

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANALYTICAL CHECKLIST

#### Introduction of the Reading Coursebooks

There are five EFL coursebooks analyzed in this study. Three of them are Chinese locally-produced EFL coursebooks for intermediate or high-intermediate level students, published in recent years (1997-2003). The remaining two are international EFL reading coursebooks for intermediate level students, also published recently (2001-2003).

The Chinese-produced EFL coursebooks are:

*New College English 4*, (2000), Ying Huilan (Ed.), Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. This book includes 12 units. The length of each passage ranges from 900 words to 1100 words. It is for non-English major students. In the present study this book was referred to as *NCE 4*.

*New Horizon College English: reading and writing program 4*, (2003), Zheng Shutang (Ed.), Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. This book includes 10 units. The length of each passage is about 900 words. It is for non-English major students. This book was referred to as *NHCE 4*.

*Contemporary College English: intensive reading 4*, (2003), Yang

Limin (ed.), Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. This book includes 15 units. The length of each passage ranges from 1500 words to 1800 words. It is designed for English major students. This book was referred to as *CCE 4*.

These three coursebooks are all recently published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, which is one of the most authoritative publishers in China. According to ACTFL proficiency guideline, they are all at advanced-plus level. These three books are used nationwide in Chinese universities and colleges. They are the representatives of contemporary Chinese reading coursebooks at college level, which is the reason why the present study selected these three coursebooks for analysis.

The two International EFL reading coursebooks are:

*ACTIVE 2*, (2003), Anderson, N. J. Boston: Thomson Heinle Press. This book was referred to as *ACTIVE 2*. It includes 14 units. The length of each passage is about 500 words.

*Select Readings 2*, (2001). Gundersen, E. & Lee, L. Oxford: Oxford University Press. This book was referred to as *SR 2*. It includes 14 chapters. The length of each passage ranges from 600 words to 900 words.

These two international reading coursebooks are also recently published by well-known publishers. Although *ACTIVE 2* claims it is at intermediate-low level, according to ACTFL proficiency guideline, it is at intermediate-high level. Although *SR 2* claims it is at intermediate level, according to ACTFL proficiency guideline, it is at intermediate-high level. They claim to teach reading skills; therefore it is relevant

to see what and how reading skills are taught in these two international reading coursebooks.

### Construction and Development of the Analytical Framework

#### Checklist Approach

The literature on textbook selection and/or textbook evaluation is vast. A checklist approach is one method of coursebook evaluation (Ansary& Babaii, 2002; Byrd 2001). Littlejohn (1998) illustrated the use of a checklist to analyze the tasks in two units of a coursebook for secondary school students. Rivas (1999) also used checklists to analyze reading in recent ELT coursebooks. McGrath (2002) recommends the checklist as one way of analyzing or evaluating materials and claims that the checklist method has at least four advantages: (1) It is systematic. All the elements that are thought to be important will be considered. (2) It is cost effective. It takes relatively short time to record a great deal of information. (3) The information is recorded in a convenient format. This allows the easy comparison between competing sets of materials. (4) It is explicit, and if the categories are well understood by all involved in the evaluation, offers a framework for decision-making.

In Rivas's study (1999), the analysis focused on the attempts to develop both lower-level text processing skills and higher-level comprehension and reasoning skills.

In her checklist, the types of reading activities are listed as the criteria and divided

into three parts: pre-reading activities, while-reading activities and post-reading activities, for examples: guessing words meaning is included in pre-reading activities, direct inference questions in while-reading activities, and discussions in post-reading activities. The checklist shows both the number and type of activities. A similar checklist approach can be used to analyze the coursebooks in the present study.

The checklist was developed especially according to the purposes of the present study. As Sheldon (1988) suggests, some global list of criteria can never really apply in most local environment, without considerable modification. McGrath (2002) gives four categories of specific criteria typically considered in evaluation: 1) Media-specific criteria, which relate to the particular medium used. In reference to audio-recorded material, for instance, one might consider the audibility of the recording. 2) Content-specific criteria, which relate to the nature of the material, such as the choice of topics, situations or language in a business English book or the texts included and skills covered in a book focusing on the development of reading skills. 3) Age-specific criteria, which relate to the suitability of the material for the age-group for which it is intended. 4) Local criteria, which relate to the appropriateness of the material for the particular environment in which it is to be used. In the present study, the criteria were limited to content criteria, which were reading skills and strategies covered in the reading coursebooks. The reading skills and strategies were listed in the checklist (Figure 1).

Reading skills and strategies		Tasks, activities or directions.	
Pre-reading stage	Predicting/guessing		
	Relating to background knowledge		
	Setting the purpose of reading		
While-reading stage	Skimming		
	Scanning		
	Making use of reference apparatus, graphic conventions and figures		
	Re-reading		
	Varying reading speed		
	Word Solving Skills	1. Using structural clues: grammatical function	
		2. Using structural clues: morphology	
		3. Using a dictionary	
		4. Figuring out unknown words from the context	
		5. Understanding denotation and connotation	
	Text Processing Skills	<i>Text Processing Skill 1.</i> Simplifying sentences	
		<i>Text Processing Skill 2.</i> Recognizing and interpreting cohesive devices	
		2.1. interpreting proforms	
		2.2. interpreting elliptical expressions	
		2.3. interpreting lexical cohesion (synonymy, hyponymy, metaphor, text-structuring word and pin-down word.)	
		<i>Text Processing Skill 3.</i> Interpreting discourse markers. (Conjuncts/subjuncts)	
		<i>Text Processing Skill 4.</i> Recognizing functional value	
<i>Text Processing Skill 5.</i> Recognizing text organization: rhetorical structure			
<i>Text Processing Skill 6.</i> Recognizing presupposition, implication and making inference			
Post-reading stage	Summarizing		
	Evaluating		
	Synthesizing		
	Commenting and reflecting		

Figure 1. Analytical checklist for each coursebook

### Reading Skills and Strategies in the Checklist

There are many reading skills and strategies, and each skill or strategy may have many sub-skills and sub-strategies. Masuhara(2003) describes reading as a complex operation which involve many potential skills/strategies. There are also different ways of categorizing the types of reading skills/strategies. In the present study, the criteria were made mainly according to the skills and strategies in the Three-Phase approach (Saricoban, 2002) and Nuttall (1996)'s categorization of reading skills, in combination with other reading skills and strategies.

Rivas (1999) uses the Three-Phase approach in her analysis of coursebooks. The purposes of this approach are: building up and activating background knowledge (Grabe, 1991), practicing reading skills, engaging in comprehension instruction (Grabe, 1991), and helping with the problems of language and motivation (Williams, 1984 cited in Rivas 1999).

In the Three-phase Approach, different stages have different aims and involve different strategies. The pre-reading stage will attempt to improve students' interest in the topic, and motivate them; prepare the students for the context of the reading passage; and build a bridge between the reading passage and the learners' background knowledge, and interests. The aim of the while-reading stage is to improve the students' inferring and judging abilities, and help the students understand the writer's purpose, the language structure and the logical organization in the reading text. The aim of the post-reading stage is to interpret descriptions (outlining and summarizing)

and to help students use their acquired knowledge in similar readings.

The design of most coursebooks analyzed in the present study follows a three-phase approach. The strategy types for the three reading stages in the checklist in this study were based on Saricoban (2002) and Nuttall (1996), which were discussed in Chapter Two.

There are some overlaps between Nuttall's skills and the reading strategies in the Three-Phase approach, such as skimming, scanning and predicting. However the limitation of the strategy types in the three-phase approach is that the reading strategies in while-reading phase are too brief and general. There are many skills involved in reading process and each skill may involve a number of sub-skills (Tomlinson 2003). In the while-reading stage, the checklist adapted the word attack skills and text attack skills from Nuttall because she gives more detail and a clear description of each reading skill and sub-skills. For the sake of common and easy understanding, the term 'word attack skills' and 'text attack skills' were changed into 'word solving skills' and 'text processing Skill'.

### Explanations for the Reading Skills and Strategies in the Checklist

#### Pre-reading Stage

In Pre-reading Stage, the reading skills and strategies include:

predicting/guessing, relating to background knowledge and setting the purpose of

reading. Predicting/guessing means when students know what the topic of a reading is, they can use what they already know about the topic to predict the kind of words, or the kind of information they will read. Relating to background knowledge will build a bridge between the reading passage and the learners' background knowledge and interests. Students are asked to give their personal opinion about the topic. Setting the purpose of reading prepares the students for the context of the reading passage. Students are asked to find answers to given questions based on the text.

#### While-reading Stage

The While-reading Stage includes skimming, scanning, making use of reference apparatus, graphic conventions and figures, re-reading, Varying reading speed, Word Solving Skills and Text Processing Skills.

Skimming means glancing rapidly through a text to determine its main idea. It is a way of approaching difficult text to get a top-down view.

Scanning means glancing rapidly through a text to search for a specific piece of information or to get an initial impression of whether the text is suitable for a given purpose.

Making use of reference apparatus, graphic conventions and figures:

Reference apparatus includes appendices, notes, bibliographical references in the text, lists of symbols, abbreviations and lists of special terms and glossaries. Graphic conventions include layout, spacing between lines, indentation, punctuation and



symbols. Figures include illustrations diagrams, maps, graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, tables, flow charts, and similar methods of representing information.

Re-reading. Research indicates that re-reading is one of the reading strategies which have a high level of usage (Cabral, 2002; He, 2001). Rereading can give the reader time to reflect on the content (Block 1986). Therefore, it is included in the checklist.

Varying reading speed: Reading speed is not the only factor to consider when judging someone's reading efficiency, but reading speed and comprehension are closely linked. Reading involves both mental and physical activity. A good reader makes fewer fixations than a poor one; his eye takes in several words at a time. A good reader takes in the sense of a whole chunk without parsing to consider the individual words (Nuttall, 1996).

For Word Solving Skills, using structural information to assign meaning to a word is one important word solving skill. There are two kinds of structural information, namely grammatical function and morphology. If the students can label the grammatical categories (*verb, noun, etc*) of a word, it is easier for them to understand the text. The morphology will offer valuable clues to the meaning of a word. In English, morphology involves the study of affixation, and of the ways in which compound words are built, and also the way phrasal verbs are put together. When the structural approach cannot deliver enough meaning for one word, the reader can get rough idea of a word's meaning from the context in which it occurs, and with every subsequent occurrence, the meaning becomes more precise. It is important for

students to know that a rough idea of the meaning is often all we need. Whether they should get the completely accurate meaning will depend on their purpose for reading and how crucial the word is to the text (Nuttall 1996). Denotation is the literal meaning of a word – what you find in a dictionary. Connotation is the implied meaning of a word – what a word suggests to the reader, or what it makes the reader feel, what it makes the reader think of.

Text Processing Skill1: Simplifying sentences. This means removing all the optional parts of the sentences systematically until only the essentials remain and the bare structure of the sentence is clear. Nuttall suggests several ways to do that: a) rewrite the sentence as two or more sentences by removing coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *but*. b) find the nouns and remove any items following them which are part of the same noun group. c) search for nominalizations (making a noun group out of a clause). d) identify the verbs and find the subject / object of each. e. use 'who/what does what' to find out where the participle and infinitive or preposition clauses/phrases fit in.

Text Processing Skill 2 includes three sub-skills: interpreting proforms; interpreting elliptical expressions; and interpreting lexical cohesion.

Sub-skill 1: interpreting pro-forms. Here pro-forms are the words like: *it*, *our*, *this*, *those*, *then one*, *so/not*, and comparatives (*smaller*, *same such other*, etc.), which are used by the writer to avoid unnecessary repetition.

Sub-skill 2: interpreting elliptical expressions. As with pro-forms, the author may omit some information to avoid needless repetition. This is ellipsis. To deal with

ellipsis, a reader should recognize that the information is incomplete, then search the text and retrieve the required information.

Sub-skill 3. Interpreting lexical cohesion. The concern is with the problems caused when a reader fails to interpret the relationship between a lexical item and other parts of the discourse. The lexical relations contributing to lexical cohesion include: synonymy, hyponymy, metaphor, and text-structuring words, which are explained below.

**Synonymy:** Synonymy means that two or more words have the same meaning. For example, “The *house* stood at the end of a quiet neat street. The little *dwelling*, however, looked neglected *Building* and cheerless.” (McCarthy, 1990, p.16) Here, ‘house’ and ‘dwelling’ refer to the same building. Readers who fail to recognize this will not realize that ‘little’, ‘neglected’ and ‘cheerless’ all describe the house.

**Hyponymy:** The relationship of hyponymy is the relationship where ‘x’ is a kind of ‘y’ (McCarthy, 1990), in other words, a relationship of inclusion. For example, “house”, “school”, factories and cinemas are kinds of building. The superordinate term is “building”, and the other terms are co-hyponyms. “Building” could replace any of the hyponyms in many contexts. The reader will have difficulties if he/she fails to realize that the two terms have the same referent.

**Metaphor:** Metaphor is a way of talking about one thing in terms of another. One way of handling it is to analyze what the two things have in common that is relevant to the context, though they may be separated by several sentences and even paragraphs. For example: “*Light dawned*; for the first time, he felt he *understood*

what it was all about.” (McCarthy, 1990, p.28) The reader must recognize that metaphorical term has the same referent as other non-figurative terms. Here, “light dawned” and “understood” refer to the same experience.

Text-structuring words: these are signals telling the reader to fill out the meaning, usually from information elsewhere in the text. For example: “The *problem* will not be resolved by such *methods*.” (Nuttall, 1996, p.91-92) The meaning is not clear unless “the problem” and “the methods” can be identified.

Text Processing Skill 3: Interpreting discourse markers. Discourse markers are also called conjuncts/subjuncts by Quirk (Quirk as cited in Nuttall, 1996). Studying these can help the reader to work out the meaning of difficult text. There are three groups of markers: 1) Markers that signal the sequence of events, such as: then, first, next, first of all. 2) Markers that signal discourse organization. Re-expressing: that is to say, rather, to put it another way, etc. Specifying: namely, to wit, that is to say, etc. Referring: in this respect, as we said, apart from this, etc. Resuming: to resume, getting back to the argument, etc. Exemplifying: to illustrate this, for example, etc. Summarizing: to sum up, in short, etc. Focusing: let us consider, we must now turn to, etc. 3) Markers that signal the writer’s point of view. These markers show the relationships the writer perceives between the facts or ideas about which she writes. They can be sub-divided into: ‘additive’ (moreover, incidentally, similarly), ‘adversative’ (yet, actually, instead, on the other hand, anyhow, etc), ‘causal’ (so, for this reason, as result, in order to, so that if, unless, otherwise), ‘content disjuncts’ (certainly, surprisingly, fortunately), ‘style disjuncts’ (briefly,

generally, put simply) (Nuttall, 1996).

Text-processing skill 4: Recognizing functional value. As Nuttall states, the reader has to recognize functional value when it is signaled by a discourse marker or other means: therefore, however, it can be defined, or when there is no explicit signal and the value therefore has to be inferred. Readers have to work out whether the writer intended the sentence to be hypothesis, an example, a definition, etc. Nuttall divided functions into three groups, namely independent functions (associated with prepositional meaning), text-dependent functions (associated with contextual meaning), interaction-dependent functions (associated with pragmatic meaning).

Text Processing Skill 5: Recognizing text organization. This means perceiving how the writer has selected material, organized it and given it coherence. There are three levels: organization of paragraphs into texts, organization of sentences into paragraphs, and text diagrams.

Text Processing Skill 6: Recognizing presupposition and making inference. The presuppositions can be roughly divided into two groups: 1) the knowledge and experience that the writer expects the reader to have. 2) The opinions, attitudes, emotions that the writer expects the reader to share or to understand. Inference can often be used to reconstruct the writers' unstated presuppositions. Presupposition is bound up with inference, and this skill is closely connected with Text Processing Skill 4 (recognizing functional value): the presuppositions the writer makes and the inferences she expects us to draw will affect our interpretation of the value of a sentence.

### Post-reading Stage

The Post-reading Stage includes: summarizing, evaluating, synthesizing, commenting and reflecting. Summarizing information is one of the reading comprehension strategies recommended by many researchers (Harrison cited in Ahmad & Asraf, 2004; Nist & Holschuh, 2000). It is claimed that summaries not only improve students' comprehension, but also help them monitor their comprehension (Nist & Simpson, 2000).

Evaluating means assessing strengths and weaknesses of a text according to the author's goals, intended audience, and the reader's purposes and values (PREP Communications Standards, n.d.).

Synthesizing asks students to identify the most important ideas in a text, put those ideas into their own words, and then make connections between among these important ideas (Reading Strategies, n.d.).

Commenting and reflecting means students respond to a text and express opinions about the text and characters in the text (Singhal, 2000).

### Data Analysis

In the present study, each coursebook was analyzed task-by-task according to the checklist (see Figure 1). McGrath (2002) describes analysis as a process which leads to an objective, verifiable description. Evaluation, on the other hand, involves the

making of judgments. The analysis in the present study viewed the materials as plans for action rather than considered how they are interpreted in any particular situation. The data will be both qualitative and quantitative. The first step was to use the checklist to analyze tasks designed to teach reading skills/strategies. In Figure 1, the third column was used to record which reading skill was taught in each coursebook, and the analysis will describe how each reading skill is taught. Each coursebook has been analyzed for three times. The interval is about one month. The second step was to use Figure 2 to record how many reading skills and strategies are taught in each coursebook. This enabled the author to evaluate and compare the reading skills taught in the selected five coursebooks.

Reading skills and strategies		N C E 4	N H C E4	C C E 4	A CT IV E2	SR 2	
Pre-reading Stage	Predicting/guessing						
	Relating to background knowledge						
	Setting the purpose for reading						
While-reading stage	Skimming						
	Scanning						
	Making use of reference apparatus, graphic conventions and figure						
	Re-reading						
	Varying reading speed						
	Word Solving Skills	1. Using structural clues: grammatical function					
		2. Using structural clues: morphology					
		3. Using a dictionary					
		4. Figuring out the unknown words from the context					
		5. Understanding denotation and connotation					
	Text Processing Skills	Text Processing Skill 1. Simplifying sentences					
		Text Processing Skill 2. Recognizing and interpreting cohesive devices					
		2.1. interpreting proforms					
		2.2. interpreting elliptical expressions					
		2.3. interpreting lexical cohesion (synonymy, hyponymy, metaphor, text structuring word and pin-down word.)					
Text Processing Skill 3. Interpreting discourse markers (Conjuncts/subjuncts)							
Text Processing Skill 4. Recognizing functional value							
Text Processing Skill 5. Recognizing text organization: rhetorical structure							
Text Processing Skill 6. Recognizing presupposition, implication and making inference							
Post-reading stage	Summarizing						
	Evaluating						
	Synthesizing						
	Commenting and reflecting						
Total reading skills taught in the coursebooks							

Figure 2. Summary checklist of reading skills and strategies taught in reading coursebooks