

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This chapter includes the conclusion of the present study, limitation of the present study, implications for teaching and learning, and recommendations for further study.

Conclusion of the Study

Reading Skills and Strategies Taught in the Selected Coursebooks

Following from the analysis of the five reading coursebooks presented in Chapter Four, the reading skills and strategies taught in these five coursebooks are summarized in Table 15.

Table 15 did not show the frequency of each reading skill and strategy taught in every coursebook, because this would cause misguide for readers. Being taught frequently does not mean it has effective teaching. For example, in *NCE 4*, skimming was taught 12 times, but there was no explanation of what is skimming and how to skim. In *ACTIVE 2*, skimming was taught twice, but it includes explicit explanation, example and practice. Although *NCE 4* seems focus more on skimming,

Table 15

Reading Skills and Strategies Taught in Five Coursebooks

Reading skills and strategies		N CE	N H CE	C CE	ACT IVE	S R	
		4	4	4	2	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 the dictionary					✓		
4. Figuring out the unknown words from the context.					✓	✓	
5. Understanding denotation and connotation			✓				
Text Processing Skills	<i>Text Processing skill 1. Simplifying sentences</i>	✓		✓			
	<i>Text Processing skill 2. Recognizing and interpreting cohesive devices.</i>						
	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. Interpreting discourse markers. (Conjuncts/subjuncts)</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	<i>Text Processing skill 4. Recognizing functional value</i>			✓			
	<i>Text Processing skill 5. Recognizing text organization: rhetorical structure</i>	✓	✓				
<i>Text Processing skill 6. Recognizing presupposition, implication and making inference</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Post-reading stage	Summarizing	✓	✓				
	Evaluating		✓	✓			
	Synthesizing	✓				✓	
	Commenting and reflecting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Total reading skills taught in the coursebooks		16	15	9	14	12	

ACTIVE 2 has more effective way of teaching.

As can be seen in Table 15, there are some reading skills and strategies taught by all the selected coursebooks: using morphological clues; interpreting discourse markers; recognizing presupposition, implication and making inference; and commenting and reflecting. Reading skills and strategies taught by four coursebooks are: relating to background knowledge, skimming, and scanning. The reason why these reading skills and strategies are taught by all or almost all selected coursebooks might be that the designers of the coursebooks think these reading skills and strategies are the most frequently used ones or the most essential ones for reading comprehension. There are others which would seem to be important but are given much less attention: using dictionary, re-reading, varying reading speed, understanding denotation and connotation, interpreting lexical cohesion, and recognizing functional value. Maybe the coursebook designers do not regard these reading skills and strategies as the important ones for reading comprehension. Alternatively, it might be thought that students at this level do not require training in, for example, dictionary use, or re-reading.

Comparing How Reading Skills and Strategies Are Taught in Selected Coursebooks

Different coursebooks have different ways of teaching reading skills and strategies. The following are different ways of teaching some reading skills and

strategies in the selected coursebooks.

Skills at the pre-reading stage. In the pre-reading stage, *NHCE 4*, *ACTIVE 2* and *SR 2* teach all the three reading skills and strategies in the pre-reading stage. *NCE 4* only teaches “Relating to background knowledge”. *CCE 4* does not have any reading skills and strategies taught in the pre-reading stage. Comparing with Chinese coursebooks, the two international coursebooks have stronger teaching of reading skills and strategies in the pre-reading stage, because *ACTIVE 2* and *SR 2* have all three reading skills and strategies taught and practiced frequently. In *NCE 4* and *NHCE 4*, only In-class Reading has pre-reading activities; there are no pre-reading activities for After-class Reading. With the exception of *CCE 4*, all the books emphasize Relating to background knowledge.

Scanning and Skimming. *NCE 4* has activities involving scanning and skimming, but there is no direct teaching. *CCE 4* does not teach these two skills. In *NHCE 4*, *ACTIVE 2* and *SR 2*, there are explicit instructions for scanning and skimming, and activities for students to practice.

Making use of reference apparatus, graphic conventions and figure. Only *ACTIVE 2* and *SR 2* have this reading skill taught and practiced, including explanations, examples, exercises and reflection. The three Chinese coursebooks do not teach this reading skill.

Varying reading speed. Only *ACTIVE 2* teaches how to vary reading speed and have practice in Chapter 2 of every unit. The Reading Rate Chart at the end of the coursebook helps both teachers and students monitor the improvement of the

students' reading fluency.

Word Solving Skills. Many exercises in the three selected Chinese reading coursebooks are vocabulary exercises, but mainly for practicing morphological function and grammatical function (*NHCE 4* has explicit instruction and exercises for understanding denotation and connotation). *ACTIVE 2* covers four word solving skills but not understanding denotation and connotation, and it has explanations, examples and practice. *SR 2* covers two word solving skills, using morphological clues and figuring out the unknown words from the context, and it also offers explanations, examples and exercises.

Simplifying sentences. In *NCE 4*, in the notes, there are some examples of simplifying sentence, but there is no direct teaching on how to simplify sentences and no exercises for practice. *CCE 4* has exercises asking students to identify subject and main verbs in the sentences. But without any explanation and examples, it will be difficult for students to do and to understand the reason for doing these exercises. *NHCE 4* and the two international books do not address this strategy at all.

Interpreting proforms. All three Chinese coursebooks teach how to interpret proforms. *NCE 4* just offer the explanation of interpretation of a proform in a sentence taken from the text, without exercises for students to practice. *NHCE 4* and *CCE 4* just have one or two questions asking students to interpret a proform in a sentence taken from the text. Explanations of what a proform is, and more practice, are likely to be beneficial.

Interpreting discourse markers. All five selected reading coursebooks have different ways to teach discourse markers. *NCE 4* has only explanations for some discourse markers in the notes without any exercises or activities to practice. In *CCE 4*, some units have explanation, example and exercises for teaching discourse markers, but most of the exercises ask students to identify discourse markers in the text without any explanations and examples. It will be difficult for the students to do this task without explanation of this skill and examples.

Comparatively, *NHCE 4*, *ACTIVE 2*, and *SR 2* have more attractive way of teaching this skill, including explanation, examples and exercises. *NHCE 4*'s exercises focus on interpreting discourse markers and how to use these discourse markers. As Nuttall (1996, p.97) suggests, the students must understand how each discourse marker operates. Therefore, these kinds of exercises offer the opportunity for the students to understand what the discourse markers mean and how to operate them. In *ACTIVE 2* and *SR 2*, the feature is to practice the reading skill in a context.

Recognizing functional value. *NHCE 4* is the only coursebook teaches functional value. The teaching includes explanation, examples and exercises.

Recognizing text organization: rhetorical structure. Only *NCE 4* and *NHCE 4* have similar exercises teaching text organization. The coursebook offers the framework of text organization or paragraph organization. The students need to complete the framework with some specific information. Other coursebooks do not have this reading skill.

Recognizing presupposition and making inference. All five selected reading coursebooks give attention to this reading skill. *NCE 4* only uses questions to ask the students to recognize presuppositions and make inferences. *CCE 4* has more varieties of activities to practice this reading skill, such as answering questions, and identifying the implied meaning of given sentences. But in these two coursebooks there are no explanations and examples for this reading skill. Comparatively, *NHCE 4*, *ACTIVE 2*, and *SR 2* have explanations of this reading skill with examples taken from the text and exercises for making inference. But *ACTIVE 2* and *SR 2* are better because in *ACTIVE 2*, after making inferences, the students have to explain their answers to other students. Explaining their answers helps students evaluate and reflect on their skill use. The increased awareness of skills may help them use the skills more independently. The good point of *SR 2* is that it has various ways to teach making inference, such as matching evidence with inference, multiple choices and judging some given inferences true or false. But other coursebooks only use questions to ask students to make inferences. According to Nuttall's (1996, p.117) suggestion, judging given inferences true or false is one way to train how to make inferences.

Generally speaking, *ACTIVE 2* and *SR 2* are the best coursebooks for teaching reading skills and strategies because they have explanations, examples, exercises and reflection. There are various forms of exercises, and the level of difficulty of the exercises increases gradually. Reading skills are practiced in context. In *NHCE 4*, the teaching of most reading skills and strategies include explanations,

examples and exercises. *NCE 4* involves the most reading skills and strategies according to the checklist, but it does not provide direct teaching for these skills. There are not explanations of what the particular reading skill is, no examples and no exercises. *CCE 3* has the least reading skills and strategies taught, and the teaching lacks explanations and examples to support students to do the exercises.

Limitation of the Study

There are some limitations of this study. Firstly, reading involves many potential skills and strategies. Each skill or strategy may involve a number of subskills and substrategies (Masuhara: 2003). There are also various ways to classify reading skills and strategies. Therefore, the checklist in the present study cannot cover all the reading skills and strategies.

Secondly, in the present study, each coursebook is just one from a series of 2 to 6 coursebooks. This study analyzed only the reading skills and strategies taught in book 4 or book 2. Some reading skills and strategies that are not taught in the selected coursebooks may be taught in other coursebooks in that series.

Thirdly, the present study only considered materials as work plans, rather than how the materials were used. Some teachers may adapt or modify the materials when they teach in the classroom. The role of teaching material is limited (Allwright, 1981). One coursebook may teach many reading skills and strategies very well, but it does not ensure that it can be used successfully in the classroom because it may not

meet the local expectations of the students or teachers.

Fourthly, knowing reading strategies does not guarantee the reader's ability to use effective reading skills and strategies at appropriate times (Masuhara, 2003). The reader needs self-monitoring of these reading skills and strategies. The duration of training, clarity of training procedures, and student's responsibility all are important variables in strategy training (Grabe, 1991). Therefore, the teaching of reading skills and strategies in the coursebooks does not guarantee the students' successful reading comprehension because how learners learn and use them is also another issue.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

Material Design

Firstly, one thing material designers need to pay attention to is the difference between activities involving reading skills and strategies and the teaching of reading skills and strategies. In the Notes of *NCE 4*, the explanations involve some reading skills and strategies. For instance, it gives the meaning of one discourse marker in that sentence without explicit instruction of what a discourse marker is, and without examples and activities for students to practice. After reading the notes, many students may know the meaning of that particular sentence, but cannot apply reading skills or strategies on other occasions. This is just involving but not teaching. The

direct teaching of reading skills and strategies should include, modeling the process, providing examples, practicing strategies, and evaluating strategy use (Nist & Holschuh, 2000). If there are only explanations and examples, it cannot help students learn that skill or strategy. Students need to practice these skills and strategies so that they can acquire the reading skills and strategies. Therefore, reading materials should provide enough activities for students to practice skills and strategies.

Secondly, explicit explanation of reading skills and strategies in the coursebooks are also necessary. As Nist and Holschuh (2000) suggest, students should be familiar with a definition or description of the strategy. The explanation of why the strategy should be learned can help students' control of the strategy. Direct instruction will also facilitate learning. For teachers who do not know much about reading skills and strategies, materials that offer explanations of strategies will be a good training and teaching resource. *SR 2* offers some teaching suggestions on how to use the book and how to manage some activities, which is potentially a helpful training for teachers.

Thirdly, it is also important to have consistent practice in the coursebook. It will be better to offer some activities in after-class reading for the students to practice what they learned independently. It is also necessary to review reading skills and strategies frequently. For example, *NHCE 4* reviews some reading skills taught in Book 1 or Book 2. In *ACTIVE 2* and *SR 2*, some reading skills and strategies are practiced in two or three different units.

Fourthly, it is necessary to raise students' awareness of the process of skill

and strategy use. Evaluating and reflecting their skill use will help the students use the skills more independently and apply effective reading skills and strategies at appropriate times. *ACTIVE 2* and *SR 2* have some activities asking students to explain the process of skill and strategy use, which is very helpful and necessary.

Fifthly, for each reading skill and strategy, there can be various ways to offer practice. If the coursebook always offers the same activity for practicing one reading skill or strategy, strategy training does not transfer well to other reading tasks. Therefore, in the coursebook, it is better to have various forms of activities for practicing particular reading skills and strategies, so that students know how to apply that reading skill and strategy flexibly in different language circumstances.

Material Adaptation: Addition and Modification

There is no perfect language teaching material; therefore, the teacher should adapt the material when necessary. This study suggests how reading skills and strategies should be taught and also compares different methods of teaching reading skills and strategies in the five selected coursebooks. Therefore, this study may give some help for material addition and modification. Teachers can add material, either in the form of texts or exercise material, if they feel the material does not cover enough reading skills and strategies. Teachers can also modify material, especially exercise material, to make it more appropriate for teaching reading skills and strategies, and more accessible for students (Maley, 1998). For example, if there are

only notes involving some reading skills and strategies, teachers can add explicit explanations, examples and exercises for students to practice. If the coursebook has no activity for students to reflect on the process of skill and strategies use, the teacher can also add that activity when he or she teaches in the class. Teachers can also modify the forms of activity or the difficulty level of the activity according to the local need in the classroom to make it more appropriate for the students' situation.

Recommendations for Further Studies

After evaluating what and how reading skills and strategies are taught in these five selected reading coursebooks, further study could consider the implementation of reading coursebooks or adaptation of reading coursebooks in real teaching situations, to see how the reading skills and strategies are taught in class. Another direction for further study is to analyze one series of coursebooks to see whether there are systematic reading skills and strategies teaching.