2 Analysis of Grade 10 reading material and Grade 10 examination paper

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The English language syllabus for Grade 10 is designed to develop the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are seen as the foundation of language learning, the content of language learning, and a means of language learning (High-school English Syllabus, 2004: 9). The textbook is the main source of information for the teacher while the teacher's guide serves as a reference on teaching procedures. Additionally, the examination paper is used to assess reading comprehension. In this study, I do not analyse the teacher's guide, but only mention some of the content when relevant.

The analysis of the reading material and the examination paper was carried out using a checklist derived from modified interactive approaches to reading combined with Nuttal' s (1996) and Klein *et al.*' s (1991) criteria for selecting a text (See section 3.3.4 in the previous chapter). I also consider whether the textbook encourages the development of metacognitive strategies. In this section, I aim to analyse the extent to which the textbook develops learners' reading skills and strategies and the extent to which the examination paper assesses such skills and strategies. The analysis deals with aspects such as the choice of texts, the attention paid to top-down and bottom-up reading processes, and ends with a summary of the weaknesses and strengths of the textbook.

This next section gives an overview of the textbook in use, Senior English for China, Student's Book 1A (2003).

4.2.1 The contents and organisation of the Grade 10 textbook

In the English Grade 10 students' book, the contents are divided into seven parts. 'Warming up' is the first part, which tries to help learners set up some background for the unit, for example, Unit 3 is about travelling so that there are three drills focused on travelling: 1).Look at the travellers in the pictures. Are they doing anything wrong? Write your answer below. 2).What do you have to consider before you decide which means of transportation you will use? 3).How would you like to go to the places, by boat, by train, by air or by bus? Why? These warming-up type activities are followed by a 'Listening' part, which helps learners to improve their basic listening skills, such as learning to catch the numbers or names of places, and then by a 'Speaking' part, which helps learners to speak out in English. 'Reading' is the fourth part and includes sections on pre-reading, reading, and post-reading. 'Language study' is the fifth part, including word study and grammar. The final sections integrate skills study, including reading and writing, and aim to develop writing skills.

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The kinds of texts represented in the book can be seen to fall into four groups: the first group consists of Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 and here texts are designed for learners' common interest, for examples, Good friends, Going places, and Sports. The second group consists of Units 5, 11, 12, in which the focus is on Arts and literature. The third group in Units 9 and 10 relates to Science and Technology. The final group, Units 6 and 7, relates to Western history and culture(See Appendix A).

4.2.2 Analysis of textbook

4.2.2.1 To what extent are learners' interests reflected in the texts (suitability)?

In order to develop learners' reading skills and strategies, both learners and teachers should be interested in the reading materials as '… interesting content makes the learner's task far more rewarding' (Nuttal, 1996: 170).

When I interviewed learners in Grade 10 about the content of the textbook, fifty percent of interviewees said that they did like some topics in this textbook such as western culture, films, sports and music. However, the other fifty percent said that they did not like this textbook at all. After looking at the spread of texts in the book, I concluded that only 32% of the total of 25 texts match learners' expressed interests. For example, 'Sport' is represented in Unit 8 in two texts; two texts about western culture are provided in Unit 6 and 7; films are covered in two texts in Unit 5 and Unit 12.

To sum up, it is clear that the selection of texts does not really reflect learners' interests and learners may therefore not be motivated to read. While some texts may appeal to learners who are interested in Arts and sports, other learners' interests in for example, History, Commerce and Policy, are not taken into consideration.

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4.2.2.2 What is the extent of familiarity of the texts to the target audience?

As I have mentioned earlier, the reading passages in the textbook of Grade 10 can be divided into four groups. Each of these groups will be discussed in more detail below.

Group 1

There are five units in this group, all of which attempt to make links to learners' experience: Unit 1 'Good friends', Unit 2 'English around the world', Unit 3 'Going places', Unit 4 'Unforgettable experiences', and Unit 8 'Sports'. Although the topics might seem familiar to the learners, the actual content of the texts is not known to the learners. As an example, Unit 1 is about friendship and has one friend telling another

about a film ‘Cast Away’, but eighty percent of learners had not watched the film. Even though a picture accompanied the text, learners could not link the topic of Friend to the film. Such texts cannot be said to form part of the background knowledge of learners and therefore learners will not be able to draw on ‘content’ schemata.

A further point relates to linguistic schemata. Many of the texts use long, complex sentences. An example is a reading text on unforgettable experiences, named, ‘Earthquakes’. The language structures in this reading are quite difficult for Grade 10 learners, for example, ‘a wide and busy road which was built like a bridge over another road fell onto the one below.’ (Senior English for China, Student’s Book 1A, 2003: 106). In this sentence, there is not only an attributive clause, but also two difficult prepositions and a pronoun for which it is hard to find the reference: over, onto, and the pronoun ‘one’. Such sentences can slow down the development of reading skills and strategies in the target language. As Nuttal (1996) remarks, ‘linguistically difficult texts are unlikely to be suitable for developing most reading skills’ (p. 177).

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Group 2

In Group 2, texts are about Arts and Media. Most of the content in these units is extracted from the culture of the western world, such as ‘Getting to know Steven Spielberg’ (pp. 31-32) who is a famous director, information on a world-famous pop star (pp. 73-74), and pop music and rock music (p76).

This content was more accessible and some learners were interested in these topics. They also had background knowledge of the topics.

Group 3

In this group, the texts focus on Technology, such as ‘Life on the Go’ which is about a tool of communication, the cell phone. Some texts are also taken from the world of Sciences, such as protecting the environment, animals and plants, and describing the importance of natural resources. These topics are quite far from the learners’ life experiences. At the same time, the teacher struggles with these kinds of texts as they are

not part of the language course in the Education Institution. As Kilfoil (1995:165) points out '… English teachers are not specialists in scientific subjects and might not understand the demands of the discourse or even the content of the text'. Thus, it would be difficult for learners to develop reading skills and strategies that area appropriate for this kind of text.

Group 4

In this group, the texts are about history and culture, such as historical cities and table manners. These topics focus on western cultural heritage and western cultural knowledge, with which learners are not familiar. They are all beyond the scope of learners' knowledge.

To sum up, the often complex language structure and vocabulary combined with the learners' lack of familiarity with the reading topics mean that they cannot easily draw on content or linguistic schemata. This makes it difficult to expand learners' reading skills and strategies because efficient and effective reading should be focused on both top-down (background of learners' knowledge) and bottom-up strategies (grammar skills) interactively. In order to investigate these issues in more depth, I will now discuss the extent to which tasks in this textbook develop learners' top-down strategies.

4.2.2.3 To what extent does the textbook develop skills and strategies in top-down processing?

In this section, I will analyse the development of top-down processes divided into three questions: 1) Do the texts supply the necessary background? 2) Are they helpful in activating learners' background knowledge? 3) To what extent does this textbook develop skimming and scanning skills? These correspond to questions 4, 5, and 6 on the checklist.

Top-down processing requires that the individual makes predictions based on higher level schemata. According to Carrell *et al* (1988), the individual then searches for 'information in the text (called inputs) to fit into these partially satisfied, higher order schemata' (p.

77). As we have seen above, this textbook does not provide many texts that allow learners to draw on their background knowledge. In this section, I will therefore analyse the extent to which the texts themselves supply the necessary background.

4.2.2.4 Do the reading passages themselves provide the necessary background for the text?

In the first group of texts, the topics are familiar to the learners, but there is no introduction on the content of the texts, which could assist the learners to acquire some background knowledge on the topics and to understand the texts more easily. For example, as mentioned above, most learners had not watched the film 'Cast Away', so that they could not understand what friendship was about in this context. The second group has topics on Art and literature. For example, Unit 11 is entitled 'The sounds of the world'. Learners needed some preparation in order to know what Blues music is, its origins and the kinds of instrument used. However, there is no such background knowledge given.

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Group 3 focuses on Technology. The topics in this unit are not familiar to learners at all. Unit 9 is 'Life on the Go'; Unit 10 is 'Are we Endangered?'. When I interviewed learners, they said they did not know what these topics were about. Their guesses are stated below. One boy explained that 'Life on the Go' was about how to keep life longer. Another learner stated when she looked at the topic 'Are we Endangered?', she did not know what this text was about because she did not know the word 'Endangered', and there was nothing given to guide her to get the point of this text. Therefore, without careful development of topic and language knowledge, the topics do not seem to be helpful as tools for developing reading skills.

Group 4 is on history and culture, historical cities and Western culture. Here, once again no background information is given.

In conclusion, background information is very important for learners to make sense of the texts. As early as 1970, Bright and McGregor pointed out that it is less difficult for

readers to comprehend the content if sufficient background information is given in the texts. In interactive reading models, it is important to provide background knowledge. However, 'schema availability alone is not a sufficient condition for adequate comprehension. Relevant schemata must be activated' (Carrell, 1988: 105). Thus I am now going to analyse if the reading material in Grade 10 activates learners' background knowledge adequately.

4.2.2.5 To what extent do the tasks in the textbook activate learners' background knowledge?

Carrell (1988) states that building background knowledge can take place through appropriate activities, such as visual aids (viewing films), slides, pictures, class discussions or debates. In this textbook, there are some tasks that precede the reading texts. I will first take the exercises in Unit 3 as examples (Appendix B).

Exercise 1

Work together with a partner. Learner A works for a company that wants to open up a local mountain to tourists. Learner B is worried that tourism will cause many problems. Try to get the other learner to agree with you. You can use the reasons listed on your card, but you can also think of more reasons.

Learner A: You think that tourism can give us the money we need to protect the mountain; tourism will help make our city famous and will help us develop the city; tourism will help people get more interested in history and nature.

Learner B: You think that tourists will destroy the mountain; you think that tourism will be bad for business in your city; tourism will turn the mountain into a place for business and people will not think about nature any more.

Exercise 2

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Work together with the partner and write down a discussion which is about developing your village to be a tourist resort.

Learner A: --------

Learner B: --------

These exercises will be discussed after learning the text. These exercises could be useless to activate the background information of the texts.

Moreover, the content of the pre-reading exercises is not explicitly connected with the text. The exercises I presented above are about developing tourism, and the text is about adventure travel - hiking and rafting. However, there are pictures of hiking and rafting that encourage learners to discuss and predict the content of the readings. (Appendix B).

Another example is in Unit 7 where the text is about a city of heroes in Russia.
There is some attempt to use pre-reading activities: some questions are given before learners go on to the reading activity. However, these questions do not link to the content of the text as well as they could. These are the questions asked:

1) Some cities, like Paris and Beijing, are called great cities of the world. In your opinion, what makes a city great?
2) What are your favourite cities? Why?
3) What cultural relics are there in the place where you live? How important are they?

Although these questions are broadly related to the topic, they do not relate to the city or cities in Russia, so learners may not be able to use much background knowledge to predict the content of the text.

In some cases, background is provided only in the teacher's guide, but not in the textbook. An example is in unit 3 of the teacher's guide (Appendix B). Here learners are

dependent on the teacher to prepare for the readings and cannot learn independently from the textbook.

4.2.2.6 To what extent does the textbook develop skimming and scanning skills?

In this textbook, there are no any skimming exercises, but only scanning exercises. An example of a scanning exercise used in this material is 'Fill in the blanks with the words and phrases you have learnt in the unit' (Unit 1). Learners must scan the text quickly, find the words and fill them into the blanks, for example, 'My friend is ____. He never tells lies'.

However, most exercises are 'traditional' sentence and word-based tasks of the type listed below:

- 'Match the words on the left with their meaning on the right' in Units 2,3 and 12;
- 'Read the following sentences and guess the meaning of the words' in Unit 11;
- 'Look at the words in the box and pick out those with the prefix 're' that means 'again' ' in Unit 10;
- 'Match the words on the left with their meaning on the right' in Unit 9,
- 'Read the sentences to see if you can guess the words about the Olympic Games; the first letter has been given' in Unit 8;
- 'Study how the following word is formed. Try to find similar words in the reading passage' in Unit 7;
- 'Study the word formation—in, im, non, un' in Unit 6;
- 'Study the meaning of the following verbs. Fill in each blank, using the correct verb in its correct form' in Unit 4;

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Such exercises are not sufficient to develop effective reading skills and strategies. For example, scanning exercises should involve 'making decisions about the exact information the reader is searching for, and thinking about the form it takes; identifying where this information might be found, and searching quickly down the page until the information is found' (Meried, 2001:24). Skimming exercises should help learners to 'get

the gist of the text; to identify the main idea of the text; to infer or to draw a conclusion from the text' (Laviosa, 1994:238). Such exercises can help learners to exploit what they have read and to understand in detail.

4.2.2.7 To what extent does the textbook develop bottom-up processing?

The comprehension of a text involves interaction between the reader's background knowledge (top-down), and the text itself (bottom-up). If there is insufficient emphasis on bottom-up skills, readers will struggle to make sense of texts. Therefore, I am going to discuss the development of bottom-up processing skills through grammatical skills and vocabulary development.

In all units, the activities for learning grammar are designed similarly. First a grammatical model is presented and then learners practise these models (Appendix D). These kinds of grammatical exercises relate to the text because they cover some of the difficult grammar points explored in the new text, for example, in Unit 5, Direct Speech and Indirect Speech.

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However, grammatical structures at discoursal level include cohesive devices, which provide links between sentences and clauses. Carrell *et al* (1988), Mackay (1979) and Cowan (1976) suggest that linguistic elements acting as cohesive devices can help readers unify the ideas in text.

As can be seen in the activities described above, teaching and practising grammar skills only focused on sentence level. There are no tasks focusing on cohesive devices. As a result, these kinds of activities limit the extent to which fluent readers can be developed. Overall, the textbook seems not to develop appropriate grammatical skills for bottom-up processing.

4.2.2.8 Does this textbook give practice in key vocabulary development strategies?

'Pre-teaching vocabulary in order to increase learning from text will be more successful if the words to be taught are key words in the target language passages ...' (Carrell *et al*, 1988: 240-41). However, in this whole book, there is no evidence of key vocabulary items taught as pre-reading activity. Key vocabulary is taught only in the word study section, and teaching vocabulary only happens after post-reading activities (Appendix D).

During my observations, the teacher taught vocabulary separately from reading and after reading. Vocabulary study could thus not help learners in decoding words and getting textual meaning or background knowledge.

The seven kinds of exercises, which are practised after reading, will be listed below:

1）Fill in the blanks with the words and phrases you have learnt in the text.

2）Fill in the blanks with the following words.

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3）Fill in the blanks. The first letter has been given. Guess what the words are.

I like pop music. She likes ____ music, but we are good friends.
If you were alone on a deserted island, you would have to learn to collect water and ___ food.
The s____ was so well-written that the famous actress accepted the r___ at once.

4) Match the words on the left with their meaning on the right.

5) Read the following sentences and guess the meaning of the word in italics in each sentence.

Beat

1. My heart is *beating* faster.

2. The music is so fast that I can't follow the *beat*.

3. The German team *beat* the Japanese team 3-1 in the volleyball match.

6) Learning negative prefixes:

non-stop unfold incorrect important understand invite unlucky impossible uniform interesting

7) Study how the following word is formed:

re- (meaning 'again') + build = rebuild (meaning 'build again')

The main purpose of activities 1 to 3 seems to be to comprehend the text, but not to build vocabulary. Activities 4 and 5 consist of guessing from the context of the reading passage. They can help learners to get meaning from context instead of using a dictionary. Exercises 6 and 7 are good to help learners to recognize the words automatically. Unfortunately, the designers put these activities after the reading texts so that they are less helpful in increasing reading fluency and speed.

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There is a word list at the back of the book. It shows learners the words, their pronunciation, and the translation of these words into Chinese, but it does not necessarily help learners to recognize these words rapidly and accurately. As Eskey & Grabe (1988) state , 'simply knowing the meaning of some set number of words does not ensure that a reader will be able while reading to process those words both rapidly and accurately…' (p. 231-236).

To sum up, the development of bottom-up processing skills and strategies in the textbook is limited and may not assist learners as second language readers to develop into fast readers in English.

4.2.2.9 Does the textbook develop skills such as inferring meaning from context, semantic mapping and word recognition exercises?

In the textbook, there are no activities that encourage learners to infer meaning from context, nor are there any that teach semantic mapping. There are tasks in most units that develop word recognition skills, largely based on morphology, for example, in-formal and re-build. These tasks are, however, only placed after the text and therefore do not function as aids to comprehension.

4.2.2.10 Does the textbook encourage metacognitive strategies?

There are no tasks that develop metacognitive strategies such as pre-assessment and pre-planning, ongoing planning and evaluation or post-evaluation of the usefulness of strategy use.

For the purposes of developing reading skills, many writers recommend a three-phased procedure (Kidane, 1998) that integrates all the skills and strategies discussed above. The phases are: pre-reading, while-reading, and post- reading. I will now discuss to what extent these three phases are adequately used in the Grade 10 textbook.

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4.2.2.11 To what extent are the pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading phases adequately used?

In this textbook, the structure of tasks in each unit is designed as pre-reading, reading, and post-reading.

Pre-reading tasks

Abraham (2002) states that an interactive approach ‘demands that the teachers activate the learners’ schema’ during the pre-reading phase by helping ‘learners recognize the knowledge that they already have about the topic of a text’ (p. 6), through the discussion

of titles, subheadings, photographs, identifying text structure and previewing. Zhang (1993) explains that such activities could include looking at visuals, (charts, pictures) and other contextual aids; previewing vocabulary items in context; skimming the text through reading the first line of each paragraph, and the last paragraph or conclusion, and so on.

In the textbook, it seems that there are two types of activities to help learners' recall their background knowledge in pre-reading tasks:

Type 1). List the items, for example,

> List the three most useful items and explain why you think they would be useful, when you are alone on an island. The items are a knife, a box of matches, a mirror, a radio, a frying pan, a gun, a hammer, a book, a saw, an umbrella, a rope, a compass. (Unit 1, 2003: 3) (see Appendix C)

The task above is about surviving on an island while the text is on friendship. No connection is made between the two for the learners and on the surface they appear unrelated. We can imagine how learners could imagine that they relate to different topics. However, only after reading the text would learners understand that the two topics are connected, so the purpose of the pre-reading exercise is not achieved.

Type 2). Answer the questions, for example, before reading the passage, there are some questions given in a pre-reading task.

> How many languages do you speak? Which is your native language? If you speak more than one language, in what situations do you use the languages? (Unit 2, 2003: 10) (see Appendix C)

One of the problems with this type of activity is that learners' speaking ability is not good enough for them to communicate freely in English. They could not even answer questions

fluently in English while I was observing in class (See Appendix L and the DVD, Appendix M). Consequently, the purpose of this activity may not be achieved.

As discussed under point 4.2.2.6, there is also little attention to the development of skimming or scanning strategies. To sum up, it seems that the pre-reading activities in this textbook were not particularly helpful in activating background knowledge or assisting learners to predict the content of the text.

While-reading phase

There are no while-reading activities in this textbook. However, some while-reading processes are shown in the Teacher's Guide. Developing effective strategies in this phase means that such activities need to appear in the textbook as well. This gap may have contributed to learners' lack of response to questions in class because they did not know what processes were going to be taught or what aims were going to be focused on.

Post-reading task

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In the post-reading phase, Laviosa (1994) suggests that comprehension questions should be asked to check if learners understand main points, make sure of the main ideas and supporting details, foretell the context, and identify words or phrases about the culture of the target language. Learners discuss, exchange ideas, and make personal comments on the text with their own knowledge. Haller (2000) describes post-reading activities (matching exercises, cloze exercises, cut-up sentences, and comprehension questions) which can help learners to improve reading comprehension.

Tasks in the post-reading phase should thus help learners make sure of the main ideas of the text. The activities in this textbook are easily retrieved. The example is chosen from Unit 12. The activity is about identifying whether descriptions are true or false.

( ) Harry Potter is a world-famous writer.

( ) Harry Potter was born in a rich family and grew up with his mother and father.
( ) Harry Potter is a boy with a scar on his forehead
( ) Harry goes to an ordinary school.
( ) Harry learns a lot about the real world at Hogwarts.
( ) Harry discovers that it is easy to do the right thing.

These types of questions can be easily answered from the textbook. This indicates that the learners do not think about text deeply, but only survey the questions on a superficial level. As Harrison (1980) points out, 'a factual question which can be answered by simply transforming a sentence from the passage almost verbatim is requiring a shallower level of processing than one which requires a paraphrase in the child's own words' (p. 28).

To sum up, although pre-reading and post-reading activities are present in units, these activities are not sufficient for to help learners recall or build background knowledge or to check if learners grasp the main ideas of the text. In addition, I could not find while-reading activities in the textbook. Thus, I have to argue that the three phrases are not successfully designed in this textbook.

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4.2.3 Summary of strengths and gaps of the textbook

The main strength of the reading section of textbook for Grade 10, Senior English for China, is that reading activities are integrated with listening, speaking, and writing activities. For example in each unit, the tasks are all designed in a sequence as Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Moreover, writing tasks are designed in an integrated way with reading activities, in a section named Integrating Skills. Such integration is believed to encourage reading development (Brown,1994).

However, in terms of interactive reading theory, which the teachers' guide promotes, there are several gaps or problems with the textbook.

Reading activities are not designed in a way that enables learners to draw on their content or linguistic schemata. In pre-reading activities there is insufficient connection between the exercises and the content of the text. For the while-reading process, the information about what processes should be taught, what aims were going to be focused on or what reading skills and strategies learners should practise is not given in the Learners' book, but only in the Teacher's Guide. Therefore, learners could not practise or implement 'online planning' with metacognitive awareness of their strategies to 'enhance their reading, provide strategic support or understand their own comprehension failure' (Grabe & Stoller, 2002: 45). In relation to post-reading activities, the textbook does not supply enough activities for learners to engage with the text deeply. Learners only survey questions on the text and comprehend texts on a superficial level.

Therefore, this kind of textbook makes it difficult to expand learners' reading skills and strategies. The fact that no attention is paid to the development of metacognitive strategies in particular can be seen to affect learners' ability to become independent readers.

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4.3 Analysis of the examination paper

This analysis relates to the first examination of Grade 10 in the first semester in Taiyuan in 2005 and considers the extent to which the examination paper tests the reading skills and strategies developed in the textbook. This examination paper consisted of gap filling, multiple choice, and reading comprehension. Gap filling is about 35% of the total points and multiple choices is about 15% of the total points, leaving 50% for reading comprehension. The purposes of the first two sections of the examination were to assess vocabulary knowledge and grammar skills such as tense and the sentence structures (see Appendix E).

Readings in the examination paper were divided into four passages, moving from general knowledge to academic knowledge. The reading content is shown below:

- Passage A: Choosing friends among teenagers
- Passage B: Sports – a football race between France and Scotland
- Passage C: A letter researching the purposes of going onto the Internet among learners
- Passage D: Academic knowledge about the body heat of human beings.

Only one of these texts, Passage B, was given a title.

I will now consider assessment tasks in the examination paper from the point of view of top-down and bottom-up skills and strategies. These strategies include skimming and scanning, reading modes which are selected depending on reading purpose (Carver, 2000). Here skimming is considered a predominantly pre-reading activity while scanning for particular information can take place at any stage of the reading process.

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4.3.1 To what extent does the examination paper assess the development of top-down reading processes?

Activating background knowledge

There were no tasks that serve to activate learners' background knowledge or develop the background needed to understand the text. Of the four passages in the reading section, only one was given a title. There were also no sub-headings. As a result, learners could not use these parts of the text to help them predict what the passages were about.

Developing skimming and scanning skills

The questions given in the reading section did not assess learners skimming skills, only scanning skills to some extent. For example, the questions on Passage A (p. 5) are shown below:

51. When teenagers have something difficult to say to their parents, they usually ---------- .

A. stay alone at home

B. fight with their parents

C. discuss it with their friends.

D. to go their brothers and sisters for help.

52. The underlined sentence ‘Your answers are welcome.’ means ----------

A. you are welcome to discuss the questions with us.

B. we’ve got no idea, so your answers are welcome.

C. your answers are always right.

D. you can give us all the right answers.

53. Which of the following is the writer’s attitude?

A. parents should choose friends for their children.

B. children should choose everything they like.

C. parents should understand their children better.

D. teenagers should only go to their friends for help.

These questions were designed to follow the content of each paragraph. If learners wanted to answer these questions, they had to read carefully paragraph by paragraph and re-read again and again to find answers. So the readings in the examination paper only assessed scanning skills.

To sum up, when skimming skills are not developed, there may be a serious impact on reading speed. It is difficult for learners to develop into fast readers. In the end, learners may develop a ‘reading habit’ which involves reading word by word, and sentence by sentence.

4.3.2 To what extent does the examination paper assess the development of bottom-up reading processes?

The 'Reading comprehension' section focused on testing reading skills. However, topics are unfamiliar to learners and the level of reading demanded is beyond that of the textbook. A typical example is Passage D. There were a large number of vocabulary items that learners have not met before, such as 'designer', 'give off', 'collect', 'fuel', and 'reuse'. In addition, the language structures were very complex, for example, 'it sounds rather reasonable to draw the following conclusion that the hottest prospect for the Pittsburgh University would be a hardworking, overweight boy learner who is very clever in the university'. In this very long sentence, not only were new words such as 'conclusion', 'reasonable', and 'prospect' present but the sentence itself was extremely complex, consisting of one infinitive phrase, two attributive clauses. The most important phrase 'the hottest prospect' was quite beyond learners' comprehension either linguistically or culturally. Even if learners were able to use strategies appropriately, such obstacles to efficient bottom-up processing would still defeat them.

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Developing vocabulary

In the examination paper, there was one activity for developing vocabulary, namely, gap-filling. However, none of the words in the answer sheet were chosen from the word-list in the textbook so any preparation learners did would not have been helpful. In addition, the words are not taken from the text and were therefore decontextualised. Therefore, the paper cannot be said to have assessed word recognition in a fair manner.

Grammar skills

In the examination paper, grammar skills were assessed in Multiple choice tasks.
For example, Q26

He ___ his good health to taking a lot of exercise.

A. gives B. owes C. keeps D. gets

Unfortunately, these activities focused on sentence level only. There were no questions assessing knowledge of, for example, cohesive devices linking sentences and/or clauses. As a result, these kinds of activities could only be said to be assessing vocabulary and grammatical skills in a very limited way and not contributing to the development of fluent bottom-up processing.

I now move on to describe how the development of reading skills and strategies took place in the classroom.

4.4 Presentation and analysis of classroom observation

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In this research, the purpose of the classroom observations was to observe classroom processes in reading skills development and to identify some of the factors that affect the teaching and learning of reading. The names of the school and the participants have been kept anonymous for reasons of safety and confidentiality.

In this section I will discuss the presentation of the reading lessons within the three phases of teaching reading: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading.

Presentation of the reading lessons

Teachers are obviously very important in any language class. As Eskey and Grabe (1988) point out, '… it is […] the teacher who must introduce and provide useful reading strategies for coping with text in an unfamiliar language. […] the teacher must coach the learners in their use' (p. 229). Therefore, observations are useful for researchers to explore the ways in which teachers develop reading skills and strategies.

I will present extracts from one lesson to illustrate the teacher's approach to the three phases of pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading (for more details see Appendix F and the DVD--Appendix M). The approach taken in this lesson was generally representative of reading skills development throughout my period of observation.

Pre-reading

The discussion in this section focuses on a transcription of an extract from the DVD which relates to the reading of a text, named 'Table Manners at a Dinner Party'.

The teacher had prepared pre-reading tasks. She asked learners some questions to try and help them to build their background knowledge, such as 'Have you gone to a dinner party? What are good manners at a Chinese dinner party?' Then, she tried to expand these points with two examples:

Example 1:	'The table is very big. I like vegetables or meat. I cannot reach it. I stand up and get it. Is it polite or not?'
Example 2:	'When you are eating and talking with a mouth full of food. Is it polite? Is it good manners?'

Learners were all silent without any words. Next, she tried to oblige learners to answer the questions by asking again and again: 'Do you understand?' All the learners would answer with one word: 'YES'. Then, she answered her own questions immediately to break the deadlock.

There was thus little interaction between learners and teacher. It was clear that learners did not cooperate with the teacher in pre-reading processes. As a result, she could not know whether her questions activated learners' background knowledge or not. Although learners said 'YES' to her, it did not mean that they knew what she was asking or why they should answer these questions. They answered the teacher's questions mechanically without thinking, as in the following extract:.

Teacher:	…. When somebody makes a toast, you should stand up and drink it. Do you understand?
Learners:	Yes.
Teacher:	Do you understand?
Learners and Teacher:	Yea.

In the above extract, learners did not know what the teacher was trying to do when she demonstrated the concept of 'making a toast'. Although she tried to encourage learners to stand up and make a toast to other people, there was no indication from learners that they knew what the teacher was asking them to do. They listened quietly while the teacher was making a speech.

This activity was therefore not effective in helping learners to activate their prior knowledge and predict the content of the text. Learners were not told the purpose of the task or how it could help to develop their understanding of the text.

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A further point is that during the whole pre-reading process, as guided by the textbook, the teacher only referred to Chinese table manners without mentioning Western table manners, yet the text is about table manners in Western countries. As a result, when the teacher wrote down the topic of this lesson and asked learners what they knew about Western table manners, all the learners sat in silence. Some learners opened their textbook and tried to look for some relevant information. It seems that the designer of the textbook should bring in Western culture as well in order to make links to the content of this text. Otherwise, learners will have no background knowledge of Western culture to help them understand the text.

Moreover, the teacher was not guided to use the resources of the text sufficiently to develop learners' background knowledge. For example, she wrote down the title of the text on the blackboard without analysing and explaining the meaning of the topic or

asking learners to predict what the text was about. Thus, she missed opportunities to assist learners to be ready for the new text through using schema activation.

Finally, developing vocabulary is an important part of the learners' book, and is presented in the vocabulary list. James (1987:181) states that '… the instruction that a teacher provides before learners read is more important than what the teacher does afterwards'. However, the teacher did not explain any key words before reading, but only after reading (see also 4.2.2.8.). The organisation of the textbook did not assist the teacher to teach key vocabulary as a form of preparation for the text.

Overall, the textbook did not offer sufficient guidance in developing pre-reading skills.

While reading

In the while reading phase, scanning can be helpful in improving reading comprehension. The teacher did encourage learners to use scanning. For example, she wrote down the main information of the text on the blackboard and asked learners to find out the answers from the text. At the same time, she guided learners not to read one word at a time and suggested that they read as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the teacher did not model this process: after the learners had read the text in silence, the teacher gave learners all the answers herself while reading the text one word at a time. For example, here the teacher is asking whether laying the table was mentioned in the text:

Teacher:	Mentioned or not mentioned? (Then repeated in Chinese)
Learners:	Mentioned
Teacher:	Where? Where?
Learner 1:	The first paragraph (in Chinese)
Teacher:	Paragraph one, where?
Teacher:	Yea, oh, for example, beside napkin you will find small… and three glasses… do you understand?

(She was reading the passage alone one word by one word, and

translating each word into Chinese. She gave the answer to learners immediately.)

Some learners: Yea.

Teacher: This is laying the table, knife, fork, glasses, how to put these things. Do you understand? (Repeated in Chinese)

Learners: Yea.

As the statement above, a traditional grammar-translation type of approach was still used in this reading class because the teacher read word by word, translating as she went and then answering the questions which she had asked learners. This could indicate that learners would use the same reading skills and strategies as the teacher's to understand the text and would not be developing reading strategies that could promote independent reading.

On the other hand, the learners seemed happy because they did not have to read and search for the knowledge by themselves. They only had to say 'Yes'. When they did not know how to answer the questions, they just kept quiet and waited for the response from their teacher. Nuttal (1996) argues that if a teacher reads alone or explains the text to learners by her- or himself, the work which learners are going to do has been done by the teacher. Then, learners only understand the teacher, not the text. In conclusion, the processes used during the while-reading phase did not seem to contribute to the development of helpful reading strategies and skills or to improve levels of reading comprehension.

Post-reading

The post-reading processes I observed did not seem to be accorded important status in the reading procedure because the teacher asked learners to finish the post-reading tasks at home. The next day she would check the answers to these tasks in class. Here she gave all the key answers to the exercises directly without checking the learners' answers. As Nuttal (1996) declares, '… the process by which the learner arrives at an answer is critical. If he [sic] gives the right answer by accident, it is valueless' (p. 182). In this

class, opportunities for exploring learners' strategies for coming up with answers were not exploited and so it was not possible to know how much they actually understood or whether there was any conscious use of strategies.

In general, as the analysis of classroom observation shows, this teacher seemed to implement the three phases in reading procedure. However, she attached most importance to the while-reading phase. In pre-reading, although she attempted to follow the textbook in preparing learners for the text, these activities were not particularly helpful. In post-reading, she downplayed the importance of these activities. Even in the while-reading phase, an approach close to grammar-translation approach was used. Therefore, it was difficult for learners to develop or improve their reading strategies and skills.

In the next section, I will explore the teacher's perspectives on these issues.

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4.5 Presentation and analysis of teacher's interview

I have selected two main issues from the interview with the teacher (Appendix G). One focuses on teaching reading skills and strategies. The other focuses on assessing reading comprehension.

This teacher told me that she taught reading through three processes: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. In the pre-reading process, she taught learners the background knowledge of the text. In the while-reading process, she suggested that learners looked for the main points in each paragraph through reading the first sentence and the last sentence and recommended that learners use skimming and scanning strategies. In the post-reading process, she asked learners to summarize the text. Then, she taught grammar and vocabulary. Afterwards, she required learners to do exercises in workbook. Lastly, she gave learners some reading materials for homework.

When the teacher talked about assessing reading comprehension, she said that she checked learners' reading comprehension through watching their faces. If they

understood the text, they would be very happy; otherwise they would be unhappy. At a later stage, she would ask them to do the examination paper.

In the section that follows I relate the teacher's comments on particular issues to my findings during classroom observation. This will help me to determine the strengths of the classroom processes and any gaps that there might be.

4.5.1 Teacher's views on learners' use of reading strategies

This teacher evaluated the success of her teaching according to whether learners used the strategies she had been trying to develop. She said that she was not satisfied with the learners' use of reading strategies for the following reasons:

> The problem is that learners do not use the reading skills and strategies which I taught in class. I always tell them that the main sentence is in the beginning of the paragraph or the end of the paragraph, but they never listen to me and they do what they want to do. They read one word by one word. (trans).

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Learners had the same thoughts as the teacher's when I interviewed them. However, while I was in the classroom, the teacher did not explicitly train learners how to use reading skills and strategies and did not ask them to practice reading skills and strategies in class.

The second reason she offered is given below:

> The learners read texts slowly. I asked them to read every day to improve their reading ability. I try to find easy texts for them. The problem is that they have not got enough words and grammar to understand the readings. At least, 70% of learners have problems in reading. They said they read with a dictionary all the time. Therefore, learners do not want to read any more. (trans.)

During my time in the school, I did not notice her giving learners readings for homework, except for the examination paper. However, reading is not only about learning vocabulary and grammar, but also about having more reading experience. Learners may not improve their reading ability in English without developing a habit of reading. As Bright and McGregor (1970) say, 'where there is little reading; there will be little language learning' (cited in Brusch, 1991:156).

4.5.2 Teachers' views on the purposes of teaching reading

The teacher's views on the purposes of teaching reading were to improve learners' reading ability, to teach them reading strategies and to expand their knowledge in different fields, such as arts, culture, sports, and so on. This teacher tried to make learners independent. These purposes were achieved in reading lessons step by step. At the end, learners should be able to pass examinations easily and get high marks for entry into university.

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She claimed that learners had read the text efficiently under her direction, that learners had already achieved the status of independent readers and did not have any problems in the English reading class. She felt that her role in this class was a consultant who guided learners to grasp the reading skills and use strategies, that is, that learners performed actively in the class.

4.5.3 Teacher's awareness of new approaches to reading skills development and assessment

The teacher said that she was familiar with the theoretical aspects of an interactive approach as trained in the education community. She said that:

> I know the interactive reading approach, top-down and bottom-up. I have been trained to teach reading lessons through pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. I spend two classes on teaching one reading

> lesson. In the first class, I guide them to understand the text properly from learning background knowledge and to get the main ideas of the text. In the second class, I teach them vocabulary and grammar. (trans.)

Previous training and experience

She had taught English for 18 years in this high school. Before that, she graduated from Teachers' College. In the college, she passed all the courses on models of teaching and teaching theories. She told me that she had been trained on teaching reading through practising approaches such as accelerated reading in college. She said that:

> For me, I always read one word by one word when I was in college. Our teacher asked us to finish reading as quickly as possible. If I could finish reading on time, he would add 10 points on my finial exams. Otherwise I would be punished. Thus, I must read faster; even I could not understand it. (trans.)

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After training and graduating in college, she had professional knowledge of reading skills and strategies. She revealed that:

> In order to make learners feel interested in my class, I prepare my lessons carefully. I work on the internet to research the relative topics of the texts and the pictures of the texts, and look for the information of the texts in library. While I am teaching, I encourage learners to use reading skills and strategies. After class, I assess their knowledge with homework and the examination paper. Thus all the learners looked forward to attending my class. (trans.)

So, from her point of view, she received appropriate training.

4.6 Comparing interview and observations: strengths and gaps

The teacher mentioned above that she had taught learners reading skills and strategies through three phases. Indeed, she did use three phrases when I was observing in class. However, findings in relation to what happened in these phases in my observation differed from her interview. The sequences of activities suggested by interactive approaches were not followed. For example, she taught vocabulary and grammar in the second part of the reading class so this meant that these could not be used to develop learners' linguistic or content schemata or to help them predict the text content. Carrell *et al*. (1988) point out that '… if the words are taught in semantically and topically related sets, […] word meanings and background knowledge improve concurrently' (p. 243).

Although the teacher said she had been trained using the advanced approaches, she did not use them to a great extent in her teaching class. The intention and the reality were different. In my observation of classroom practice, this teacher did not develop reading strategies but rather explained and summarized the main ideas of paragraphs and then answered most of the questions herself. Therefore, although the teacher had sound ideas about what reading instruction should aim to do; these ideas were not often carried out in practice. Consequently, I do not think she had received enough training on the theories of developing reading skills and strategies or on how to translate them into practice. Combined with the gaps in the textbook, this meant that the development of interactive reading skills and strategies was limited. In neither the curriculum in theory nor the curriculum in use was there any evidence of the development of metacognitive strategy development.

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With regard to assessment, the teacher mentioned that she had assessed learners' reading skills and strategies through doing the examination paper and answering the questions. She, indeed, had asked learners some questions and directed learners to do the examination paper in my observation. However, there were gaps between her interview and my observation. According to her point of view, the examination was very important

as a way of assessing learners' knowledge. In interviews, all the learners said that the aim of learning English was to pass examinations. They spent a lot of time on doing homework and on doing the examination paper. This meant in practice that they never spent time on developing interactive skills and strategies but only on being able to handle the kinds of non-interactive questions that appear in the examination paper. Thus, it was not easy for learners to become fluent or strategic readers. Moreover, in teaching the learners how to do examinations, she normally gave the correct answers to learners. She read alone and translated one paragraph by one paragraph into Chinese. These activities are not conducive to the development of effective strategies.

4.7 Presentation and analysis of learners' interviews

Interviews were conducted over a three-week period from Dec.11th in 2005 to Jan 2nd in 2006 (Appendix J). Eight learners in Grade Ten participated in the interviews. All spoke in Mandarin. The teacher chose these learners according to the results of their examination so that three levels of proficiency are represented, good, average and poor learners. Learners were not told the basis for selection. Names of the learners have been kept anonymous for the sake of confidentiality so the names are codified as numbers, for example, learner one is codified as (L1); learner two (L2), etc. A description of the learners is given in Table 4.4 below:

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Table 4.1 Profile of learners interviewed

Learner	Gender	Age	Ability
L1	F	17	Good
L2	F	17	Good
L3	M	17	Average
L4	F	17	Average

L5	F	17	Poor
L6	F	17	Poor
L7	F	17	Poor
L8	M	17	Average

All interviews were transcribed and then translated into English.

4.7.1 Key findings

Attitudes towards English as a subject

L1 liked learning English very much, because she was good at speaking and reading. The others did not like this subject, because it was very difficult, especially the reading tasks. They felt that there was a lot of difficult vocabulary and grammar. Therefore, L1 and L2 learners wanted to read more English materials while the others preferred to read Chinese readings.

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Experiences of teaching methods

They said that they had been learning English for four years. They described what their teacher used to do in presenting a lesson, for example:

> The teacher used to show us some questions. We worked in groups and found the answers, and then she checked the answers with us. Normally, she read the texts and explained it in detail alone, then, translated into Chinese (L2).

When asked how they felt about the methods used to teach reading, L7 responded:

> I did not like her teaching method. She read the text and translated into Chinese so that we needed not to use our minds. It was really boring. For me I liked the teacher who had the beautiful pronunciation and good teaching skills.

L1 mentioned that the teacher taught them in two languages, English and Chinese. The teacher presented in reading class in this way:

> The teacher read first. Then we read and answered the questions of this text. Then, the teacher translated sentences of the text into Chinese. At last, the teacher showed us a lot of examples of grammars and words. In order to consolidate grammar and words, and to make sure if we had understood the text, the teacher gave us the examination paper, and asked us more questions in detail.

Two of them (L3 and L8) told me that sometimes teacher showed them pictures of the text. It was helpful for them to understand the text. However, learners could not describe the strategies used in the reading process so it is probable that they did not know how to use reading strategies appropriately. There was no evidence of strategy choice as **a conscious process**.

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Overall, learners felt that they needed more than they were getting. For example, L1 said:

> The teacher should give us chances to think of the questions in class and give us the right to answer questions and explore our own thoughts. We are not audience in the class. We need learn skills and strategies in reading class, not only doing exercises and passing examinations.

Responses to textbook and examination paper

12.5% (1 out of 8) of interviewees liked this textbook, saying 'Yes, I do [like it]. I feel it is not bad' (L6). Though she said she liked this textbook, she suggested readings could be more linked to her life, such as music and sports. However, 87.5% of interviewees did not like the textbook mainly because the contents in the textbook were not interesting, and did not link to the examination paper. The topics in particular were 'far from our

life'. They also felt that the examination paper was more difficult than the textbook. After studying the textbook seriously, they still could not pass the examinations or get good marks. They felt that this was due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary and grammar. When answering Question 23 (see appendix J), L5, L7, and L8 all told me that they learnt a lot of grammar and words and did a lot of relevant exercises in class and after class, while studying the textbook, but they did not know how to use grammar to analyse sentences while doing examinations. They did not know the proper meaning of words in context when doing examinations and so felt nervous of taking the examination.

Perceptions of the purposes of teaching EFL reading

For learners, the purpose of being taught reading in English was to learn words and grammar. The purpose of learning words and grammar was to pass examinations. L3 told me that 'our teacher gave us a lot of examination papers for homework. We felt that our study was for passing examinations.'

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4.7.2 Comparing interviews, observations and textbook analysis

From learners' interviews, it was difficult for me to find positive points on English as a subject. Their views were similar to my observations in the following ways: the learners were passive in class and often bored, the teacher performed alone and dominated interactions most of the time, learners did not learn any strategies in class. Although the teacher did encourage them not to read word by word, she did not guide them to practise many interactive reading strategies such as skimming and scanning.

In addition, teacher assessed reading comprehension through doing the examination paper. All the learners were nervous to do examinations due to a lack of confidence in using reading skills and strategies, and because of a big gap between the textbook and the examination paper. As a result, the examination could only be said to be assessing vocabulary and grammatical skills in a very limited way and not contributing to the development of fluent bottom-up processing (see 4.4.2). The vocabulary and grammar

were much beyond the level of the textbook, as described in 4.4.2 . The readings in the examination paper had little relevance to learners' own situation so that it was difficult for them to draw themselves into the readings, for example, the reading comprehension about body heat of human beings (Appendix E).

One reason for learners' difficulties is that the designer of the textbook separated the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary from the reading process. Therefore, learners could not link theories of grammar and words to reading practice. As a result, they only could read word by word. In addition, there were too many difficult unknown words and complex structures in the examination paper. As a result of all these factors, learners struggled to pass examinations.

4.8 Language learning theories that seem to underlie the teacher's and learners approaches to EFL reading

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According to the findings analysed above, although the teacher said that she had been trained in the theories of top-down and bottom-up processing, her practice focused mainly on bottom-up processing. Although some pre-reading activities were introduced, the predominant approach was similar to grammar- translation, as activities consisted of translating isolated sentences from English into Chinese. Although the sentences came from a coherent text, they were treated more as grammar exercises than as tools for making meaning. At the same time, the pattern of question-response that was used has elements of behaviourism although this was unintentional and a way of dealing with learners' lack of response. She did however focus quite a lot on word recognition which is central for constructing meaning in texts (Koda, 2005). In general, the teacher seemed to see her role as 'information giver/text explainer' rather than 'coach/classroom organizer/trouble shooter/consultant/personnel manager/catalyst' (Williams, 1986: 44) and thus did not place a lot of emphasis on helping learners to become independent readers.

Assessment was viewed by both learners and teachers as relating only to the ability to pass the examination and did not seem to have a formative role. It was not used for consolidating knowledge learnt from the textbook, but only to practice sentence- and word-level kinds of exercises. Consequently, learners' confidence was shaky and their ability to use reading strategies strangled.

In order to explore learners' use of reading strategies in more detail, I used a questionnaire to elicit the differences or similarities in their use of strategies in Chinese and English.

4.9 Presentation and analysis of questionnaire

The questionnaire on reading strategies was designed to explore the patterns of strategy use in two languages and the extent to which transfer of strategies from one language to another might be helping or hindering in EFL reading.

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The questionnaire on the next pages is divided into four parts: the first five questions relate to pre-reading strategies, the next two sections (eleven questions) relate to while-reading strategies, and the last ten to post-reading strategies.

Table 4.2 Tabulated responses to questionnaire on reading strategies

How often do you do the following when reading?

No.		Questions	English			Chinese		
	When preparing to read a new text		always	sometimes	never	always	sometimes	never
1		Predict the content of a text from the title.	9.7	35.4	54.8	58	32.3	9.7
2		Read sub-headings in order to predict the content of the text.	77.4	19.4	3.2	67,7	29	3.2
3		Read the first and last paragraphs of a text to help you understand the main message.	18.5	46.5	35	34.8	40.6	24.6
4		Skim read the text for a general understanding	35.5	51.6	12.9	60	38	11.8
5		Read the questions on the text before you read the text itself.	38.7	51.6	9.7	35.5	48.4	16.1
	While reading a							

	text							
6		Recognize loss of concentration and start again	25.8	67.7	6.5	12.9	71	16.1
7		Tell your teacher that you do not have enough background knowledge of the text to make sense of it.	9.7	38.7	51.6	9.7	51.6	38.7
8		Tell the teacher when you don't understand a part of the text.	6.5	42	51.6	6.5	45.2	48.4
9		Translate the sentence into Chinese to help you understand.	40.3	54.8	3.8			
10		Use features of the text such as linking words to help you understand the author's message.	30	63.6	6.5	48	42	9.7
	When you find a word you do not understand							
11		Skip unknown words and carry on reading.	25.8	64.5	9.7	25.8	58.1	16.1
12		Translate the word into Chinese	51.6	35.5	9.7			
13		Guess the meaning of an unknown word from the rest of the sentence (the context.)	30	63.6	6.5	48	42	9.7
14		Check the meaning of an unknown word with a dictionary.	71	16	12.9	16.1	67.7	16
15		Guess meaning without using any particular methods.	12.9	32.3	58.4	3.2	29	67.7
16		Break an unknown word into parts to help you understand its meaning.	12.9	22.6	64.5	12.9	71	16.1
	When answering questions							
17		Reread the text to make sure you understand it.	45.5	45.2	9.7	38.7	58.1	3.2
18		Scan the text for a specific word or phrase or piece of information.	29	38.7	32.3	51.6	16.1	32.3
19		Look for the answer to each question according to the order of information in the text.	25.8	61.3	12.9	25.8	54.8	19.4
20		Select the answer and write it how it is stated in the text.	61.3	38.7	0	64.5	35.4	0
21		Select the answer and write it in your own words, based on understanding the text.	58.1	41.9	0	71	29	0
22		Stop reading the text after finding the answer.	38.7	45.2	16.1	32.2	58.1	9.7
23		Skip a question and return to it later.	29	45.2	25.8	19.4	64.5	16.1
24		Select an answer even when you have not understood the question?	6.5	90.3	3.2	6.4	77.4	16.1
25		Mark answers without reading in	0	61.3	38.7	3.2	80.6	16.1

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	order to fill the space.						
26	Go back and change an answer after re-reading the text	9.7	90.3	0	3.2	93.5	3.2

The questions on pre-reading strategies reveal some interesting patterns. Only 9.7% of learners always analyze the title to predict the content of an English text as compared to 58% when reading Chinese texts (question 1). Yet 77.4% always use sub-headings for this purpose in English texts and 67.7% in Chinese (question 2). So there is positive transfer in the latter case but not in the first. This could be due to the fact that main headings do not often give sufficient information in the English texts learners encounter in the textbook and also to the teacher's use of sub-headings as preparation in class.

With question 5, the percentages are roughly the same so the strategy of reading the questions before beginning the text transfers positively even if it is not used as often as it could be: for English and Chinese respectively, only 38.7% and 35.5 % of learners always use this strategy while 51.6% and 48.4% sometimes use it. In the other two questions, there appears to be less transfer of strategies from Chinese to English. 67.7% sometimes use the text structure to help them in Chinese (question 3) but 58.1 % of learners never use this strategy in English. Schoonen *et al*. (1998) identify knowledge of text characteristics as one of three important domains in metacognitive knowledge for L2 reading. Another important component they identify, knowledge of L2 reading strategies is also lacking, for example, although 60% of learners use skimming for Chinese texts, this percentage is only 35.5.% for English texts. While there may be many reasons for this, the fact that the textbook does not explicitly develop either of these strategies must play a role.

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With regard to while-reading strategies, patterns are similar for question 6, recognising loss of concentration and rereading. This kind of strategy could be independent of language proficiency. For questions 7 and 8, asking the teacher for more background or stating when a part of the text is not understood, these are done much less often in English: 51.6% of learners never do either of these things in English reading and tiny

percentages always do them. It is hard to know why this should be so but may relate to the dynamics of the classroom as the numbers who always use these strategies in Chinese are also low.

Interestingly, high percentages (40.3 % and 54.8 %) always or sometimes use Chinese grammar to understand English texts by translating sentences into Chinese (question 9). This seem to indicate that there is still a high level of reliance on grammar –translation rather than the confidence to make meaning from texts using a range of other strategies. This may mean that language proficiency is not sufficiently high to engage with the texts or that learners have not been taught appropriate strategies for L2 reading and find that existing L1 strategies are not helpful. Question 10 is interesting in that learners claim to use linking words either sometimes or always in relatively high numbers for both languages (only 6.5% and 9.7% respectively never use this strategy) yet these are never taught in the EFL class. There is clearly a lot of potential for building on this in EFL reading.

In relation to dealing with unknown words, dictionary use is much higher in English (question 14) as one would expect; the use of translation is also very high (question 12). There are positive patterns of transfer for questions 11 and 13, skipping unknown words or guessing the meaning of a word from the context. Again as one would expect, learners guess the meanings of unknown words from context more in Chinese: 48% always do this as compared to 30% in English but large numbers sometimes do this. For question 16, a much higher percentage of learners sometimes break unknown words into parts (71%) in Chinese that in English (22.6%) while 64.5% never do this in English. This is confusing as learners do not need to break words into parts of characters to read in Chinese so some learners may have misunderstood the question. However, the answers for English on this question – 64.5% never do this – seem to indicate that learners are not making use of morphology to understand new English words even though there is some training on this in the textbook. This could mean that there is negative transfer from Chinese reading strategies – learners might not believe morphology can help -- or this might be related to the high level of orthographic distance between the two languages. In

this case, proficiency in the L2 may be a better predictor of L2 decoding efficiency than L1 decoding competence (Koda, 2005).

In post-reading, there is evidence of similar patterns and therefore transfer of strategies in question 17 (rereading), question 19 (looking for answers according to the order of information in the text), 20 (selecting and writing answers as they are in the text), 22 (stopping reading after finding the answer), 23 (skipping a question and returning to it later), 24 (choosing an answer even when the question is not understood) and 26 (changing an answer after rereading the text). Of these, strategy 22 and 24 could be considered examples of potentially negative transfer as they might interfere with other more beneficial strategies. It is interesting that learners more often fill in an answer without reading in Chinese than in English (question 25). The use of scanning is considerably higher in Chinese (51.6% always use this strategy as compared to 29% in English)(question 18). Again the level of proficiency in the L2 may affect learners' ability to make use of scanning.

Without further research it is not possible to know for sure what is going on when learners choose either consciously or unconsciously to use a particular strategy in English. Apart from L1 reading skills, L2 proficiency and L2 decoding ability, sociocultural variables and individual and experiential factors also play a part (Bernhardt, 2005). Overall, the percentages of learners who always make use of particular strategies in reading are low which would indicate that their English reading skills and strategies are weak. In interviews, learners said that they did not know how to use reading strategies and not much guidance was given in class yet they are transferring strategies wherever they can to help them make sense of text. Accordingly, it seems clear that there is much scope for taking a more metacognitive approach to strategy use, encouraging learners to discuss and reflect on strategy use and to plan which strategies are most appropriate for a particular task or text.

To sum up, it is difficult for Chinese learners to develop appropriate L2 reading skills and strategies if they are still using a slow mechanical translation process. Strategic

competence is not only compensatory but also non-compensatory (Cohen, 1998) and helping learners to develop such metacognitive knowledge can only enhance their reading ability. However, as Schoonen *et al*. (1998) found, metacognitive knowledge of 'reading strategies, reading goals and text characteristics cannot compensate for a lack of language-specific knowledge if the latter remains below a certain threshold level. The limited FL knowledge "short-circuits" the transfer of reading skills to the FL' (p. 72). So, even where strategy transfer may be positive, the level of language proficiency must be sufficient to enable this to succeed.

4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I analysed my findings from the reading section of the Grade 10 textbook, the examination, classroom observations, teachers and learners' interviews and the questionnaire. In the next chapter I will summarize the key findings and draw some conclusions. I will also make some recommendations for the improvement of reading strategies and current approaches to teaching reading in China.

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Chapter Five Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This study has attempted to investigate the reading skills and strategies taught and used in one EFL class in China, as well as the factors that promote or hinder the acquisition of these skills and strategies. The previous chapter included an analysis of four sources of data. They were as follows: classroom observation, interviews with one teacher and eight learners, a questionnaire comparing reading strategies in Chinese and English, and an analysis of the reading section of the English textbook for Grade 10 and the reading comprehension section of the examination paper. Together these research tools gave me a rounded understanding of the development of reading skills and strategies in this class.

5.2 Summary of the findings obtained from different data

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From the analysis of the textbook and examination paper, it seems that the nature of the texts selected hindered learners from drawing on either their content or linguistic schemata. Texts for reading did not interest learners on the whole, little attention was paid to developing or activating background knowledge and texts were often too linguistically complex for learners' reading level. The examination was even more difficult than the textbook and there was little connection between the two. The way in which reading comprehension was assessed did not promote interactive reading. The fact that passing the examination was always in the front of learners' and the teacher's minds means that potentially useful strategies which could assist learners to become fluent and independent readers were not developed.

In addition, although the textbook does present reading in three phases, the kinds of activities used throughout did not appear to be effective in developing interactive readings skills and strategies: there was an over-emphasis on word and sentence-level

comprehension and little attention to top-down strategies such as using headings or text structure to predict content, skimming and scanning. Vocabulary items were taught only in the post-reading phase rather than as tools for setting up textual meaning and background knowledge.

From the teacher and learner interviews and classroom observations, it appears that the teacher had not had sufficient training in implementing interactive approaches especially when guidance from the textbook is missing. Although she did her best, the lack of response from learners meant that she often used repetition and translation rather than interactive methods. Moreover, there was no development of a metacognitive approach to strategy use, particularly in transferring strategies from one language to another. Learners were passive readers on the whole and not encouraged to take responsibility for their own reading and understanding.

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From the questionnaire, it seems that learners are trying to transfer strategies from their L1 but that these are not always successful.

5.3 Summary of the answers to the main questions in the study

What kinds of skills and reading strategies are taught in reading English as a foreign language and for what purposes?

In my observations, I found that traditional, less interactive reading methods were still brought into play in teaching processes. In the pre-reading stage, there was little interaction between learners and teacher. The teacher explained the content of the reading passage and learners listened. The textbook did not offer guidance on using the resources of the text to develop or activate learners' background knowledge. In the while-reading stage, skimming and scanning reading skills were not used to help learners to achieve

particular reading purposes: the teacher usually read and translated texts word by word. The post-reading stage did not receive much attention and these tasks were often left for homework. They tended to be tasks on grammar and vocabulary, taught in isolation from the text. However, vocabulary tasks could be said to be building word recognition to some extent.

Therefore, these factors could indicate that learners would use the same reading skills and strategies as teacher had used. In this reading situation, learners would find it difficult to develop independent reading strategies.

The purpose of teaching skills and reading strategies in this class was to help learners pass examination. Although the teacher stated that her teaching purpose was to help learners improve their reading skills and strategies, her procedure for preparing learners for the examination was to give the correct answers to questions in the paper through reading alone and translating paragraph by paragraph into Chinese. There was no discussion of reading strategies.

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What language learning theories seem to underlie these approaches to reading skills development and assessment?

Although the textbook appears to follow an interactive approach in the way it is organised, for example, warming up exercises for developing top-down strategies, and post-reading language study for developing bottom-up processing skills, the activities themselves were not well integrated with the text. Activities often related to words or sentences in isolation rather than building word storage and retrieval strategies, strategies for understanding the meanings of words in context, or for recognising and creating discourse-level cohesion and coherence .

The teacher, similarly, had been trained in interactive approaches and did her best to use these in class. In fact, though, she mainly reinforced bottom-up language decoding skills in her teaching process, for the most part explaining the meaning of words in Chinese and analyzing the structure of sentences. Here aspects of behaviourism and grammar-translation could be seen alongside some elements of an interactive approach, for example, pre-reading activities. Her approach was strongly influenced by the examination paper, which focuses largely on assessing developing bottom-up decoding skills in a decontextualised way, for example, gap filling for testing vocabulary. To sum up, although the textbook and the teacher state that they are using interactive theories of reading, their focus is mainly on bottom-up skills development and this is not always well connected to the text.

What are the teachers' and learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of these approaches?

The teacher told me that after teaching the three phases of reading, learners could grasp basic reading skills such as skimming and scanning to set up their background knowledge of the text. She felt that teaching grammar and vocabulary after the text was a good idea because learners were already familiar with the context and the words so that it was much easier for learners to learn grammar structures. She did not distinguish between vocabulary development as an aid to comprehension (pre-reading) and as a goal in its own right (post-reading). She did say, though, that even when she tries to encourage learners not to read word by word, they continue to do this and do not seem to practise the more interactive strategies she tries to teach.

Learners felt that they were not often taught reading strategies and therefore had to read word by word in order to understand the text. They felt that focusing on grammar and vocabulary was important but did not seem to help them understand examination texts.

What is the relationship between learners' reading strategies in English and Chinese?

When strategy transfer takes place, it seems to be when the strategies do not require detailed decoding of the text, for example, reading the questions before the text or using sub-headings to predict the content. Strategies such as skimming and scanning which require higher levels of decoding competence are not often transferred. Thus, there seem to be two main reasons for lack of transfer: first, learners have not developed sufficient decoding competence in the L2. Here the role of orthographic distance is central. As Koda (2005) points out, for learners with L1 backgrounds that are orthographically distant from the L2, proficiency in the L2 may be a better predictor of L2 decoding efficiency that L1 decoding competence. So strategies developed in the L1 may be less helpful than L2-specific strategies. A second factor is that few appropriate strategies are explicitly taught and learners are not encouraged to reflect on the relationship between text, reading purpose and strategy use. An example of where this could be positively reinforced is in using the text structure to help in getting the gist of the text, which most learners already do in Chinese.

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Why do Chinese learners of EFL at secondary school level have difficulty in achieving the syllabus goals set for reading?

Overall then, Chinese learners of EFL at secondary school level have difficulty in achieving the syllabus goals set for reading. This study has identified several interacting factors which contribute to this situation. First, the kinds of activities presented in the textbook limit the extent to which fluent readers can be developed. The predominant focus is bottom-up decoding – while this is recognised as of great importance for developing reading fluency, the manner in which it is done in this book is limited and often decontextualised. Combined with an examination which assesses grammar and vocabulary in isolation, the effect is to undermine the development of interactive reading

skills and strategies. Under these circumstances, the teacher struggles to bring into the classroom her training in interactive approaches.

A significant gap in learning materials and teaching approaches is a metacognitive approach to strategy use. Learners are never expected to plan their strategy for approaching a text or task, to try different strategies or to reflect on their effectiveness. for particular strategies or in different languages. This limits their ability to become independent readers.

All these findings taken together show that learners in Grade Ten find it extremely difficult to develop effective reading skills and strategies under current conditions. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed.

5.4 Recommendations for developing strategic readers

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5.4.1 Improving the textbook

The designers of textbook in Grade 10 level should rethink their approach to the development of interactive reading skills and strategies. Some points for improving the reading section in the textbook are presented below:

1) The contents and topics of texts should be more closely matched to the interests of the learners in order to motivate them.
2) In order to develop learners' top-down reading skills, the texts in textbook should reflect the learners' background knowledge or relate to a familiar context. Where this is not possible, background information should be provided
3) Pre-reading tasks should have a clear link to the content of the text, for example, in talking about Western culture in Unit 6, the pre-reading activity should be designed with questions relating to Western culture.
4) Top-down processing strategies are not well developed properly in the textbook.

These activities should be more carefully designed and integrated with the texts, so there is systematic development through all units. These skills are essential in order for learners to become proficient in handing various types of reading materials (Laviosa, 1994: 238). Examples include discussing purposes for reading, skimming and scanning; using titles and table of contents, introducing vocabulary in pre-reading process.

5) Activities to engage learners actively during the 'while reading' phase need to be included.
6) 'Post-reading' activities need to be much more carefully thought out and well integrated with the text. The focus should go beyond word and sentence level meaning to include grammatical elements that build cohesion and coherence.
7) A strong focus on conscious and reflective strategy use should be developed with a view to creating strategic readers able to monitor and adjust their own reading processes.
8) Some effort should be made to include a critical awareness of language in its social, political, cultural, historical, and economic context.

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5.4.2 Improving teaching skills

The Ministry of Education should consider the need to upgrade teachers' skills in the area of interactive and strategic EFL reading. Although almost all English teachers have been educated in an Education Institution, without re-training they may find it difficult to implement new approaches. This is particularly important in bringing about new approaches to assessment which support the development of interactive reading. Such retraining and rethinking of assessment could improve the motivation of both teachers and learners.

A key need is to develop language teacher expertise for integrating learning strategies into EFL instruction. Building a conscious awareness of the varying usefulness of different strategies in L1 and L2 could enhance learners ability to develop into independent readers. At the same time it could begin to change the teacher's role from

that of a controller and instructor to that of a ‘change agent’, helping learners to become more responsible for their own learning (Cohen, 1998: 97).

5.5 Conclusion

This research has discussed a number of issues regarding the effectiveness and relevance of the reading section of the English for Chinese Grade 10 Textbook and its implementation. I hope that this study may provide constructive information for textbook designers and policy makers with regard to the weaknesses of the textbook and the lack of attention to interactive reading skills and metacognitive strategy development.

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