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The Teaching of English Reading in Chinese Junior High Schools: A Case Study

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APPENDIX

Reading is an essential skill for learners of English as a second / foreign language. For most of these learners it is the most important skill to master in order to ensure success not only in learning English, but also in studying any content class where reading in English is required. For Chinese junior high school students, the reading section in some important examinations such as entrance examination occupies the most points. Reading is the key for passing the examination.

Chinese students begin reading in a foreign language with a different knowledge and skill base than they had when starting to read in their first language - Chinese. There are some factors that influence reading in a foreign language. For example, the attitudes toward the text and the purpose for reading, the different types of reading skills and strategies used between first language and FL, the Chinese students' beliefs about the reading process, the knowledge of written scripts in the L1, and background knowledge of the topics. According to these factors, there are various principles that experts advise for teaching FL reading. These include exploiting the reader's background knowledge, building a strong vocabulary base, and teaching for comprehension. Moreover, there are two ways of viewing models of reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2002): Metaphorical Models (Bottom-up model, Top-down model, Interactive models) and Specific Models (Interactive Compensatory Model, Word Recognition Model, Simple View of Reading Model, Dual-Coding Model, Psycholinguistic Guessing Game Model). The principles and methods mentioned above are implemented in various ways by teachers who teach English reading in China. My thesis focuses on the teaching of English reading in a Chinese Junior High school. My thesis's theme is the mismatch between textbook methodology and teaching in the school.

The overall objective of this case study is to analyze the problems and issues in teaching of English reading in a Chinese junior high school. This junior high school is the average level in Chinese junior high school. The main research questions are:

- ① What is the structure and methodology of the reading component or strand in the Chinese English text book?
- ② Does the methodology of textbook confirm to current effective models of EFL reading?

- ③ Do the teachers follow the effective methodology of textbook, and if not, why?
- ④ What is the standard and goal of English reading formulated by the Chinese Ministry of Education?
- ⑤ What teaching strategies and skills do the teachers use to develop the students' reading skills generally in lessons?
- ⑥ What are teachers' reactions and implementation to the reading component in the text books? Through interviews and questionnaires to teachers, this thesis will analyze the situation of the teaching of English reading in Chinese junior school including models, skills and strategies that are used, the problems and issues faced by Chinese teachers of English.

This thesis will be organized in the following chapters. After the Introduction, the first chapter will discuss the definition, purpose, interaction between reader and text, background, factors of reading. The next chapter will focus on the teaching of English reading in Chinese junior high school, including the standard and goal of English reading formulated by Chinese Ministry of Education; the structure of an English lesson ; the structure of main text book and teacher' book, and the proportion of reading in examination. This chapter will be expanded to introduce the English educational situation of Chinese junior high school and the proportion of reading in examinations. Chapter 3 presents the context and participants in the case study and the research questions and methods. Chapter 4 will present the findings. Finally, in chapter 5, the problems and issues in the teaching of English reading in Chinese junior high school will be discussed. Moreover, teachers' points of view on expectations and experiences with teaching of reading in English will be discussed.

In this case study, I focused on the teaching of English reading in a Chinese junior high school, conducted Ganshan Junior High School in Changsha County, Hunan Province, China. I did the interview and questionnaire for five teachers from this school with different age and training level. The English levels among the classes of students also are different. However, the English text books are the same for all classes in the same grade. According to the situations of each class, English teachers have to use different teaching skills and strategies to improve students' English level.

The teachers received training in the universities and teachers' training center. However, when they face the different level and situation of class, they feel that they have to change the teaching skills and strategies which sometimes may not achieve the expected effect. In the interviews, when the teachers were asked about this, they responded by saying the English textbooks are edited by English language teaching experts. They couldn't say the textbooks are not good. They admitted that the structure, content, practices of textbooks are the standard of English teaching. However, when they taught, they had to change, or often, ignore some parts. This is the mismatch between textbook and teaching in class. There are many reasons, such as the level and situations of students are too low to finish all the parts in text; the English teachers don't have enough training to teach the textbook effectively with suitable skills and strategies.

To my knowledge, the teaching of English reading in Chinese junior high school is improving. The Chinese traditional models such as translational model and grammar model are being used less and less. The textbooks are also edited into fitter to improve students' English ability for real life, although the entrance examination of senior high school is still the purpose for English teaching. Teachers are making the English teaching suitable not only for examinations but also for students reading skills for everyday life. More and more young Chinese English teachers received advanced and effective methods written by English language teaching experts in university. Although they are using these methods in lessons with many difficulties, they try their best to find the solutions. However, there are still many teachers in China who continue use the traditional methods and strategies. Traditional methods and strategies is more effective for students to get high scores in examination. This is also the contradiction. Therefore research in this field is needed to increase the effective ways of teaching reading which develop students' reading skills and improve the entrance examination of English so that it is more suitable for students real reading abilities.

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