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PERSPECTIVES ON CHINESE EFL STUDENTS'

READING PERFORMANCE

by

Hanci Ping

B.A., Hubei University, 1982

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ART**

in the Faculty

of

Education

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Perspectives on Chinese EFL Students' Reading Performance

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Abstract

This study explores factors underlying the deliberate and intensive approach to reading English used by Chinese EFL students. Three aspects are examined: Chinese attitudes towards learning and reading; Chinese students' initial learning experiences; and the method of English reading instruction in China.

Chinese attitudes towards learning and reading are examined from the perspectives of both Confucian and contemporary Chinese educational principles. Chinese EFL students' reading methods originate in Confucian principles of learning. Confucius believed that human morality could be achieved through learning. A tremendous reverence for learning is reflected in Chinese attitudes towards books. Reading, therefore, is considered a most serious activity. Chinese value and stress the spirit of persistence and assiduity for learning more than learning strategies. The intensive and detailed method for learning to read has thus been highly recommended and used throughout history, and later translated into English teaching.

To gain a better understanding of how Chinese students become literate, a brief discussion of the Chinese writing system is presented as Chinese is a non-alphabetic language which differs dramatically from English in fundamental respects. Also discussed are the traditional processes for teaching literacy and the students' practice in achieving literacy and language proficiency. A knowledge of Chinese EFL students' initial learning experiences and the differences between the traditional teaching processes and

the interactive process advocated in the West help us understand Chinese EFL students' reading habits.

Chinese EFL students' reading methods are also influenced by the way they are taught to read in English. I discuss "Intensive Reading", the core of EFL teaching in China, and also examine the reasons why the method of intensive reading has been used from historical, political and educational perspectives because little research has been done on this topic. Discussion focuses on the specific characteristics of English teaching in China which influence Chinese EFL students' reading methods.

The study concludes with a discussion of my arguments in light of the literature concerned. Chinese approaches to teaching and learning to read are discussed with regard to current Western Views of the reading process and the models of reading. The implications are discussed and recommendations are made for further study.

Dedication

**To my father, whose hope, encouragement and love is always
very important for me in my endeavors.**

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1. Introduction to Background and Problem

English, in China, is by far the most widely studied of all foreign languages. According to the country's foreign language policy, English is taught in all middle schools and in those primary schools where English teachers are available. At colleges and universities, students majoring in programs other than English learn the language as a compulsory subject for at least two years. Not only are students required to learn English, but people of all ages and occupations are encouraged to realize the importance of learning English. Scientists, technicians, teachers and many other professionals are asked to master a foreign language in order to read literature about advanced technology and management from developed countries. Because of its wide use, English is usually the foreign language professionals choose to learn. To further encourage English learning, the language is required for promotion in various academic institutions and many other areas. With the open-door policy to the Western world, more and more students, scholars and scientists go abroad for advanced study, or research or business. For those who are planning to go abroad, studying English is becoming a necessary step towards their goal. Accordingly, it is estimated that 200 to 300 million Chinese are currently learning and using English at all levels of schooling, including adult learners outside educational institutions (Dzau, 1990). English has actually become a major priority in China's educational system.

While English occupies an important role in Chinese education, reading is commonly considered the most important of all the skills of language instruction (i.e., speaking, hearing, reading, writing, and translation). Official priority is given to reading instruction (Tang, 1983). For English teaching either in secondary schools or in universities "reading is the core curriculum" (Matalene, 1985; p.790). On a personal level, reading is also favored by most students. Typically, students want to improve their English proficiency in order to gain access to information rather than to improve their social communication skills (Fang, 1991). Competence in reading English is very important for students who wish to succeed in their academic studies and professional careers.

Despite the consistent emphasis placed on reading by both Chinese authorities and students, Chinese EFL students' reading performance is generally unsatisfactory according to the Western view of reading. Numerous studies of Chinese learners' reading performance (Dzau, 1990, Fang, 1991; Johns, 1984; Mahon & Grabe , 1982; Maley, 1983; Oatey, 1984; Scovel, 1983; Tang, 1983; and Zhang, 1983) report that Chinese EFL students are still slow readers after studying English for several years. Fang's study (1991), for example, shows that his second year undergraduate students majoring in English read an average of only 35 - 50 words per minute. Even sophisticated learners of English in a teacher training program read English at only 60 - 100 words per minute (Mahon & Grabe, 1982). Dzau (1990) also shows that many Chinese graduates majoring in English read slowly: their reading speed was on average between 50 - 80 words a minute. According to Western scholars, speed of reading is one of the most important factors distinguishing poor readers from skilled ones. Smith and Lott (1973) suggest that an optimal rate of

reading is 200 w.p.m. or more, otherwise the reader is not going to comprehend what he is reading simply because his memory system will not be able to retain, organize and keep the fragmentary information in any efficient way. Thus, most Chinese EFL students are far from being skilled readers given their rate of reading in English.

Considering poor reading in a foreign language, Alderson's study (1984) offers two explanatory hypotheses. One hypothesis suggests that poor foreign language reading is due to an inadequate knowledge of the foreign language. That is, it is hypothesized that reading ability in a second language is largely a function of proficiency in that language. The second hypothesis states that poor foreign language reading is due to incorrect reading strategies. Alderson argues that ESL/EFL readers who cannot read effectively apply reading strategies they learned from their first language to learn to read in English. These strategies differ in many ways from those required for English, thus, they are ineffective.

In the above studies, the Chinese EFL students' ineffective reading performance does not seem to be due to their inadequate knowledge of English. The subjects who were found to be slow readers were college students who had already studied English for at least six years (Dzau, 1990; Fang, 1991; Johns, 1984; Maley, 1983; Oatey, 1984; Scovel, 1983; Tang, 1983; and Zhang, 1983). At primary and secondary schools, English enjoys the same priority as Chinese and mathematics because of the increasing demand for it. During the six years of secondary school education, students receive 5 to 6 class hours of English per week. The English program designed for secondary English education is meant to help students acquire all the basic sentence patterns,

grammar and a vocabulary of more than two thousand words. By the time students graduate from high school they are supposed to have mastered a basic knowledge of English. The English level for university students, especially for those who major in English, is even higher. For instance, Fang's subjects (1991) -- his second year English major students -- after having fully engaged in English study for a whole academic year, have typically learned about 4,000 to 4,500 words and acquired a fairly good command of grammar. Likewise, in the study by Mahon & Grabe (1982), teachers of English are indicated as having "... thorough, accurate, and detailed knowledge of English grammar" (p.135). They do, however, read slowly and deliberately.

Therefore, it may be that Chinese EFL students' reading strategies account for their ineffective reading in English. A brief survey of studies on Chinese students' reading practices can help identify the problem (Dzau, 1990; Ford, 1988; Fang, 1991; Harvey, 1985; Mahon & Grabe, 1982; Matalene, 1985; Scovel, 1983; Tinberg, 1986, etc.). The findings suggest that the subjects are only interested in learning unfamiliar words and are not bothering with the gist of the whole passage, ie., the overall meaning of what they are reading. These studies find that, for many students, reading is a laborious process during which they analyze individual phrases and structures, look up and memorize the definitions for new words, re-read passages, and sometimes memorize sentence meanings and translate into Chinese as they read along. These readers "feel insecure without a dictionary" (Chern, 1993; p. 68) and they are most interested in the accuracy of meaning of individual words. To put it simply, the Chinese EFL students' reading strategies can be summed as follows: they tend to 1) read word-by-word; 2) rely on a dictionary for meanings of a new word; 3) pay more attention to the meanings of individual

words rather than developing a comprehension of the whole passage. Fang (1991) argues that "It is their flawed method of reading that prevents them from increasing their proficiency, which doubtlessly results in slow reading as well as poor comprehension" (p. 624).

With regard to the slow and deliberate reading habits of Chinese EFL students, most studies have discussed teaching methods and tended to impute students' "flawed" method of reading to Intensive Reading, the most dominant method of teaching reading in Chinese universities. Up to date studies on how English reading is taught abound. They are mainly done by Western educators who have taught English in China, and most of them are anecdotal in nature (Ford, 1988). Little research has been done, however, on the underlying factors contributing to Chinese English teaching and learning to read, which, I think, is the key to understanding Chinese EFL students' reading habits. Partly due to lack of knowledge of the underlying factors of Chinese methods of teaching and learning to read, Western educators with different approaches to reading feel puzzled, dissatisfied, and even frustrated when teaching English in China (Dzau, 1990, Frelick and Naerssen, 1984; Johns, 1984; Maley, 1983; Matalene, 1985; Oatey, 1984; Scovel, 1983; Tinberg, 1986; Willaims, 1984; Wu, 1983; Yu, 1984, etc.). More and more Western educators are engaged in English teaching in China, and also more and more Chinese students are coming to Western countries for study. A deep understanding of Chinese methods of learning to read is much needed for the benefit of Chinese English education and ESL teaching in the West as well.

2. Purpose of the Study

Knowing how to read and write, according to Schieffelin and Cochran-Smith (1984), is never a simple matter: "What literacy is learned and how it is learned and used depends on many cultural factors" (p. xi). Schieffelin and Cochran-Smith (1984) suggest that the question of literacy should be best treated as a cultural phenomenon. I feel that the Chinese methods of learning and teaching reading in English, from my own experience and observation of learning and teaching English in China, cannot be well understood without a knowledge of underlying cultural factors. Given the fact that there is a paucity of research on this topic, I briefly examine here Chinese EFL students' reading habits in terms of three aspects of their learning experiences. These three aspects are discussed from historical, political and educational perspectives as follows: 1) Chinese attitudes towards learning and reading in particular; 2) Chinese literacy learning experience; and 3) English reading instruction in China. In the remaining pages of this chapter, I briefly introduce these ideas, which are expanded on in the main body of the thesis.

Chinese attitudes towards learning and reading in particular is discussed first because I believe that a real understanding of the Chinese approach to reading in English must be based on a grasp of the factors that the Chinese themselves stress and value. Chinese attitudes towards learning and reading are most affected by Confucian beliefs and concepts of learning. Confucius believed that human being's morality could be developed through education. Throughout Chinese history, many rulers and thinkers have confirmed this belief and recommended that all people should learn the

Chinese classics in that they contain truth, wisdom and knowledge. Tremendous emphasis on learning led to the Chinese civil examination system which was mainly based on Confucian classics. It was believed that through learning one can achieve morality as well as reach higher status in society. Chinese reverence for learning is reflected in their attitudes towards reading books. As learning is considered a most serious activity calling for devotion, perseverance and hard work (Sampson, 1990), careful and intensive reading in learning a foreign language is highly appreciated. Chinese attitudes towards learning, Mei (1985) suggests, may to some extent, have discouraged experiments with new strategies in reading instruction. The Intensive Reading approach has thus been used in actual Chinese reading instruction for hundreds of years, and later translated into teaching reading in English.

The second factor to be considered in the slow and deliberate reading habits is Chinese students' prior learning experiences. My arguments for this are based on Alderson's (1984) second hypothesis for poor reading in a foreign language. Taking initial language learning experience into consideration, the Chinese language, the characters in particular, must be examined. Chinese is an entirely different language from English. Chinese characters are not phonetic and they indicate meaning rather than sound. As a Chinese beginner, one has to learn the characters one by one, recognize them one by one, and try to remember them one by one. Teachers tend to encourage accuracy and discourage guessing in meaning while reading (Chern 1993). Learning a new word one must rely on being taught it or look it up in the dictionary for its sound and meaning. Without acquisition of characters, reading is out of the question. The emphasis on accuracy in reading words in Chinese instruction might have been transferred to reading in English, thus

resulting in slow reading. A knowledge of how Chinese students obtain their first language literacy and the differences between the traditional processes and the interactive process advocated in the West help us understand Chinese EFL students' reading methods.

Thirdly, Intensive Reading, the actual practice in English reading instruction in China must be examined. I introduce the general approaches to English instruction in China, the "Intensive Reading" in particular, the widely used method of teaching English in China. I explore the reasons why Intensive Reading has been dominantly taught from historical, political and educational perspectives. I choose to discuss these three perspectives concerning the method of intensive reading partly because studies on how English reading is taught in China are numerous (Cheng, 1988; Dzau, 1990; Everett, 1990; Fang, 1991; Ford, 1988; Mahon & Grabe, 1982; Maley, 1983; Matalene, 1985; Meyer, 1990; Oatey, 1984; Ross, 1993; Scovel, 1983; Tang, 1983; Tinberg, 1986; Wang, 1981; Wang, 1982; Wang, 1986; Yu, 1984; Zhang, 1983), and partly because I believe that the intensive reading teaching methodology has far deeper roots in philosophy, cultural and basic concepts of education in China (Yu, 1984). It is the philosophical principle underlying English teaching practice that emphasizes the word-by-word reading approach.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of my arguments in light of the literature adduced. Chinese approaches to teaching and learning to read are discussed with regard to current Western views on the reading process and the models of reading. The implications of the study are discussed and recommendations are made for further study.

3. Significance of the Study

By examining the underlying factors contributing to Chinese English teaching and learning to read, we can develop a deeper understanding of Chinese EFL students' reading habits. Moreover, insights will be also obtained about how to teach Chinese EFL/ESL students reading in English more effectively. Thus, regarding reading instruction, the significance of this study is twofold. By becoming more knowledgeable about Chinese EFL/ESL students' initial language learning experiences, both English teachers who are engaged in teaching in China and ESL teachers in English speaking countries will be more aware of teaching methods that may improve students' reading ability. An understanding of students' attitudes towards learning and reading, their first language literacy and educational experiences will contribute to the efforts of thousands of EFL/ESL teachers who are currently working in China, and in North America where ESL students with a Chinese education background represent a substantial proportion of students in many schools (Walters & Gunderson, 1985).

Secondly, for teachers of English in China this study is meant to make them ponder their reading instruction, especially the Intensive Reading teaching method. It is hoped that educators and teachers of English in China will get some insights from this study. The study of Chinese EFL reading instruction will be worthwhile because the large number of learners' reading performances are affected by the way they are taught to read in English.

4. Method of the Study

This study is a conceptual analysis using existing literature both in English and Chinese. Arguments are based on relevant studies and my own experience of learning and teaching in China. No qualitative and quantitative methods of research are used in this study because no new data have been collected.

5. Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on Chinese EFL students who have already passed an English language threshold, i.e., they have mastered basic knowledge of English required by the secondary English curriculum. Specifically, they have acquired the basic grammar and have mastered at least over 2,000 English words. Although the methods of teaching and learning to read in China are very much the same, the study is relevant to tertiary level students.

The study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the reasons why Chinese EFL students read slowly and deliberately. This is based on my own understanding and observation of the problem. In addition, the Chinese EFL students' reading habits are discussed in relationship with underlying factors. The strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning to read in China are not the focus of this study, though summaries, comments and recommendations for further study are made throughout the thesis.

6. Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters.

Chapter One is the introduction and includes a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance and the limitations of the study, and definitions of terms used in the study.

Chapter Two discusses the Chinese attitudes towards learning, and towards reading in particular. Chinese attitudes towards learning and reading are examined with a discussion of the effect on the teaching and learning of both Confucian and current educational principles.

Chapter Three describes Chinese students' initial literacy learning experiences. To help understand Chinese literacy acquisition, the Chinese language is briefly discussed.

Chapter Four discusses the way English is taught in China, focusing the Chinese teaching method -- Intensive Reading. I examine the intensive reading from historical, political and educational perspectives.

Chapter Five presents the conclusion of the study. Chinese approaches to learning and teaching to read are discussed with regard to current Western views on the reading process and the models of reading. The implications are discussed and recommendations are made for further research.

7. Some Definitions of Terms Used in This Study

ESL (English as a Second Language)

The term means that English is not the learner's native language. And, English may be acquired later than the native language. Also, it means that English is learned and used in the country the language is spoken. It is frequently the official language or one of the two recognized languages in the country. It is needed for full participation in the political and economic life of the nation, or it may be the language needed for education. Further, English can be learned informally because of its wide use within the environment.

EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

Unlike ESL, English is learned in a country where English is not spoken and it has no official status or a recognized function. Learning English as a foreign language is often undertaken with a variety of purposes in the learners' mind. In contrast to ESL learners, EFL learners usually receive more formal instruction and other measures compensating for the lack of environmental support.

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

The TOEFL, administered by the Educational Testing Service in the U.S.A., is given to students who plan to enter schools in North America and whose native language is not English. It is designed to measure the English proficiency of students. The examination is divided into 3 multiple-choice sections that test the student's ability to understand spoken North American English, to recognize standard written English, and to understand nontechnical reading materials. Since 1986, the TOEFL began including an essay section to evaluate writing proficiency in certain times of test within a

year. Admission committees in various school throughout North America use the scores of TOEFL to determine a student's English competency.

Chinese

Chinese is the language used by all "Han" China, ie., excluding the national minorities whose languages are not Chinese in origin.

Chinese EFL Students

The term refers to those students who have already obtained Chinese literacy. It specially refers to those who have completed secondary school education.

Intensive Reading Course

An intensive reading course is a course designed in China to teach students at university level the usage of words, phrases, and grammar. It includes whatever is necessary to the students' basic training and advanced study of English.

Extensive Reading Course

This is a course designed for helping students of English to read more broadly. The purpose of an extensive reading course is to help students enlarge vocabulary, increase reading speed, and enrich knowledge.

CHAPTER II

Chinese Attitudes towards Learning and Reading

1. Introduction

Chinese students' reading habits are much affected by the beliefs and values that the Chinese stress. To have a deeper understanding of the Chinese approach to reading in English, I am going to discuss Chinese attitudes towards learning, and towards reading in particular, including "the beliefs and values that organize their activities and utterances" in literacy learning (Schieffelin and Cochran-Smith, 1984). Chinese attitudes towards learning and reading are explored with a discussion of the effect on teaching and learning of both Confucian and current Chinese educational principles.

2. Confucius' Influence on Chinese Learning

Chinese attitudes towards learning are much influenced by Confucius' thoughts on learning. Confucius (551 - 479 B.C.) is widely taken to be the greatest single influence on Chinese culture and learning (see, for example, Chan, 1988). In Encyclopedia Americana (1989), the teachings of Confucius are suggested to have exercised such a great molding influence, "with no claim to divinity nor reference to the supernatural", that if using one word to characterize the Chinese way of life, the word would be "Confucian". It may be an exaggeration to characterize traditional Chinese life and culture as Confucian, but Confucian ethical values and his belief in learning have, for well over 2,000 years, served in Chinese history as the source of the social

code and the inspiration for learning. Confucius' teachings were not only influential in China, but also extended to other East Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea and Vietnam.

Confucius' profound and long-lasting influence lies in his idealist humanism, specifically, his deep conviction in the nation's integrity and dignity as well as equality and educability of all human beings. Confucius believed in the essential goodness of human beings. He argued that a good education would change human beings for the better, and that all human beings were capable of benefiting from learning. He suggested that the highest goal a person should seek was to live a moral life and all other activities were subordinate to this. Confucius emphasized that it was through acquiring knowledge that the highest stage of moral development, and moreover, a world of peace and harmony could be achieved. Confucius' ideals for life and human being were clearly and eloquently summed up by his disciple Zhengzi in a paragraph from his study, *The Great Learning*:

The ancients who wish to illustrate the highest virtue throughout the empire first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their own selves. Wishing to cultivate their selves, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

(cited in Cleverley, 1991, pp.7 - 8.)

The Confucian principle that human beings could realize their potential through learning stimulated many of his disciples, and enabled nearly all the dynastic leaders, and the majority of subsequent Chinese thinkers to value and practice Confucian ideals (Smith, 1990). Taking learning as a means of achieving wisdom contributing to personal and social integrity, Confucian classics have been traditionally the substance of learning. The Confucian classics are, in fact, a combination of Confucius' teachings and some other Chinese classics attributed to him. Confucian teachings were the early part of *Lun-Yu* (Analects of Confucius), a collection consisting of notes and journals on Confucius' sayings and activities assembled by his disciples, and compiled after the master's death. Many other sayings were later invented and supported the doctrines. It is said that Confucius wrote *The Chun-Chiu* (the Spring and Autumn of the State of Lu) and edited *The Shih Ching* (the Classics of Poetry), *The Shu Ching* (the Classics of History), *The Yi Ching* (the Classics of Changes) and *The Li Chi* (the Classics of Ceremonies). This group of ancient texts is known as the Five Classics. During the Song Dynasty (960 - 1279) Confucian scholars brought together *The Analects*, *The Mencius* (a Confucian disciple's works), *The Ta Hwei* (The Great Learning) attributed to Tseng Shen, a disciple of Confucius, and *The Chung Yung* (The Doctrine of the Mean), attributed to Tzy Ssu, the grandson of Confucius. The scholars named the collection the Four Books. The Four Books and the Five Classics had been put together as Confucian classics.

Consistent emphasis on learning the Confucian classics has been addressed throughout Chinese history. Many Chinese thinkers have proposed that the Confucius' teachings be taken as the ruling ideology,

supplying the moral rationale for the elite and providing all people with a set of personal values which justified the country's political structure. The Han Dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 220) adopted Confucianism as the state orthodoxy. In the Sui Dynasty (581 - 618) the Confucian classics were explicitly designated as the basis of a revived examination system. During the Song Dynasty (960 - 1279) the enthusiasm for learning Confucian classics reached higher levels because of Neo-Confucianists' recommendation. Zu Xi (1130 - 1200, A. D.), who is regarded as the most influential scholar after Confucius since the Song Dynasty, highly recommended Confucianism. He believed that the ideal of achieving morality and world peace could be achieved if we maintained perseverance in learning and made a systematic study of the Confucian books (Cleverley, 1991). The Qing Dynasty (1866 - 1911), the latest of the imperial dynasties, proposed that acceptance of the wisdom of the Confucian classics was a prerequisite for personal power (Cleverley, 1991). Hence, Confucian classics have been taken as a kind of teaching canon for a long time and Confucian classics were, therefore, the most widely read and studied of all books. They served for centuries as the core curriculum in Chinese education before the May 4th Movement, 1919, a cultural revolution for Chinese education. The Four Books used to be learned at the primary level and the Five Classics at the secondary level. The mastery of Confucian classics became the basis for civil examinations that remained until the overthrow of the Ching Dynasty in the first decade of the 20th century.

Modern Chinese leaders, such as Dr. Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong, also learned and were much influenced by Confucian classics. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the democratic revolution which overthrew the Qing Dynasty in 1911, though Western trained, learned the classics in childhood. He was

profoundly influenced by Confucian percepts and he highly recommended that students study the classics with diligence and perseverance. Mao Zedong, the late communist Party leader in China, also learned the classics, the historical heritage. Mao appreciated the Confucian belief in 'learning without satiety, and instructing others without being wearied.' Mao said that "We should sum up our history from Confucius to Sun Yat-sen and take out this valuable legacy" (p.14 in Cleverly, 1991). The valuable legacy Mao referred to is actually the stress on learning and education. Like the dynastic leaders before him, Mao prized education as a means of achieving orderly relations on earth that fulfills a supreme blueprint (Cleverley, 1991).

Not only in ancient times, but in modern China, emphasis on learning is much stressed. Learning and education in modern times is connected with the country's policy. Since 1980, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, the dominant Chinese central leader after Mao, China has formulated an ambitious plan to move the country from its present underdeveloped state into the forefront of 20th century science and technology advances. Known simply as the "four modernizations" (industry, agriculture, national defense, and science and technology), this policy places a premium on the need for an elite corps of persons with advanced training. Deng believes in effective bureaucracy. He said that unless a bureaucracy was well provided with advanced specialists and experts, it could not carry out effective policies (Suettinger, 1981). Deng's opinion also emphasizes the value of knowledge and intellectuals.

3. The Effect of the Examination System on Chinese Attitudes towards Learning

The Chinese belief in being "good" through learning led to the creation of the examination system, thus reinforcing a traditional veneration for learning. Miyazaki (1976), the Japanese educator and researcher who made a thorough study of the Chinese examination system, commented that the traditional Chinese examination system was unique in that it stood alone as the preferred route to success and it lasted for nearly 1,500 years. It functioned very well in ensuring a dedicated, hard working and intellectual civil service system and assured that all officials would be scholarly officials and distinguished intellectuals who came to their positions through hard-work, learning and competition. It also allowed the most humble family to hold out the hope that their child (unfortunately, only their sons) would achieve a position of distinction in government. Much of the history of the examination system in China is the story of intellectuals who have succeeded in their studies and hence received positions of power and esteem from the central government. Therefore, striving for achievement in examinations has been a key motivation for learning.

Though the civil service examination system was abolished at the beginning of this century, in modern China learning has also been valued and considered as a means of development of the self and the country as well. Except for the period of the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976) when education was distorted and learning was discouraged, great emphasis is still placed on testing as a means for students to get into key middle schools and particularly to enter university. Mei, a member of the U.S. reading research team to

China in 1985, noticed that "Examinations are a ubiquitous and important feature of Chinese education, and becoming more so...". (p.14). To get the chance of receiving higher education and, consequently, to get a good job is mainly achieved by accumulating knowledge and passing the examinations. Success in examinations is thus seen as the route to better jobs, and higher positions in society. In 1977, the year after the end of the Cultural Revolution, university entrance examination was resumed. Most Chinese students are more motivated and enthusiastic about learning than before. Bertrand Russell, the British philosopher and mathematician, stated in 1922 that one of the good effects of the Chinese examination system was a widely diffused respect for learning. He thought that it was through this kind of examination system that Chinese reverence for learning was reinforced.

4. Chinese Reverence for Book Learning

Due to the Confucius' influence and consistent emphasis on learning throughout Chinese history, Scovel (1984), an American English educator who taught English in China in the 1980s, commented that the Chinese have an enormous reverence for education and learning. Chan (1988) suggests that it is this reverence that elevates learning to the status of sacred. Field (1984), an American English teacher, observed while teaching in China that being fond of learning is a desirable quality in China. People are taught at very young age the first thing they should do in this world is to learn to be a good person and the only means to this goal is through learning. With the traditional respect for learning "the Chinese attached an importance hardly paralleled elsewhere upon the value of learning", commented Bodde, an American educator (1981:14).

The Chinese reverence for learning is shown by their attitudes towards books. Scovel (1984) noted that many Chinese revere books as the embodiment of knowledge, wisdom and truth. For instance, the reverence for books is conveyed through poetical inspiration. From ancient times, many poems have celebrated reading books. Cheng Tsung, emperor of the Sung Dynasty (960 - 1127) wrote such a poem on books (in Cleverley, 1991):

To enrich your family, no need to buy good land:

Books hold a thousand measures of grain.

For any easy life, no need to build a mansion:

In books are found houses of gold.

Going out, be not vexed at absence of followers:

In books carriages and horses form a crowd.

Marrying, be not vexed by lack of a good go-between:

In books there are girls with faces of jade.

A boy who wants to become somebody

Devotes himself to the classics, faces the window, and reads.

According to Chinese beliefs, books can bring you knowledge and thus can lead to you to success which enables you to obtain prosperity and happiness. Enormous reverence for books has been passed down from generation to generation for millennia in China. Thus, reading books naturally becomes a serious activity needing detailed attention and assiduity.

5. Chinese Traditional Views on Learning and Reading

Dzau (1990), a Chinese professor of English in Macao, suggests that traditional schools in China take learning as a quantitative accumulation. Things are learned little by little, one after another. The knowledge is all in the book, and you can take it out and put it into your head. Considering learning as a process of accumulation of knowledge, most Chinese students pay attention to how much they have learned, but care less about how and when they are going to apply it in practice. Therefore, they are often proud of the numbers of texts they have memorized. In terms of English learning in China, when students say that they have "learned an English lesson", they generally mean that they have looked up and committed every single word to memory, and translated and analyzed grammatically every sentence in it. To consolidate their knowledge, Chinese students also enjoy repetitive reading. Yu (1984), a Chinese professor of English in Beijing, compares this notion of accumulating knowledge to that of saving money in the bank and spending it later. Yu explains that when you put money in the bank, it is not very important to know for sure what you are going to do with it. But once you do need the money for emergency, it is there for you to use. Learning for many Chinese, then, is the same as saving money. The knowledge you are acquiring now may not be of immediate use; but when you have learned it, it belongs to you. A well-known Chinese proverb supports this idea, "When the time comes to use your knowledge you will regret how little you have read."

Since learning is a process of accumulating knowledge, reading is an activity of absorbing whatever is written in the text. Dzau (1990) remarks that

Chinese think language proficiency is increased by the number of words and texts mastered. In reading, the accumulation of vocabulary is students' primary purpose. Mohan and Grabe (1982), American teachers who taught English at Chinese universities, found that some students even define reading as vocabulary learning. It is very common to notice that Chinese students consult a dictionary now and then while reading. They do not feel safe without a dictionary. It is widely believed that the key to fluent reading is mastery of vocabulary. The more words you know, the better you can read.

In addition to learning new words, Chinese students are taught to pay special attention to the use of words, the beauty of language, and the style of the reading materials. To learn to appreciate any element contributing to the quality of writing, the intensive and repetitive methods, and even memorization are much emphasized for reading. This view of reading has developed out of the traditional way of learning classical Chinese by memorizing words and texts of exemplary writings. Both Chinese and Western classic and modern literature for learning, then, are usually considered as "gems of literature and model pieces of exemplary writing" (p.76; Dzau, 1990). This consideration became one of the key factors in selecting reading materials. Consequently, a large quantity of classic literature can be found in the Chinese school curriculum. The classics begin to appear in books for elementary schools pupils soon after they have learned enough Chinese characters. The carefully selected classic and modern literature pieces, according to Francis Bacon (Whately, 1857), deserve being "chewed and digested ... with diligence and attention" (p. 447).

The recommendation to analyze and memorize texts while reading is in line with the money-saving metaphor of knowledge acquisition. Some old teachers explain that when they themselves studied the Chinese classics at a young age, they were not expected to understand what they memorized, but later when they were older, they all suddenly understood what they memorized. They believe that it is the same as the use of words and phrases learned by rote. Students may not be able to use them at first, but later, they will remember and use them correctly (in Dzau, 1990). A popular saying goes: "Once you have read (memorized) ten thousand books, your pen performs wonders." The more you read, the more graceful phrases and idioms you remember, the better you will read and write. For learning and teaching the Confucian classics based curriculum before 1919, and the present literature dominated Chinese language curriculum, the intensive reading method is highly recommended.

6. Recommendations for Intensive Reading Method

The intensive reading method has been employed in teaching and reading in China for hundreds of years. In the book *Gu Jin Ming Ren Du Shu Fa* (Well-known Ancient and Modern Chinese Scholars' Reading Methods) compiled by Zhang, Minren and published by Taiwan Commercial Press in 1956, most scholars highly recommended the intensive reading method. Among those, Zhu Xi's (1130 - 1200 A.D.) two hundred and sixty sayings about reading are most specific. Here are listed only a few:

- reading should be specialized and intensive;
- don't be too greedy about the quantities of reading;

- read repeatedly and think intensively;
- don't read too broadly but systematically;
- one can naturally be proficient with reading by accumulating knowledge,
- read difficult books rather than easy ones.

Obviously, what Zhu Xi emphasized is the intensive method of reading. He also recommends repetitive reading; that is, books must be read several times to gain full understanding. Reading ten times is better than once; reading one hundred times is better than reading ten times.

Hu Shih, a most distinguished modern philosopher and educator, who undertook his doctoral study under the supervision of Dr. John Dewey in the United States, proposed the intensive reading method in one of his articles (1919). He made four suggestions for reading. His suggestions are as follows (my translation): "Reading is like a pyramid, and it can be expanded and heightened" (p. 128). He says that to expand and heighten the pyramid, one has to read intensively and extensively. Intensive reading can be done by having used one's eyes, mouth, hands and heart. Using one's eyes means to look at every word carefully, and never miss one word; whenever a new word greets your eyes you should always look it up in the dictionary for its meaning. Using eyes also suggests that you have recognized every word you read, even every stroke the character contains. He illustrates this with English words: if reading carelessly, you will mistake "port" for "pork"; and "oats" for "oaks". He suggests that if you read intensively with your eyes, such careless mistakes will not be made. Using the mouth refers to reading aloud. Using hands indicates consulting a dictionary while coming across any

new word in reading. He explains that using the heart means to read with intensive attention and thinking. Forming a good habit, he says, will help develop a good personality. Thus, reading deliberately and intensively is not merely a matter of learning but that of self-improvement.

Hu Shih's recommendations for reading are well accepted in China. There are many essays on reading in congruence with that of Hu's. Wei (1988), a Taiwanese writer and sociologist, comments on Liang Qichao's recommendation on reading. Liang, a well-known Chinese modern scholar, language master and writer, emphasized cautious and careful reading (in Wei, 1988). Liang says that we are supposed to form the habit of reading cautiously. We would get nothing if we do not read meticulously. Wei (1988) mentioned that the extensive reading was not recommended until the nineteenth century in China.

Mu, Shuo Ling (1938), a modern Chinese writer, provides a very vivid analogy to both intensive and extensive reading in one of his essays on reading (in Chinese version). He states that reading intensively is like eating the meat of a crab, whereas reading extensively is like eating pork. He says the taste of crab meat is very delicious. Yet, the crab is not like pork which can be chewed and swallowed in quite a big bite in that the meat of the crab is hidden inside the hard shell. It is said that the reason why the crab tastes delicious is also because of the way it is eaten. Only by eating and chewing slowly can you enjoy the taste. If it is eaten as pork, the taste of crab would be lost with shells and meat mixed up in the mouth. Many books are like crabs. Their taste is everlasting, therefore we should read them intensively. Reading over once is not enough; they should be read twice, a third time, and

even ten times. If we do not read so intensively, we are doing something like chewing the whole crab in the mouth.

There are many Chinese sayings referring to reading. There is a clear distinction between the preference for intensive reading to reading extensively. Here are a only a few to show the popular views on reading. Those proverbs indicating intensive reading contain a positive meaning, while those concerning fast reading usually carry a negative connotation, for instance:

"A word equals one thousand pounds of gold";

"Never read without taking up a pen (to make notes)";

"The lightest ink is heavier than memory".

Reading so fast with "Ten lines at a glance" is like "Swallowing dates without taking out the cores"; -- thus, reading fast without understanding is like eating a date with its core. This is much similar to Mu Shuo Ling's analogy of eating crab with its shells.

The above illustrations clarify how intensive reading is regarded in China. It is best expressed by what Matelene, an American teacher, was told by one of her Chinese students -- "to read one book hundred times rather than one hundred books once" (Matalene, 1985, p.80). In China, Chinese and English reading courses have prescribed textbooks. For a whole semester, only one textbook is expected to be memorized rather than to be "read". Usually, a selected passage as text will be studied for a week or more. Reading over and over again is the daily routine both in and out of class, no matter

what level the students have reached. Reading instruction in both English and Chinese actually becomes a combination of teaching vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and style. The examinations in reading courses, to some extent, also determine how students learn and are taught. The receptive learning method of taking knowledge out of the textbook is keyed to the examination of checking what students have put in their heads. In English Intensive Reading tests, for example, vocabulary, grammar and syntax are the major features to be examined. Carelessness in the study of the details of the texts cause failure in one's academic pursuit. To meet the challenge of detailed examinations, the intensive study of text is the method that seems the safest approach to reading. With the philosophy and actual practice of teaching and learning to read intensively, students' interest in seeking the accurate meaning of individual words persists and grows with experience. That's probably the reason why Barnhouse, an American teacher, (1981 in Scovel, 1983) finds that Chinese EFL students are obsessed with vocabulary learning. There is a keen interest in an exact understanding of every word and, correspondingly a low tolerance for ambiguity in Chinese students' reading process.

7. The Value and Belief for Learning

The intensive reading seems more important than merely a method. The underlying meanings are well elaborated by Kuo, a modern Chinese writer, in his article in Chinese, entitled *Specialized In One Thing And Familiarized With One Book By Intensive Reading*. This article is published in 1992 in *Readers Digest*, a popular Chinese magazine. Kuo meant to write this article for those young people uncertain about their future. He suggests

they select the most appropriate and best book to read. They are not to memorize, but to make an intensive study of the book. Kuo said that once they have fully understood the book, they will surely become broad-minded and their wisdom will reach a higher scale. At the same time, Kuo recommends that young people choose a thing most appealing to them and do it with assiduity. No matter what kind of things you choose to do, Kuo commented, once you develop expertise at doing one thing, a part of the world will belong to you.

The idea of reading one book intensively and doing one thing with assiduity is actually a value and belief Chinese people hold for achieving success. These virtues are highly valued and emphasized for learning. Chinese students believe that persistence and hard-work makes learning all worthwhile. Accordingly, short cuts to learning are opposed as intrinsically harmful to disciplined study. Thus, the importance of persistence and self-discipline rather than skills and strategies are emphasized. Since China and Japan are so similar in culture, educational systems, language, and especially the belief in Confucianism what Marshull, a German sociologist, observed about the respect for the value of persistence in Japan would be also true to that of Chinese. Marshull (1988) found that Japanese think proficiency in learning and actually in everything is potential and can be attained only through very persistent training. Special intelligence is not necessary. I believe this to be similar to Chinese practice. There is a well-known Chinese saying which supports this belief: "Drops of water penetrate a stone." The proverb originally meant that consistent drops of water can make a hole through a stone. Later, people use it to describe that with persistence and perseverance one can succeed no matter how difficult the pursuit seems to be.

Chinese students, to some extent, very much need this persistence to memorize thousands of Chinese characters to meet their academic challenges. Due to the advocacy and practice of the spirit of persistence for academic achievement in China, both Field (1984) and Maley (1983), American English teachers who taught Chinese university students in early 1980s, found that the discipline their students have learned in schools make them especially devoted and diligent. Like many other foreign teachers, Field and Maley admire Chinese students' assiduity in and out of class. Yu (1984) also reported that most of foreign teachers experienced great satisfaction with their students' motivation, hard-work and fondness for learning when teaching in China.

Much emphasis on the virtues of persistence and perseverance in learning results in less attention on developing learning strategies. In China, teachers and parents are much more interested in discussing the effort students put into the study than they are discussing learning skills. With regard to reading, Sprenger (1975), a British teacher, suggests that in China reading proficiency is regarded as an activity students develop automatically as they process through school. The development of skills is mainly left to students themselves. Likewise, Mei, a research member of U.S. reading team to China (1985) observed that little research concerning reading strategies had been done to on Chinese reading instruction up to the time they visited China. This is also true to the fact that while the study of learning disabilities in Canadian institutions appears very popular, for example, in China, learning disabilities are not a common area of study. Rather than emphasis on skills and strategies, the belief that "a genius consists of 1% of inspiration and 99% perspiration" is common in China.

8. Summary

In this chapter, I have briefly reviewed Chinese attitudes toward learning and reading, and their belief and the value in learning. Historical, philosophical and cultural factors are considered in this discussion of Chinese EFL students reading habits. Chinese attitudes towards learning greatly affect their methods of reading. In Chapter III, I discuss how Chinese acquire literacy and how their initial experience of learning to read influences their English reading strategies. To simplify this question, I describe and clarify some myths and misconceptions about Chinese characters. To illustrate how Chinese reading is taught, a typical approach to teaching reading is presented.

CHAPTER III

Chinese EFL Students' Initial Literacy Learning

1. Introduction

Chinese attitudes towards learning and reading will naturally affect Chinese literacy teaching and learning. How are Chinese EFL students' English reading strategies affected by their first language reading strategies? To answer this question a discussion of the relevant characteristics of Chinese language is necessary because I think that knowledge of the unique features of the Chinese language and Chinese characters in particular may contribute to a better understanding of Chinese students' initial learning experiences. It would take too long to describe the Chinese language either in a general sense or in detail, so I will only discuss the features of Chinese which are different from English as well as clear up some misconceptions about Chinese learning. My focus is mainly on the discussion relevant to the question of why and how Chinese EFL students form deliberate and intensive reading habits through their Chinese literacy learning. I also introduce the traditional approach to teaching reading in China in order to understand students' initial learning experiences.

2. The Chinese Writing System¹

Chinese is a Sino-Tibetan language, a non-alphabetic language that differs dramatically from English in fundamental respects and particularly in

¹ All the Chinese characters are written in the traditional form; all romanized Chinese are written in the pinyin system, phonetic spelling for Chinese; when the words of an English translation are written literally, they are compared word for word with the Chinese.

the nature of the Chinese writing system. It will be helpful to discuss the distinction between pictographs, ideographs and logographs which have often been used to describe the Chinese writing system. Pictographs are the most primitive in the evolution of writing systems. They have evolved from an extension of picture signs with only modest modification of drawings. Combinations of pictographs may be used to express ideas. These more abstract representations are called ideographs, meaning that they directly present thoughts or ideas. Logographs are symbols representing entire words, in which characters present the minimal meaningful units of the language (morphemes) (Lee et al., 1986).

Written Chinese has been traditionally thought in the West to be pictographic, aiming to imitate mechanically the object signified without any possible inflectional alterations. This is a misconception. Tong (1993), a Chinese specialist, argues that even from the very beginning the Chinese characters obviously did not copy but rather signified things. Here are two well-known examples of the pictorial characters at the original stage, about 1400 B. C. (Newaham, 1973): "sun" and "moon." The character ☉ [sun] was written as a circle with a dot or horizontal line inside, and the character ☾ [moon] was drawn like a crescent with one line. Characters like these, however, did not so much illustrate as only symbolise, "they were 'marks' by which the names of things could be known and remembered" (Watters, 127, cited in Tong, 1993:39). Further, the fact which cannot be ignored concerning this conception about written Chinese is that many ancient pictorial representations of concrete objects or actions can no longer be recognized by the modern Chinese readers after thousands of years of modification and development. The above illustrated characters : ☉ and ☾ evolved from

simplistic marks into styled graphs: 日 and 月 respectively. The meanings of the characters can only be known when taught. If the early writings of this kind of characters could be called pictographic, very few examples today can still be seen as pictures (Newnhan, 1973). It may be fair to say that only a minority of total characters were originally presented in simple pictographs.

John DeFrancis, "one of the world's leading scholars on the Chinese language" (Sheridan, 1990:142), made a thorough study of Chinese characters (1984). With regard to the nature of the Chinese writing system, DeFrancis indicates that the concept that Chinese is an ideographic system of writing is more popular in the West, even among specialists. Tong (1993) also observed that Chinese scripts as ideographs was long assumed in the West. The concept of Chinese writing as a means of conveying ideas regardless of speech originated in the writings of Catholic missionaries from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In the huge eighteenth century collection of missionary reports and essays entitled *Memoires concernend l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usage, et des Chinois, par les missionries de Pekin*, an article discussing Chinese characters addressed popular views about Chinese language as follows:

They are composed of symbols and images, and that those symbols and images, not having any sound, can be read in all languages, and form a sort of intellectual painting, a metaphysical and ideal algebra, which conveys through by analogy, by relation, by convention, and so on.

[Memoires 1776:24; cited in DeFrancis 1984:134.]

A modern Western philosopher, Scharfstein's (1974) assumption of Chinese as ideograph is no more sophisticated than the early missionaries' comments. In his book *The Mind of China*, Scarfstein illustrated his assumption through a few examples such as a short horizontal line: — means "one", and the two such parallel lines: = mean "two." Further examples are illustrated by combining or assembling characters: two trees 林 is "wood," and a sun and moon together is 明 [bright]. Then, with only a few more examples Scharfstein concluded the discussion of Chinese characters like this:

Obviously, the characters so far described mean whatever they do regardless of how they are pronounced. They no more depend on pronunciation than the pointing hand we use on sight to mean "in the direction", as than numerals, which have the same meaning in English, French, and German, or even than the red and green lights that mean, respectively "stop" and "go."

(p. 133)

Scharfstein's conclusion about Chinese writing seems far beyond the real nature of the Chinese writing, but these kinds of simplistic notions about Chinese language are often seen in Western literature. John DeFrancis (1984) found it curious that the misconceptions about Chinese writing were so widely held that no special name appeared to have coined for it. He points out that the error of exaggerating the pictographic and hence semantic aspect of Chinese characters may be due to a first impression of the characters when both students of Chinese and the public at large introduced the Chinese writing system by names of some of the simplest and most interesting

pictographs such as 𦍋 [sheep], 子 [son], 口, [mouth], 山 [hill], 水 [water] etc., though the modern characters have greatly changed to other forms: 羊, 子, 口, 山, 水. It is this kind of profound initial impression which may explain the oversight of the majority of characters that are neither pictographic nor ideographic.

In fact, research data confirms that only 10% in the total vocabulary of Chinese can be traced back to the original pictographs and ideographs, of these, 5% are represented by simple pictographs or ideographs, and 5% are compound ideographs (Martin, 1972). Thus 90% of all Chinese words are phonetic compounds. Of the specific names proposed for Chinese characters, the designation "logographs" is considered the best to describe the nature of the Chinese writing system (for example, see Gwinn et al., 1993; Hudson-Ross and Dong, 1990; and Lee et al., 1986). Although it may be a more appropriate name for the Chinese characters, there are disagreements over the term. The disagreement lies in the failure to distinguish that the Chinese language has progressed from monosyllabic words to multisyllabic ones for various reasons. In the words 珊瑚 for "coral" and 蝴蝶 for "butterfly", for instance, the individual characters do not exist in current spoken Chinese. Tong (1993) points out that in the process of transformation, many monosyllabic characters are no longer individual words, but become root morphemes. DeFrancis (1984), therefore, recommends the name "morphosyllabic" as an improvement over the system for the Chinese characters. Due to the confusions about the Chinese writing system arising from the misconceptions about the language, DeFrancis suggests that we simply refer to the Chinese writing system as "Chinese characters". DeFrancis' arguments over this controversial issue is based on his careful

observations and thorough studies of the Chinese language. As far as the discussion on the nature of the Chinese characters is concerned, his arguments are insightful and convincing and are lucidly presented in his several books on Chinese language (1950, 1984, 1989), and in *Facts and Fantasy in Chinese* in particular.

Rather than perpetuating misunderstanding about the Chinese writing system I use "Chinese characters" to present written Chinese. It is the unique features of the Chinese characters that affects Chinese students' literacy acquisition.

3. The Challenge of Learning Chinese Characters









China's schools are organized as a 6-3-3 system except for some experimental schools: 6 years of elementary school, 3 years of junior high school, and 3 years of senior high school. Elementary school is compulsory nation wide, and local governments require compulsory junior high school in some regions. Beginning in 1994, Chinese children are required to go to school 5 1/2 days per week down from 6. Given the complexity of the language and also the Chinese belief in learning and reading, Jiang (1985) suggests that character recognition instruction is a vital ingredient of the foundation of Chinese language education. Accordingly, literacy instruction first requires students to learn the characters. It is reported that 1,000 may be acquired in the first year, and 2,000 in the second year (Jiang, 1985). Thus, the first two years of schooling are devoted to character recognition. Only when they have reached the third grade with a vocabulary of about 2,000 characters, do they begin learning to write beyond sentence level.

The school curriculum reflects both the importance as well as the difficulty of learning to read and write in Chinese. Students spend more time on Chinese language than on any other class. The curriculum in the lower grades of elementary school is heavily geared toward reading and language activities. Nearly 50% of the class time is devoted to Chinese (Garson, 1990).

Chinese character recognition remains a hard task for first graders who are expected to exert great effort in learning the first 630 Chinese characters so that they can take the beginning steps in reading and writing (Six Year Chinese Language Program, Books 1-4, 1983-84) (Sheridan, 1991). They learn the characters with Pinyin, the Chinese phonics as an aid, and their pronunciation in *putonghua* Standard Spoken Chinese, known as Mandarin in the West. In the beginning, they could be expected to acquire only 3 to 5 characters and no more than 6 to 7 in a session even after they have acquired some learning. During the first year, children learn about 19 new characters a week. Beginning reading passages must use words made up of few characters, and using simple sentences. As students progress, more characters are added, but still, they are offered nothing but the simple and short sentences. A lot of in-class and out-of class practice in reading and writing the characters is required for students at lower grades. More than half of the 3,000 characters learned in elementary school are learned in the first grades of the six years of elementary school. Many of the characters are reintroduced in later grades as parts of other characters (Sheridan, 1990).

Elementary school graduates in China are expected to have learned anywhere from 2,800 to 3,500 characters (Sheridan, 1981), among which 2,500 should be mastered with four abilities: *si hui* (to be able to correctly read their

sounds, to recognize their forms, to understand their meanings and to use them skillfully) (Dai and Lu, 1985). In learning the characters, children must memorize (a) the shape of each character, (b) the way of writing, (c) the meaning of the character, and (d) the pronunciation of the character, as well as Pinyin, the Chinese Alphabetic Phonetics. I discuss how an elementary student is expected to master about 2,500 characters with the four requirements. Illustrations and clarifications of learning Chinese characters are made as well.

Chinese characters are not alphabetic. Each character has its own form and it can neither be read according to its form nor written according to its sound. Learning the characters, the student first learn the shape of each character, ie., how the character is constructed from basic units which are called "strokes". The strokes are generally categorized into eight groups as dots , , lines , , and hooks , , , to name three. These strokes, with no special significance are merely the building units of characters. Characters are formed with different strokes and the strokes of the characters vary in number from 1 as in 一 [one] to more than 20 as in 鼻  [snuffling]. Traditionally, in dictionaries characters are arranged by the number of strokes. The form of the characters has been built up unsystematically through the centuries, and some are very intricate. Many characters contain more than 10 strokes. Take the 2,000 commonly used Chinese characters publicized by the Chinese Ministry of Education as an example: 221 of them contain more than 17 strokes and an average characters has 11.2 strokes (Dai, 1985). Learning the shapes of hundreds of different characters calls for much memorization.

Apart from memorizing the exact strokes of each character, students must learn both the order and geometric position of strokes in the language and the way to write them appropriately, which are considered very important. A few characters are illustrated with the correct sequence of writing in appendix 1. Memorizing the exact strokes of thousands of Chinese characters makes becoming literate in Chinese a laborious task (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1993).

In terms of learning the meaning of Chinese characters, many Westerners described that the child's tasks in learning to read are to discriminate the pattern of lines that constitute a character and then to memorize the meaning attached to this pattern (Lee et al., 1986). A Chinese character, however, does not have a unitary, fixed meaning. Take the character 風 ²*feng* (1) as an example, the same character can have different meanings in different words. When the character is written alone, one of its meanings is "wind." When it is combined with 塵 *cheng*, (2) which means "dust or dirt," the pair 風塵 means "travel fatigue." When it is combined with 發 *fa* (1) meaning "send out, issue", the word 風發 represented is "energetic." The character can also mean "style" 風格, when combined with 格 *ge* (3). When paired with 險 *xian* (3), meaning "dangerous" in English, the combination means "peril, risk." The character can refer to the tool -- pneumatic "drill" when paired with 鑽 *zhuan* (4), and when paired with 俗 *su* (2), the combination means "custom." The character can also become four character idioms when being combined with three other characters, such

² To distinguish pinyin, the Chinese phonetic spelling, from English words, pinyin is written in italics, sometimes with its tones indicated in parenthesis if it is necessary.

as 風華正茂 *feng* (1) *hua* (2) *zheng* (4) *mou* (4) and 風燭殘年 *feng* (1) *zhu*(2) *chan* (3) *nian* (3). These idioms mean "in one's prime time" and "old and ailing like a candle guttering in the wind" respectively. These are only a few examples out of 124 under the entry of 風 [wind] in the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (1983: 327 - 331). Obviously, knowing one of the meanings of a Chinese character does not necessarily guarantee the reader that it will easily discern the meaning of words of which any particular character is a part (Lee et al., 1986). This is similar to learning an English word like "look." The word has a dozen of different meanings when combined with other words such as: "look after", "look for", "look into", "look out for", "look forward to" and so on.

Another misconception stemming from the notion of ideographs in Chinese characters is that each character can be broken down into two parts: the left one is called radical yielding information about meaning, and the right component seen as specifier revealing information about pronunciation. For example, in the character 地 the left radical stands for "ground" and thus gives us a clue that the character might be connected with earth. But this is a very general piece of information; scores of characters contain this radical like 坡 *po* (1) [slope], 坪 *ping* (2) [meadow], 坑 *keng* (1) [hole in the ground] etc, usually representing something that has to do with earth and structure. Similarly, radicals such as 忄 which indicates feelings, or 金 which appears in characters concerned with metals, again pertain to very broad categories that give only vague cues about meaning, and the specific meanings can not be made out by their forms. The traditional set consists of 214 radicals (Wang, 1973), and many of them, however, even do not provide abstract meanings. The left radicals in many cases fail to provide the general

meanings, for example, the previously illustrated component 土 [earth] in the character 壞 *huai* (4), when paired with 不 *bu* (4) [no]. The meaning of the whole character means "bad" which has nothing to do with "earth." Another example is the character 杯 *bei* (1) for "cup." It has a wood radical, though few cups are now made of wood. Thus, learning one meaning for a character is only the beginning. In order to be a skilled reader of Chinese a much more complex, rich, and subtle set of meanings must be acquired.

Learning the pronunciation of the character is as important as learning its meaning. The feature that adds to the importance in learning the correct pronunciation of characters is the tones of *putonghua*. Since the language reform of 1958, *putonghua*, based on the dialect in Beijing, the northern dialect, has been emphasized to be used in instruction as a means of unifying pronunciation in China. It is well known that people speaking different dialects can hardly communicate. For instance, Cantonese and Beijingers are mutually unintelligible. Therefore, learning to pronounce correctly *putonghua* is much stressed in teaching the language. In contrast to English, *putonghua* has phonemically distinct 4 tones. For example, 通 *tong* (tone 1) means "through"; 同 *tong* (tone 2) means "together;" 桶 *tong* (tone 3) means "tub;" 痛 *tong* (tone 4) means "pain."

Besides, the components of the character do not necessarily provide cues about pronunciation, and only in some cases can we deduce meaning from contribution of elements within or between characters. For example, the right component (the phonetic) of the character provides information about pronunciation as the case for the right-hand component 誠 *cheng* (3) is pronounced 成 *cheng* (3). Unfortunately, this type of aid to pronunciation

occurs only in a limited number of characters. For most characters, the pronunciations of the characters are not necessarily identical to the right radicals. This can be illustrated with several other characters with the component 土: first, for the character 坡 the pronunciation of the right component is 皮 *pi* (2). The pronunciation of the whole character, however, is 坡 *po* (1). In other cases there is no relation between the pronunciation of the right component and the pronunciation of the character. In 地, the right portion is pronounced as 也 *ye* (3), the word reads 地 *di* (4). Another example is the character: 詣 if read according to its right portion, the character should be pronounced as 旨 *zi* (3), but the character is read as 詣 *yi* (4). "Yi" is the ancient pronunciation of the right component. Thus, even though in this case the right component carries information about pronunciation, the information is of little value to the contemporary reader. With regard to the question of losing the meaning or sound relationships in characters, Shi Shi (1957), a Chinese scholar, points out it is due to the change from an ancient to a modern Chinese language over thousands of years. The fact that many radicals have gradually lost their significance and the relation between script and ideas in written Chinese has become increasingly complicated.

Therefore, reading according to the pronunciations of the right radicals and guessing meanings from the form is discouraged in learning to read in Chinese. Learning one meaning and one pronunciation for a character is only the beginning. The humorous name "White Words Expert" is often given to those who misread characters according to the pronunciation of a radical. The word "white" here is a pun because characters for white, wrong or in vain are all pronounced *bai* (2). To know the correct pronunciation and specific meanings of a word, one relies on the dictionary and being

taught. Looking up in the dictionary for pronunciation and meaning is encouraged from childhood. For learning characters, inventive writing and guessing the meaning are discouraged, and they are even considered most detrimental to learning, while accuracy in learning is stressed throughout Chinese literacy learning. As a result, it is common to see that a textbook is learned by repeated practice of reading and writing separate characters (Huston and Dong, 1990). And it is by means of persistent practice and memorization that Chinese students learn to be *sihui* with the thousands of characters.

In order to be considered functionally literate, one has to know more than 4,000 characters. A knowledge of 4,000 to 7,000 characters enables one to read a newspaper (Wang, 1973). The most complete ancient dictionary, the Kangxi Dictionary (A.D. 1716) lists 40,545 different characters (Martin, 1972). The number of the Chinese characters required for a Chinese literate, compared with that of her English counterparts, seems much less if based on the notion that a word in Chinese is represented by a single character. Therefore, it is assumed that it is easier to learn to read in Chinese than in English. Writers such as Rosin and Gleitman (in Lee et al. 1986) suggest that readers of English have to learn far more words than do the Chinese. Their conclusion might be correct if we only consider the number of words an average North American high school student knows, ie., 46,000 words or so (Chao et al., 1967), which is about ten times of that of a Chinese literate. But a Chinese character is not typically equivalent to a word. Most words in modern Chinese are made up of two or more characters. For example, the Chinese word for "television" consists of two characters: 電 [electric] and 視 [vision]. The word "library" is composed of three separate characters: 圖書館

meaning "picture-book-building." Knowing 4,000 characters, as explained by Lee et al. (1986), makes it possible to learn many thousands of words that can be derived from combinations of the characters. Husdon-Ross (1990), an American language professor who made a study in a Chinese classroom of an elementary school in China, reported that a Grade 6 student is supposed to learn about 3,000 characters, which can help to learn 50,000 words and phrases. Accordingly, Chinese may have to learn more words in order to become literate.

4. Chinese Language Reform

The unique formulation of the Chinese characters makes learning the written language quite difficult (Hudson and Dong, 1990). Due to the time and effort in trying to memorize the complicated characters, learning Chinese is often considered the most difficult of the world's languages to learn to read (Wang, 1973). Guo, Moruo (1955), the late Chairman of the Chinese Academy and Science, stated that it takes about two years longer for students learning to read Chinese script than for students reading a phonetic script. This argument was reinforced by Wu, Yuzhang (1955), a leading educator and specialist in language. Wu points out that the difficulty in learning the characters is truly a heavy burden on childhood and adult education, and on the effort to wipe out illiteracy in China.

Hence, there have been many complaints about the difficulty of learning Chinese characters throughout Chinese history, especially since the introduction of the European languages. It was held by quite a number of Chinese specialists and Western sinologists that only by means of language

reform can the problem be solved (Cao, 1949; DeFrancis, 1950, 1984 and 1990; Guo, 1951; Newnham, 1973; Shen, 1955; Wei, 1957; Wu, 1955, etc). Beginning with the 1911 Revolution, heated, controversial arguments over the issue of the language reform have contributed to the reform of the Chinese writing system (Wu, 1950). With the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, the effort for the language reform began anew, and was greatly encouraged by the late Chairman Mao Zedong's much repeated statement (1951): "The Chinese writing system must be reformed in the direction of alphabetic writing which is commonly used throughout the world" (in Wu, 1950). The late Premier Zhou Enlai (1958) put forward three tasks of the reform of the Chinese writing system: to simplify Chinese characters, to popularize *Putonghua*, and to carry out the Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet. To simplify Chinese characters is to have some commonly used characters simplified by reducing the number of strokes. But the fundamental body of characters remains unchanged.

It is widely acknowledged that the simplification in strokes of 517 Chinese characters since 1956 (Li, 1983) cannot completely reduce the difficult of learning Chinese characters. In Hong Kong and Taiwan, the simplification of Chinese characters, however, are considered nonstandard and therefore, the traditional forms are still used. Publications outside of China all retain the complex strokes of characters. The overseas Chinese schools, such as the those in the greater Vancouver areas, also teach the Chinese characters in traditional forms. Hence, becoming a skilled reader in Chinese is a most complicated experience.

5. Chinese Characters Instruction

Owing to the features of the Chinese language, the way to approach reading is different from that of English as observed by Husdon (1990). She noticed that children reading in a phonetic language such as English learn to derive the meaning of a new word by deciphering first letters, then sound, and finally meaning, while the Chinese language requires a different approach: first character, then meaning and finally sound. As a result, it is common to see an American student read a new word out loud to check it out by ear. A Chinese student, on the other hand, will sketch a character in the air or on his hand, to unravel a puzzling phonograph.

A typical approach to characters instruction, observed by Husdon in a Grade 2 classroom as follows:

... In the standard reading lesson, the teacher focused on 8 to 10 vocabulary bits, or characters in the Chinese written system. These were usually inscribed in perfect calligraphy with coloured chalks on her portable chalkboard. Below each character, the Pinyin version of the word or word part appeared in another color or chalk. With a wooden pointer, the teacher gradually explicated the components of each character and now and then pointed to the Pinyin version for children to pronounce together.

... She spoke clearly to the children but without a smile throughout most of the lessons, calling on individual children to stand and recite or on the whole group to read aloud in unison. Now and then all children were asked to read aloud, but at their own paces. The uproar and confusion was funny to Western ears, but according to Chinese observers, this

encourages children to pay attention to what they read and aids comprehension.

(1990: 118)

Unger (1977), an American educator, by interviewing various post Cultural Revolution teachers in China, found that not many techniques had changed for teaching elementary school reading classes since the teachers themselves were students. Unger was told that the methods for teaching were in fact highly reminiscent of what the teachers themselves had been introduced to as students during their schooling. One young rural teacher explained the technique to him in detail:

The teacher puts the new news from the primer on the blackboard. The whole class reads these several times in class, and their meaning is explained several times to pupils. The words are chanted aloud by the whole class in unison. I then also had them answer the questions that are in the primer. I sometimes had pupils repeat these aloud together. I also had the pupils memorize passages and lessons, such as the poems that are in the primers. The pupils would be asked to memorize some new passages every few days, as they reached a new chapter, to memorize word-by-word the more important parts of it. The amount was not set, say having to memorize so many times a week or so many passages, but was rather determined by the demands of the textbook. Of course, we memorized more when I was a child,...

(p. 14-15)

The technique for teaching elementary schools is very much the same in all schools. Upper grade children learn to read more difficult words and

phrases. Repeated reading and writing the learned characters are the means of reinforcing recognition of characters. Reading and especially writing of characters is the routine homework for primary students. Usually, students are required to copy the learned characters repeatedly. A Western journalist (reported in Unger, 1977) who observed in an elementary school reading class, found that for homework the pupils had been asked the night before to copy out their lesson of a few hundred characters three times. The reporter's hands began to tire before he finished copying only about a thousand characters. He complained sharply that such home work constituted an unwholesome burden on children and it did harm rather than good to the quality of schooling. Contrary to his opinion, Unger (1977) found that parents and educators complained that the students nowadays were not studying enough. Most parents and or grandparents take the traditional practices and beliefs as the "natural" way for things to be. In addition to the amount of practice in writing, correctness and neatness are stressed and valued in writing. It is through this means -- persistently writing and reading the words, phrases, and passages being studied -- that a child learns both to write and read (Unger, 1977).

6. Traditional Chinese Reading Instruction

After the acquisition of about two thousand basic Chinese characters, meaningful and interesting texts such as stories are introduced. The teaching of Chinese reading is usually conducted in the traditional approach, which has been used for over 1,000 years in China. It is called 4 step process and is widely used in upper grades of elementary schools and typically in secondary

schools: (1) teaching characters and words, (2) teaching paragraphs, (3) teaching main ideas and (4) teaching writing style (Li, 1984. Chinese version).

The first step emphasizes students' continuity of learning new characters and words because character instruction is considered as the basis for language instruction, and character recognition as premise for reading and writing. Thus, reading is seen as a way to learn or be exposed to new characters. Students are helped to recognize new characters and to consolidate the learned words through instruction. Correct pronunciation and sound knowledge of each character is expected to be mastered. Teachers pay special attention to explaining those commonly used expressive characters and words with deep connotations. Equal attention is given to those complex sentence structures. The detailed analysis and explanation of characters, phrases and sentence relationships are meant to enrich students' vocabulary and improve sentence-writing ability.

The second step focuses on paragraph instruction. This step is conducted after teachers' detailed explanation and analysis of new characters and words. To cultivate students' ability to comprehend and think logically, teachers help students divide paragraphs correctly, understand the inner relationships between paragraphs and understand the functions of paragraphs in the whole passage.

In the third step, students are led to understand the main idea as well as the morality of story. Ideological education is conducted at this step. The students are expected to study morality and learn from it. A common practice is to ask students to give a brief summary or to discuss their own related

experiences. Bowell (1985), a British educator who did a reading survey in China, found that much of the material in the students' readers was of a historical nature including many classic poems, folk tales and stories. Unger (1977) also noticed that most of the lessons contained moral principles, starting with the elementary grades and continuing all the way through schooling. He comments that this is not an innovation of socialist China as the Chinese have traditionally perceived education as essentially the teaching of morality. This practice of promoting moral principles, values and desirable behaviour does not differ from educational practice before 1949, the founding of the People's Republic of China. They are also common in textbooks published in Taiwan and Hong Kong (Martin, 1975; Sheridan 1981; and Unger, 1977).

The fourth step is to have students appreciate the style of the passage learned. This step clarifies details in the text, and also encourages the habit of reading between the lines for the author's choice of words, intention, style, and viewpoint. Writing skills are often taught at this step.

Therefore, reading instruction in Chinese functions in three ways: learning language; appreciation of the style; and moral education. Of the four steps, learning the language and learning about the use of language are the most important. This can be seen in the exercises for the text designed for the fifth grade reader *Fleeting Time* (see Appendix 2) by Zu, Ziqing (in Mei, 1985). These are the exercises that the students are expected to complete in preparation for the text and exercises to be completed as homework:

Preparation

1. Look up the following words in the dictionary. Give their meanings and romanize the underlined characters (in Pin Yin):

kongxu cencen shanshan zhewan
xie nuo rong ningran

2. Meaning of new expressions:
 - (1) congcong – hurriedly
 - (2) tou cen cen -- sweat streaming down the head
 - (3) shanshan – to weep
3. Read aloud the text.
4. "Time" cannot be seen or touched. Read carefully the third paragraph and explain how the author makes you feel that "time" flies.

Homework

1. Read and write the following expressions:

congcong yanzi yangliu taohua
qingyan nuoyi xuanzhuan ningran
juecha zhewan baowu hengji
tanxi linglinglili

2. Find the parallel sentences in this article and write them down.
3. Read the following paragraphs and answer the questions: "Eight thousand days have already slipped through my fingers. Like a drop of water on the point of a needle which drips into the ocean, my days have dripped noiselessly into the stream of time, leaving not a trace behind."

How many years is "eight thousand days" and what does it refer to?

What is like "a drop of water...?"

"My days have dripped noiselessly into the stream of time" -- What does this mean?

"Leaving not a trace behind" -- What does this mean? What is the author referring to?

4. *Recite* the text (Read the text from memory).

7. Textbooks and Rote Learning

The traditional Chinese method for teaching reading is much in line with the curriculum itself. In Chinese curriculum, classics as well as modern literature are the major components of textbooks, which are considered exemplary writings for study. For instance, secondary school students are expected to learn no more than 20 passages in a semester (about half a year). Taking the time spent on learning the texts into consideration, we can imagine how detailed and intensive this teaching approach can be.

Another factor which accounts for the intensive teaching method is the amount of Chinese classics the textbooks contain. It is well known that after the May Fourth Movement in 1919, the classical written style was replaced by *Baihua* (Vernacular) styles of writing. All the publications and textbooks are written in vernacular languages. Due to the changing of the language, some classics are so foreign to modern readers, they have to be studied in the way as a foreign language is taught via grammar-translation method. One example shows the difficulty of studying the Chinese classics: the test of classic Chinese can be equally assessed as that of a foreign language for professional promotion. In China, those who want to upgrade their professional titles, such as from lecturer to professor, or from technician to engineer, have to pass a foreign language examination as one of the criterion for promotion. Those whose professions are specialized in Chinese traditional medicine, library, and anthropology, for instance, can choose to take either a foreign language test or an examination on Chinese classics. Thus, studying of the Chinese classics presents a great difficulty in learning the textbooks.

Command of the succinctness of the classic style remains a deeply admired quality of an intellectual in China. Beginning in elementary grades, students learn and memorize a considerable amount of classical Chinese literature. As the meaning of words and the style of writing are different from those in modern Chinese, teachers are "focusing particular attention on the wording of the texts, reinterpreting the meaning of the Classics through a minute analysis of the words and phrases" (Lehmann, 1975:8). More as a matter of tradition than anything else, oral reading and repeated reading of text is the predominant method for dealing with practice.

Considerable emphasis continues to be placed upon rote learning in primary school reading classes and even in higher grades. The word "memorization" in Chinese, Unger (1977) found, entails more than it does in English. Before Unger commenced interviewing teachers in Hong Kong schools, he had always thought of memorization in American terms: the learning of facts big and small, such as when a battle occurred, or the recitation of short poems. He later got to know that when the Chinese speak of memorizing, they mean much more. "Memorization of a text" for the Chinese means the actual commitment to memory of whole passages, sometimes pages on end, word for word. The Chinese word *beishu* -- the literal translation of which is "to recite the text from memory" -- often means precisely that passage. Memorization of characters as well as a whole passage is a common practice in students' learning process. It is thought that the whole phrases which reflect a certain style in the Chinese oral and written tradition and the practice of memorization can help students develop writing style through modeling. Unger (1977) observed that children in the upper grades of primary school were requested, sometimes for their daily homework, to memorize perhaps an entire chapter line by line. The issue of memorization as a teaching method is so significant in China that even Mao Zedong broached the subject, objecting to "stuffing" the students "like Peking ducks" (Sheridan, 1981).

There are several reasons for the extraordinary stress on memorization. In addition to the nature of Chinese characters that require students to read and write almost endless streams of characters, the very selection of texts accounts for the memorization. The older generation of distinguished writers

admit that their own memorization of ancient poems and proses as primary-school youngsters has been reflected in a more readable, lively, and creative writing style as adults (Unger, 1977). Memorization is seen by many Chinese as flowing from discipline and proficiency. It was and still is the belief that once the craft becomes mastered through precise repeated practice using commendable models, creative freedom would emerge within the bounds of discipline, a freedom derived through familiarity with the usage. This idea extends to the learning of a prose style: a polished but flexible use of prose is, according to this traditional but still current notion, to be built up from the child's memorized mastery of paragraphs from his reading texts. In both elementary and secondary schools Chinese students and their teachers sometimes continue to see learning as a similar project: possession of the discipline to absorb words, phrases, and whole chapters. This learning process continues, in fact, in Chinese literature classes all the way through university.

8. Summary

In this chapter I have presented a few rudimentary explanations about how Chinese students learn to read and write in Chinese. I choose to discuss the nature of the Chinese writing system first in order to provide a better understanding of how Chinese students become literate and, moreover, why their initial learning experiences affect their English reading strategies. In addition, the traditional process of teaching Chinese reading is briefly discussed. Of the means of achieving literacy and language proficiency commonly practiced in schools, memorization is particularly discussed. In Chapter Four, I discuss the way English is taught in China, focusing on the Chinese English teaching method -- Intensive Reading. I examine the

intensive reading method from historical, political and educational perspectives.

CHAPTER IV

English Reading Instruction in China

1. Introduction

Chinese EFL students' reading methods are also influenced by the way they are taught to read in English. To discuss the English language teaching going on in hundreds of thousands of Chinese classes involving millions of students seems too big a topic for one chapter; thus I introduce general approaches to English instruction in China, "Intensive Reading" in particular, the most widely used approach to teaching English in China. I examine the reasons why the method of Intensive Reading has been taught, and "still prevails in Chinese English education" (Li, 1990:110) from historical, political and educational perspectives. Little research has been done on this topic which, I think, is very important to understand Chinese approaches to learning and teaching to read in English. Discussion here focuses on the specific characteristics of English teaching in China which influence Chinese EFL students' reading methods.

2. Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Chinese Secondary Schools

With the increasing demand for learning English, the language is now one of the three major subjects in secondary schools and in some primary schools. Students receive five or six class hours of English instruction per week in secondary schools. The Ministry of Education has clearly defined the aims, objectives, and linguistic criteria of English teaching for each grade level (Wang, 1986). After six years of English learning in secondary schools, students are required to have mastered a vocabulary of about 2,000 most

frequently used words, and to have a basic knowledge of English grammar. They are supposed to be able to read aloud with acceptable pronunciation and intonation and to read simple English texts with understanding as well as to translate Chinese sentences into English, and vice versa. English is a major part of matriculation examinations and counts heavily in the entrance examination for college and university. The small percentage of high school graduates, about 4 percent of the total high school population (Ford, 1988), who pass the entrance examination, go on to a four year university education.

Regarding the question of how English is taught in Chinese secondary schools, in 1983, Tang Lixing, the author of *TEFL in China*, claimed that it was not easy to give a fully satisfactory description of how English was taught in Chinese schools though he taught English in secondary school in Shanghai for ten years himself and worked as the head of Shanghai district English teaching research group. His responsibility for the teaching research group was overseeing the routine teaching work and research in 200 elementary and secondary schools in that district. To know better about how English is typically taught in Chinese secondary schools Tang (1983) visited many schools, such as municipal key schools, district key schools¹ and regular schools. He observed English classes at all grade levels and interviewed both teachers and students. He also sent questionnaires on the present teaching of English, with particular regard to methodology, to over a hundred students and teachers of English in Shanghai. From his thorough research on English teaching in secondary schools, Tang came to the conclusion that most

¹ Students in secondary schools are grouped to these three levels of schools according to their examination scores when graduating from either primary or junior high schools. The key schools are the best, and only four percent of secondary schools are key schools (Ross, 1993). Most students go to regular schools.

secondary school teachers of English in China thought the most important aspect of English teaching was to teach the commonly used vocabulary and essential grammar rules. The teachers consider reading instruction more important than teaching of listening and speaking English because most students will not be English professionals or involved in a job that requires communicating directly with native English speakers. To develop students' reading abilities, teachers feel that they should devote all or most of the time to teaching reading, specifically, vocabulary and grammar. Consequently, most teachers of English have been using the grammar-translation method for teaching and have neglected developing their students' communicative skills.

Tang's (1983) description of a senior high school classroom in which he observed, illustrates the approach used in classrooms:

This is a junior high III class in a district key school in Shanghai. The teacher is a graduate of a three-year English training course from a well-known university with five years' teaching experience. The textbook was junior high Textbook Six. The class type was teaching the text, and the class size was about fifty [The normal population in a class in Chinese secondary schools is about fifty students].

The class procedure was :

- 1) Statement of the aim (1 minute).

- 2) Reading of the new words and expressions in the text. First the teacher led the class to read once, then she asked the class to read in chorus (4 minutes).

3) Translation of the text (12 minutes). The teacher read the text sentence by sentence, and individual students were called to translate each sentence into Chinese.

4) Reading of the text (13 minutes). The teacher first gave the class five minutes to read the text by themselves. Then she asked individuals to read the text paragraph by paragraph.

5) Explanation of language points (19 minutes). The teacher pointed out some language points to the students, and gave some examples. At one time she asked the students to do some oral translation from Chinese into English; at another, from English into Chinese. Quick students took notes while slow ones just listened. The teacher had not been able to finish explaining the text before the bell rang for recess.

(p. 62-63).

The teacher was asked if she always did her text in this way. The answer was definite. The teacher was going to finish explaining the text in the next period, then she would ask questions based on the text. She seldom let students listen to the recording of the text. "I want them to understand and translate the text. I aim at improving their reading ability" explained the teacher (Tang, 1983, p.63).

Hu (1990), instructor of English in a teacher's college in Anhui Province of China, observed English teaching in Chinese secondary schools and agreed with Tang. Hu noted that most teachers of English in China assumed that all students require for English learning is a good command of grammar and a large vocabulary. He described the general sequence of teaching each English lesson in secondary schools as follows:

First, the students read aloud the new words and expressions after the teacher by imitating their teacher. The teacher tries to help them to remember the Chinese meaning of each word by reading it mechanically again and again; then, having translated them one by one, the students read the pattern drills in the same way with the same purpose.

Then the teacher begins to deal with the text, sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph: explaining the language points, dwelling upon the grammar rules, analyzing the sentences, providing the Chinese equivalents, giving examples to show the usage of certain words and expressions. This procedure is most time-consuming. Sometimes, teaching only one short paragraph can take a whole period of 45-50 minutes.

The next thing is to teach the grammar rules. In each lesson there are usually two or three of these rules. The teacher explains and illustrates them by pointing to examples in the text or by taking examples from dictionaries or grammar books. Finally, the written exercises [to the text] are done [either orally or by written forms] by filling in the blanks with proper verbs, or adverbs, or adjectives; translating sentences into Chinese or vice versa; or doing multiple choice exercises (p. 61).

Tang (1983) indicates that the typical and traditional way to teach the text is to do a lot of translation and explanation, but little listening, and speaking English. Both Tang (1983) and Hu (1990) observed that there have been a few dissenting voices about teaching listening and speaking in secondary schools. The teachers' reasons for ignoring speaking and hearing are very simple: their main objective is to develop students' reading ability. With the aim of meeting the reading objective, grammar-translation is thought to be the best approach for teaching by many teachers.

3. English Instruction in Chinese Universities

At universities, English as a foreign language is a compulsory subject for all students no matter what their majors are. English is taught at least two academic years for over 400 periods² to both science and humanities students (Chen, 1983). Students cannot obtain their degrees or become postgraduate students if they fail the English exam. University students majoring in English will receive four years of formal education in English. They spend the major part of their schooling on it.

3.1 English Courses

Students in most universities in China take a common core curriculum throughout the undergraduate program, with few electives available. The courses taught to English majors at Chinese universities are basically similar though some differences exist in selections of materials and emphases on ability training according to their prospective professionals. The Teaching Syllabi issued by the State Education Commission usually serve as guidance for course planning. An average English major student in a key university for example would probably follow a course of study consisting of the following components: (Dzau, 1990):

Intensive Reading

6-8 periods of 45-50 minutes per week for 1st and 2nd year students, but sometimes as many as 10 periods a week. 3rd year students and perhaps 4th year students have 4-6 periods per

² A class period at university is 50 minutes, while in elementary and secondary schools it is 45 minutes.

week for Intensive Reading with 2-3 periods a week for an introductory course in English and American Literature.

Extensive Reading

2-3 periods per week for 1st and 2nd year students; 3rd and 4th year students have an advanced level reading course, such as one called *Reading from the Foreign Press*.

Oral English

2 periods per week

English Grammar

1-2 periods per week

Composition and/or Translation

1-2 periods per week in some schools for 1-3 years, depending on the availability of teachers

Total: 14-16 periods per week (p. 42).

In China, those major courses for English majors are generally alike at universities with slight differences in distribution of teaching periods. Other courses are also available such as: *Introduction to Linguistics, Chinese, Politics, Physical Education* and so on, each with 2-4 periods per week. For the program to prepare students to become teachers of English at secondary or collegiate level, *Introduction to Educational Psychology, and Pedagogy* are taught in Chinese through the Department of Education, whose responsibility is to train prospective educational administrators. *English Teaching Methodology* is usually taught in 2 periods per week by a faculty member from the English Department. Each course is usually completed within one semester.

3. 2 Intensive Reading

Judging from the time devoted to English teaching to English major students at universities, it is obvious that Chinese place reading at the core of their English curriculum, specifically, Intensive Reading (Tinberg, 1986). Dzau (1990) points out that Intensive Reading has been regarded as the core course in universities, with few exceptions, since the 1950s. Dzau suggests that the course is expected to be an integrated spoken and written English Language course where the meaning and use of words and practical knowledge or use of grammar are taught in relation to the text studied. This is the course where the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening comprehension are practised and a fifth skill, translation, is also expected to be developed. Besides, literature study is given the next largest amount of time, and it overshadows basic skills when students are in their fourth year. Thus, the course being described as "covering everything" by a Chinese teacher of English is not hyperbole at all (Ford, 1988). Due to the challenge to teach all the language skills and knowledge of literature, usually the best and most experienced teachers are assigned to teach the Intensive Reading Course, and thus its status is raised even more. Dzau indicates (1990) that the course is so important that English Language teaching in China cannot be understood without knowing about the teaching materials and the teaching methods.

3.3 Teaching Materials

Students in China learn English through textbooks as they "remain a crutch for both the teacher and students" (Tang, 1983, p. 68). The English texts for reading are mostly short stories, descriptive passages, dialogues, short plays, and some poems. The texts are simplified and abridged from the originals and graded according to vocabulary frequency and a grammar and sentence structure. Despite being taught for more than forty years, English instruction textbooks have not greatly changed since 1949.

Dzau (1993) reports that from 1952 to 1954, the English textbook used for English majors was *Advanced English* compiled in the Soviet Union. Beginning in 1954, a course book entitled *English* by Xu Guo Zhang and other Chinese English specialists was used for English majors in most universities. There are eight volumes for use during the four undergraduate years. The textbooks were based on the format consisting of a series of texts of about 500 to 1,000 words. Attached to each text was a list of new words with parts of speech, the Chinese equivalents, and sometimes an explanation of meaning and use in English. Also included are phrases and idiomatic expressions. The first four books for the freshmen and sophomores also includes sections on phonetics with exercises and short dialogues. All volumes contain similar exercises --- questions about the text, grammar exercises and translation exercises. Xu Guo Zhang's *English* has been most widely used textbooks in the past and is still being used in some parts of China. From 1962 to 1988 the book was printed 18 times with 300,000 copies sold (Xu, 1988).

The period from 1978-1989 had a change for English textbooks (Dzau, 1990). Newer textbooks appeared from 1978 when the entrance examination for universities resumed with the end of the Cultural Revolution. Newer textbooks embodying both structuralist and communicative ideas have been developed and used. Of the many published and used for university teaching, *A New English Course* by Li Guanyi's may be the most popular as shown by the rapid increase in sales of the textbooks. From 1987 to June 1989 the book was reprinted four times with 180,000 copies sold (Dzau, 1990). The textbooks for freshmen are grammatical structure-based and the language situations in the textbooks such as pattern drills and oral exercises have been made as realistic as possible so that students are provided with opportunities to practice communication in classroom. There are also many books published in English-speaking countries available, such as L. G. Alexander's *New Concept English* (1967) and others.

The development and adoption of new textbooks in the last decade show change, improvement and progress, but even the newer texts (eg. L. G. Alexander's 1967 *New Concept English*) are often taught with Intensive Reading approaches. Li Guanyi's *A New English Course*, though having an emphasis on developing students' communicative competence, still clings to Intensive Reading teaching methods and format, which are clearly shown in recommendations such as the detailed study of the text in the teachers' manuals.

2. 4. Teaching and Learning Methods for Intensive Reading Course

The process for teaching and learning of English does not differ radically across China according to many Western English educators' observations and my own observation and experience in learning and teaching the Intensive Reading course. The study of English is, in actuality, dominated by Intensive Reading method regardless of area or age level (Ford,1988)

Therefore, it is not surprising that the comments made by both Western English teachers and Chinese teachers of English for the methods of Intensive Reading teaching are similar (Cheng, 1988; Ford, 1988; Mahon and Grabe, 1982; Ross, 1993; Scoval, 1993; and Tinberg 1986). Maley (1983) interprets the process of Intensive Reading as one which squeezes each text dry, since it concentrates attention on a necessarily small number of texts rather than equipping the students with tools to deal with a wide range of texts.

Of the descriptions for the process of Intensive Reading teaching, I find Dzau's (1990) 5 step process the most comprehensive and specific though it sounds more ideal than its actual practice in most English classrooms. Dzau suggests that the 5 step process was typical for teaching Intensive Reading. For the sake of space I only cite and interpret the names of the process, based on my own experience and observations of other Chinese and Western teachers (To review how Intensive Reading course is learned with the 5 step process, please see Appendix 4).

Dzau named the first step as *Assignment and Homework*. I think this step is actually preparation for studying the texts. Students usually study the new lesson for about 2-3 hours by themselves before the actual learning of the text in class. Very often students consult the dictionary for more information about each word. Familiarity with the new words is seen to be necessary before actual learning of the text in class.

Reading the texts aloud to preview or review the knowledge they have learned is popular practice for Chinese students. Many foreign teachers have commented on students' habits for memorizing and reading aloud short excerpts from their reading in the morning (Ford, 1988; Matalene, 1985; Tinberg 1986; and others). Tinberg (1986) said he would never forget his first visit to the building where he taught English. In the area surrounding the building, students were walking singly and as they walked were speaking to themselves in English, some with the aid of a text, some without. He was surprised to find his students, while reading the texts he assigned, rereading the passages, vocalizing and depending on their dictionaries constantly. This kind of reading practice made a deep impression on this American professor. This impression becomes an image that has stayed with him since it seems to sum up the Chinese approach to reading a text --- appreciation of the text through its constituent parts, which are to be recited, scrutinized, and perhaps memorized.

Teachers spend most of the class hours at Step 2: *Classwork: Reading, Explanation and Analysis*, and Step 3: *Word Study*. Meticulous explanation and analysis of the text and word usage go to as much depth as the time allows. Dzau's illustration is typical of what most teachers of English teach in

class. Step 4: *Consolidation* is concerned with revision of what has been taught in the text, which is usually practiced in the Intensive Reading course. As explained by Dzau, the exercises mainly focus on grammar and translation. Step 5: *Freer Practice* should have students do some follow-up activities for the text learned such as class discussions, role play or debate on questions arising out of the discussions. Most teachers, however, omit this step because they regard this as less important and even as a waste of time since the course is mainly to teach reading and word study.

Dzau (1990) acclaimed that the methods used in this course were adopted all over China when English was taught at both universities and secondary schools. And this practice is pervasive in Chinese education (Scovel, 1993). This approach to teaching English reading through texts influence Chinese EFL students' reading habits. Chen (1988), a Chinese professor of English, argues that it is because of this method of teaching English students are encouraged to focus their attention on minute points instead of the text as a whole. Moreover, students often feel insecure about the text until they have made clear the exact meaning of every word, every sentence, including its Chinese equivalent.

3.5 Extensive Reading

Theoretically, Extensive Reading is a course designed to promote students' reading for context and to develop students' abilities needed for independent reading, such as pre-reading, skimming, and scanning (Tang, 1983). The course involves a broader range of relatively easier but interesting reading of about 2 - 6 thousand word texts per week. Teaching materials vary

from some classic short stories in the original to textbooks. Thus, the course is aimed to increase students' reading speed, enlarge their vocabulary and widen their knowledge of English (Chen,1983).

But in most classrooms the Extensive Reading course is taught like a second Intensive Reading course (Mahon, 1982; Tang, 1983; Tinberg, 1986). The method of instruction in Extensive Reading, based on all that Tang noted, varied little from what was happening in the intensive course. Tinberg (1986) also observed that students' attention for Extensive Reading is still directed to portions rather than the whole of the text. To understand why the Intensive Reading method is so popular and consistently used in Chinese English teaching is therefore of great importance.

4. Reasons for the Intensive Reading Method for Teaching English Reading

Why is the Intensive Reading method so influential and deep-rooted in Chinese English reading instruction? To answer this question, I examine English teaching in China from historical, political, social and educational perspectives. I think that a deeper understanding of students' intensive reading performance may be achieved through this discussion. The following sections are concerned with the historical, social and political factors affecting English teaching methods. I also consider the question from a teacher education perspective.

4. 1 Historical, Political and Social Factors Forming and Reinforcing Intensive Reading Method

The Intensive Reading uses the grammar-translation method applied in English instruction from the beginning when English as a Foreign Language was introduced to China with the famous Western Movement of the Chin Dynasty in the later half of the 19th century. The movement was started by some Chinese officials with the purpose of imitating the technology of the capitalist countries (Wang, 1986). The introduction of the capitalist mode of production, Western culture, and especially the expansion of trade and commerce with Western countries influenced the educational programs of the country. The need to learn English as a foreign language was strongly felt. Consequently, English teaching appeared in the first Chinese run English language school institute called "*Tong Wen Guan*" (Government Translators School) in China in 1862 (Ford, 1988; Yu, 1982). But it took forty years for English instruction to be formally included in the curriculum of schools, in the year 1902 (Tang, 1983).

During the mid-1800s and early 1900s, in China, as well as in other parts of the world, the grammar-translation method for foreign language study was very popular (Scovel, 1983). The practice of English teaching in China during 1902-1922 basically followed the model of Japan (Tang, 1983), focusing on developing students' abilities to read and translate English texts, and emphasizing the learning of grammar. The teaching usually started with vocabulary, then sentence structure and lot of definitions and rules. Between 1902 and 1948, when the People's Republic of China was founded, TEFL in China was far from systematic and scientific with teaching methods

unchanged. In the decades after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, English gradually gained a foothold in the school curriculum.

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 brought enormous changes in educational policy. TEFL in China, however, has undergone ups and downs during the last four decades due to political reasons. This can be seen from the six periods of the history of TEFL in China which covers more than a hundred years (Tang, 1983):

1. Prior to the founding of the P.R. China (1862 - 1949)
2. After the founding of the P. R. China (1949 - 1952)
3. "The Russian Years" (1953 - 1957)
4. The First "Renaissance" (1958 - 1966)
5. The Cultural Revolution Years (1966 - 1977)
6. The Second "Renaissance" (1977 - present)

The radical changes in TEFL in China have been caused by political rather than educational or linguistic advances. During the period of "The Russian Years" (1953 - 1957), English was ousted from the school curriculum. As the name suggests, this period was characterized by the political bias towards learning from the Soviet Union. Starting in 1952, there was a severe criticism for favouring, worshipping, and the fearing the U.S. Its immediate effect was to reject English teaching and learning. It was considered somewhat unpatriotic to study the language of the imperialist U.S. English gradually disappeared from the curriculum, replaced by Russian. By 1954, Russian had become the primary foreign language taught in both secondary schools and colleges and universities. Teachers of English were told either to

teach Russian or other subjects such as Chinese or history, if they could and would. It was during this period of "Learning from the Soviet Union" that the systematic Intensive Reading method was adopted from the Russian model (Dzau, 1990).

There were few changes for TEFL until 1955 with a gradual awareness that the complete rejection of English and other foreign languages was short-sighted, and that to communicate in other languages, not just in Russian alone, was absolutely necessary for the benefit of the country. The country's growing involvement in international affairs and in its own progress placed great demands on education and foreign language teaching. Also, due to the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, English reemerged later as the priority for foreign language learning (Ford, 1988). The Ministry of Education made a decision to resume English teaching in senior high school. During the years of the First "Renaissance" (1958 - 1966) there was a great period of growth and change for English teaching. The following two important events which took place during this booming period may give some ideas of growth and change for English teaching then. In 1959, English class hours in senior high schools were increased to five hours per week, and in junior secondary schools they were increased to four hours per week. English also became a requirement for the entrance examination for colleges and universities with its score recorded for reference (Tang, 1983).

Unfortunately, English was ousted again from the school curriculum with the advent of the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1977). The effects of this political movement upon foreign language teaching were almost disastrous. Textbooks for all subjects, not only English, were criticized and banned.

Foreign language teachers were falsely accused of being "spies of foreign countries" or "flunkeys of imperialism" or "worshippers of everything foreign." It was not until around 1969 or 1970 that English reappeared in the curriculum, but it was distorted dramatically. The English in the textbooks was not the English used in any English-speaking countries. Textbooks were not compiled according to linguistic theories or procedures of language learning, but rather according to the political norms then. I happened to belong to that unlucky generation who hardly learned any English until entering senior high school, and only learned about two hundred words and a few sentence structure before graduation. Textbooks always began with Chairman Mao's quotations and ended with political slogans. Throughout the textbooks used by all grades, not a single text dealt with a foreign theme or Western culture. For this kind of tedious materials, the grammar-translation method might be the most appropriate for teaching. English instruction had gone through its most difficult period.

Since 1977, English has regained its status and enjoyed popularity in China. The enthusiasm and commitment to learning English has been more than ever before, which has been briefly discussed in this paper.

From the brief review of the history of TEFL in China, it is evident that English Teaching in China has gone through ups and downs in a comparatively short history. Moreover, because of the closed-door policy before the 1970s, EFL in China was carried on with very little knowledge of TEFL in the West (Yu, 1982). The development of TEFL in China has been primarily influenced by political factors. The constant changing of policy and programs of TEFL has thus led to little research and improvement that have

been made in Chinese English teaching strategies. Accordingly, the Intensive Reading method has been still widely used and reinforced.

Intensive Reading still appeals to teachers of English because Chinese revere antiquity and honour traditions of the past. The teachers feel the grammar-translation approach can train students to be accurate in English. In the past decade new textbooks have been compiled with more recent development in foreign language teaching. They have, however, stayed with traditional Intensive Reading approaches. Translation is consistently emphasized for it is considered to be an art which requires accuracy, expressiveness and gracefulness in Chinese eyes. Dzau (1990) suggests that this shows how tenaciously teachers still cling to traditional methods which they think are effective in teaching. Teachers of English today, commented Li Guanyi (1990), Chinese professor of English, feel more inclined to give grammatical analysis of sentences and do lots of translation exercises rather than to try some other methods.

4. 2. Training of English Teachers

In Chinese tradition, a good teacher has three obligations: being a model; passing on knowledge; and guiding students to success (Yu, 1982). Chinese teachers are usually serious, austere and strict, and command great respect, good behavior and serious attitudes toward learning. To become a good teacher, morality as well as knowledge is important. In the four year teachers' training programme, least emphasis is given to pedagogy. The Teachers' University English Department curriculum (see appendix 5) shows that there is only one teaching methodology course taught in only two class

hours per week for one semester. Ford (1988) suggests that the curriculum seems to be an anomaly for a department whose overall mission is to train English teachers. Nevertheless, this is a typical curriculum for a four year teachers' training programme. As observed by Ford (1988), university officials thought that two courses in teaching methodology and six weeks of practice teaching are sufficient training. Students, fully occupied with gaining knowledge, regard teaching methods not directly related to learning knowledge as less useful and interesting, and even a waste of time..

Since the students are trained with traditional methods for teaching English, they tend to teach their students with same approach when they themselves become teachers. This is true of the teacher Tang observed (1983). Tang suggested that it was unlikely the teacher really knew anything about the grammar-translation method. She was only teaching as she was taught by her teachers. In this way, the Intensive Reading method has been passed down from generation to generation.

5. Summary

In China, the core of EFL teaching is "Intensive Reading." From the very beginning to the advanced level of teaching, intensive reading is taught to students. In this chapter I have discussed how Intensive Reading is taught to secondary and specifically university English major students. I have also discussed the reason why this method is still widely used in Chinese schools. The fact little change has been made to the strategies in English teaching is partly due to the past political contexts, and partly due to Chinese belief in teacher's role of imparting knowledge. Moreover, the effectiveness in

training students to be accurate in English with this approach makes it difficult to adopt other approaches for teaching. Discussion of how Chinese students are taught to read in English and reasons why the Intensive Reading has been used so widely in China help us understand Chinese EFL students' reading performances.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

1. Introduction

In this thesis I have discussed factors underlying Chinese EFL students' reading performance from several perspectives. I have discussed Chinese beliefs and values about learning and reading; their initial literacy learning experiences; and the English Intensive Reading, the method that is typically used for teaching English in China. I argue that the source of Chinese EFL students' slow and deliberate reading performance is mainly affected by these three factors rather than their knowledge of English. In this chapter, I summarize my arguments in light of the literature concerned. Also examined are the implications of these factors for teaching Chinese students to read English effectively. The Intensive Reading approach is analyzed with a comparison of the current Western views on the reading process, and the interactive models of reading in particular. The implications of this study are discussed and recommendations are made for further research.

2. Summary of the Study

This paper is based on my experiences and observation of Chinese approaches to learning and teaching to read in light of literature on the areas concerned. My arguments are motivated by Alderson's (1984) hypotheses about foreign language students' reading problems. As my initial attempt stems from clarifying the question of whether Chinese EFL students' slow and deliberate approach to reading in English is due to their language

proficiency or the strategies they apply to read in English, this study has identified, to a certain extent, the reasons why Chinese EFL students might read slowly and deliberately in English. Chinese EFL students' reading performances are not due to their knowledge of the target language, but to their learned approaches to reading in English. Despite the fact that numerous studies have only examined students' reading habits from the perspective of the way the students are taught to read in English, I argue that the issue of teaching and learning to read in a culture is not simply a matter of the teaching method itself. Chinese approaches to reading and teaching English have underlying historical, cultural and educational factors which should be explored.

Chinese EFL students' reading methods are influenced by their attitudes towards learning and reading. The Confucian belief that morality and self-development can be achieved through learning has influenced the Chinese to take learning activities very seriously. Thus, a careful, intensive and deliberate approach to reading has been emphasized more than strategies for reading. Chinese attitudes towards learning and reading help reinforce the Intensive Reading method in both Chinese and English instruction.

Chinese EFL students' approaches to reading English are also affected by their initial literacy learning experiences. The characteristics of Chinese characters differ tremendously from English orthography and Chinese students' first language acquisition and their learning to read Chinese are both very demanding tasks. Learning thousands of intricate Chinese characters calls for the intensive reading approach. Tinberg, (1986) points out that it is the attention to details in reading and writing of Chinese characters

that influences the way Chinese learn to read. The intensive approach to teaching and learning to read, I think, is thus transferred to their second language reading strategies. The argument that initial educational experience influences students' second language learning is confirmed by one of the findings in Mohan and Lo's (1988) research on the English writing performance of EFL students in Hong Kong. Mohan and Lo observed that Chinese students in Hong Kong were strongly oriented to sentence level accuracy rather than discourse structures. They found that the students' interest in seeking accuracy in individual sentences was because their initial language learning tended to be heavily weighed toward the development of sentence-level skills. My arguments are consistent with some of Mohan and Lo's research findings that students' first language literacy and educational experiences influence their development in second language learning skills. Moreover, the study of Chinese EFL students' reading performances has contributed to the knowledge about second language reading with regard to the hypotheses of foreign language reading problems discussed in Alderson (1984). One of the hypotheses is that success in reading a foreign/second language depends crucially upon EFL/ESL students' first language reading strategies rather than the student's level of English, given that students have already passed a threshold in language proficiency.

It is widely acknowledged that Chinese EFL students' intensive and close reading methods are reinforced by the way they are taught to read English. The Intensive Reading teaching methods, though introduced formally following the Russian model, "originate in the Chinese historical factors" as indicated by Scovel (1983:35). Specifically, the traditional way of learning Chinese classics has had a great impact on the learning of English.

Scovel noted that TEFL in China continues to exist in a neo-Confucian tradition, and he found that in the classrooms where the Intensive Reading approach was practiced, the broader goals of facile comprehension and communication were subordinate to the narrow goals of grammatical accuracy in reading. The widely-taught Intensive Reading course is comparable to the methods used in Chinese classics teaching. In fact, the Intensive Reading teaching method is not only widely used in English teaching, but in modern Chinese instruction as well. Chinese students are taught to read Chinese through intensive study of the text. In short, both Chinese and English teaching, in many ways, follow the classic Confucius teaching model except that the languages are different. One obvious similarity is that both emphasize a word-by-word, and sentence-by-sentence parsing of the text. Chinese students' initial learning experiences have them learning to read carefully and closely, thus slowly.

A study on Japanese students' reading performance concurs with my arguments for the reasons for Chinese EFL students' intensive reading methods (Maher, 1984). With regard to Japanese students' reading proficiency, Maher's study (1984) found that Japanese students read English slowly and thus inefficiently despite six to ten years of English study. Maher comments that Japanese students' efficient reading ability is influenced by their previous language learning experiences because in Japanese schools English teaching is still carried out largely via grammar/translation, interrupted by long grammatical explanation. Maher also points out that the dynamics of language education practices are influenced by various attitudinal, historical and political factors, of which, the historical educational factor is the most influential.

Maher explains that more than a thousand years ago, Japanese scholars started their painstaking word-by-word study of the Buddhist and Confucian books in Chinese translation. This method of studying the Chinese and Japanese classics still exists and continues in Japanese reading instruction. Maher says that this approach to the classics has been further transferred to English reading instruction, thus making English, a totally different language, studied and read in the same way as Japanese classics. This rather direct evidence makes me feel more confident in saying that Chinese EFL students' slow and deliberate reading performances are much effected by the historical, cultural and educational factors.

3. The current Western Views on Reading and the Models of Reading

The study of the underlying factors contributing to Chinese EFL students' deliberate and slow reading habits provides a deeper understanding of their reading performance. To get insights for considering effective reading instruction in China, I discuss some of the current theories of reading in the West with an emphasis on three models of the reading process: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models. I choose to discuss these three among many different approaches because I think they are most representative in teaching reading and moreover, they are most relevant to the study of learning to read in a foreign language. Since the purpose of my thesis focuses on exploring the reasons why Chinese EFL students approach English reading intensively, the discussion in this section provides a comparison of the gaps between Western and Chinese approaches to teaching and learning to read

English, and highlights the issue of improving English reading instruction in China.

3. 1. Current Western Views on the Reading Process

The question "what is the reading process?" has been a perennial discussion since reading is such a complex process. Bernhardt (1991) observes that the question of the process of reading has been the concern of thousands of academicians for thousands of years, and this concern has yielded many insights and data. Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) suggest that, especially during the past two decades, Western countries have made substantial advances in understanding the reading process. There has been abundant recent literature on theories of the reading process. There are generally two types of definitions of reading (Dechant, 1991). According to the first type of definition, reading is generally equated with the interpretation of experience. This definition is described by Spencer in the Claremont College Reading Conference's Eleventh Yearbook: "In the broadest sense, reading is the process of interpreting sense stimuli and of adapting one's behavior with regard to them. It is the process of making discriminative responses" (in Schubert, 1969:19). Dachants (1991) illustrates this type of reading as the way in which one reads a facial expression, reads pictures, or a doctor reads the symptoms of illness, and so on. Dachants explains that an important implication of this definition of reading as interpretation of experiences is that students must be readers of experience before they can become readers of graphic symbols. That means students cannot understand symbols without having had such experiences that give the symbols meaning.

The second type of definition of reading equates reading with the interpretation of graphic symbols. Dachants (1991) noted that most definitions offered in professional textbooks belong to this category. Writers have provided many descriptions of reading, with varying emphases. Here I only cite a few descriptions of this type of definition of reading:

- Reading is an activity which involves the comprehension and interpretation of ideas symbolized by written or printed language (DeBoer, John J., Dallman, & Martha, in Schubert, 1969);
- Reading gives significance intended by the writer to the graphic symbols by relating them to what the reader already knows (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkerson, 1985);
- Reading is a complex interaction of cognitive and linguistic processes with which readers construct a meaningful representation of the writer's message (Barnitz, 1986);
- Reading involves three processes: orthographic, phonological, and semantic identification of the graphic symbols, which occur interactively and interdependently (Adams, 1990).
- Reading is an interactive process involving both the reader's previous fund of knowledge and the words in the text (Dechant, 1991).

The above cited definitions represent, to some extent, the current Western views on the reading process. It is believed that reading means building a representation of text by relating the graphic symbols to one's knowledge and experience (Dechant ,1991). Chinese approaches to learning to

read emphasize learning the language of written text. Therefore, the study of individual words, the use of grammar and the study of syntactic forms and style is the focus of learning how to read. Actually, the different approaches to learning to read reflect the emphasis on the different views of the nature of learning. In the West, learning is seen to involve active learners, thus reading is seen as a process of constructing meaning (Bogdan & Straw, 1993). Some Western educators hold the notion that the readers are free to interpret a text in almost whatever way they wish to, while in China, students are taught to read directly for objective meaning (Sampson, 1990). In short, learning in China, to some extent, is considered a process of a quantitative increase in knowledge by taking in and memorizing what is in the book and what the teacher teaches (Pratt, 1992). Learners, are generally taken to be receptive.

3. 2. Models of Reading

To explain the current understanding of the reading process in the West, I explain two models of the reading process which have been combined to create the current view of the reading process as an interactive process. Current research has shown that effective reading involves an interaction of the reader with the written text (Dachart, 1991). While reading, the reader must engage in both "top-down" and "bottom-up" processing of the text. The reader activates various types of relevant background knowledge for understanding the text which Carrell (1983) defines as the content schemata and the formal schemata. The content schemata refers to background knowledge of the cultural content of a text, and the formal schemata means linguistic knowledge, i.e., background knowledge of formal, rhetorical, and organizational structures of different types of texts. Reading models have been

developed to determine the way readers use language information to construct meaning from print. How a teacher perceives the models determines how she engages her students in the reading process (Gunderson, 1990). Thus, appropriate use of the models of reading in classrooms is of importance in helping students developing reading skills.

3. 2. 1. Bottom-up Models of Reading

Bottom-up models (Gough, 1972, 1976; LaBerge and Samuel, 1974) are based on the principle that the written text is organized in a hierarchical order from the smallest linguistic unit to higher units. The order may be like this: grapho-phonetic, phonemic, syllabic, morphemic, word, and sentence levels. So the reader takes one "linguistic step" after another, starting with recognition of letters, gradually compiling the smaller units to decipher and understand larger units like sentences and paragraphs. The emphasis in this approach is on processing the text letter by letter, word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence until reaching the highest level: getting the overall meaning of the text. Bottom-up processing is driven by the incoming data. Due to the nature of this process, this model is described as being "data driven" (Bernhardt, 1991). Data, in this context, refer to the letters and words in the text. Dechant (1991) therefore suggests that the bottom-up models, at least at the beginning stage, pay little attention to the influences of the reader's prior knowledge, contextual information, and other reading strategies such as scanning, skimming and inferring. On the contrary, the bottom-up models advocate strategies as follows: readers must recognize each word in the text in order to comprehend the selection; knowledge of discrete subskills is very important; accuracy in recognizing individual words is significant (Gove, 1983).

3. 2. 2. Top-down Models of reading

Unlike bottom-up models of reading, top-down models believe that the meaning resides in the heads of the reader, not in print (Gunderson, 1990). It is thus assumed that the processing of print begins with the reader's prior knowledge. The text is processed by making hypotheses or predictions about the meaning of some unit of print. As bottom-up models are described as "data driven" in nature, top-down models are said to be "conceptually driven".

Top-down models of reading came into existence through views of reading posed by psycholinguists Goodman and Smith, who have made significant contributions to the understanding of the reading process (Weaver, 1988; Dechant, 1991). Goodman (1967) defined reading as a "psycholinguistic guessing game." He saw reading as a complex process by which a reader *constructs*, to some extent, a message encoded by a writer in graphic language. The psycholinguistic evidence is that we remember sentences for their meaning rather than for specific words (Mehler, 1963, in Smith, 1973). Top-down models put much emphasis on relying upon the information and testing of readers' hypotheses about what they read next. They are thus often described as a hypotheses testing model (Dechant (1991). Accordingly, a top-down approach emphasizes that reading is not merely a bottom-up process and that meaning is not totally embodied in the text. The reader's knowledge of the world, experience, and the concepts they have learned, in other words, their schemata, are a very important part of the reading process. As Frank Smith (1979) explains the importance of the schemata: the more you already know the less you need to find out in the print. That is to say, the more the

readers have already known about the topic they reading, the less they need to use the graphic information in the text. Reading in this context is more a matter of bring meaning to the text than absorbing it.

As summed up by Gove (1983), the advocates of the top-down approach believe that:

- 1) readers are able to comprehend a passage even though they do not know each word;
- 2) readers should use contextual clues and grammatical cues to identify unrecognized words;
- 3) reading requires the use of meaning activities rather than the mastery of a series of word-recognition skills;
- 4) the reading of sentences, paragraphs and whole selections should be the primary focus of instruction;
- 5) reading for meaning is the primary objective of reading rather than mastery of letters, phonics, and words;
- 6) the most important aspect about reading is the amount and kind of information gained through reading.

Thus, the reader's contribution to meaning is seen as the essential ingredient in understanding of the text. Reading, then, is inferential, constructive and the process is one of problem-solving rather than passively absorbing linguistic knowledge of the text. Actually most current Western reading theorists recognize the importance of top-down models of reading (See

Weaver, 1988). They believe that reading is not a passive process by which readers soak up words, phrases and information from the print, but an active process by which readers predict, sample, confirm or correct their hypotheses about the text. In brief, reading is a meaning-constructing process rather than a meaning-getting process (Bogdan & Straw, 1993).

3. 2. 3. Interactive Models of Reading

In the past 15 years, Western views of the reading process have come to recognize that neither a top-down, or a bottom-up approach in isolation is sufficient. These views are based on much cognitive research on reading which shows that the process of reading should be characterized as an interaction between visually processed print and activation of existing knowledge (MacKinnon & Waller, 1985). With these views on reading, the interactive models thus suggest that the process of translating print to meaning involves many sources, and that the reader simultaneously makes use of all levels of processing: formulating hypotheses or making predictions about meaning, and simultaneously decoding letters or words. That is, readers use neither prior knowledge nor graphophonic information exclusively during the process of reading. Thus, readers formulate hypotheses based on the interaction of information from semantic, syntactic and graphophones sources of information. The reading process is the product of the simultaneous joint application of all the sources of information (Rumelhart, 1976, 1980). Dechant (1991) suggests that the knowledge comes from ten sources of meaning. They are specifically indicated as: 1) logographic knowledge; 2) graphemic knowledge; 3) phonological knowledge; 4) orthographical knowledge; 5) graphemic knowledge; 6) graphemic knowledge; 7) lexical knowledge; 8)

semantic knowledge; 9) syntactic knowledge; 10) schematic knowledge. Obviously, in the interactive models of reading, reading is perceived to involve parallel as well as simultaneous processing of all the sources of knowledge (May, 1986).

Advocates of the interactive models suggest that readers process the smallest linguistic units like letters and words at same time as they formulate hypotheses about the meaning of what is on the written text. According to Kamil and Pearson (1979), readers assume either an active or a passive role, depending on the strength of their hypotheses about the meaning of the written text. Those who bring a great deal of knowledge to the print will process the print actively, making minimal use of graphonic information since their hypotheses will be strong. On the other hand, those who have little experience and knowledge of the topic to be read will read passively because they depend much more on the written text itself for information cues.

3. 3. Models of Reading and the Intensive Reading Approach

It is evident that the strategies advocated by bottom-up theories are much in line with the method of Intensive Reading in language teaching in China. Both approaches begin with a word-by-word process. When the focus of students' attention is put on details rather than the overall meaning of a text, accuracy in recognizing every single word and translation encourages dependency on the dictionary and deliberate reading habits. The Intensive Reading method has its advantages in learning to read in a foreign language. Some Western educators from their experiences of teaching English in China,

Different from bottom-up approaches, top-down models of reading emphasize applying readers' prior knowledge and encouraging "educated guessing" of meaning of the text as the meaning is considered central for reading. The top-down models contrast with the Intensive Reading method which focuses on the form of the written text. Chinese believe that it is very important for students to understand the meanings of individual words, and to have a thorough knowledge of grammatical functions of sentences and the style of the writing. They accept the premise that by learning all these language components, readers come to the meaning of the material. By way of

not sufficient.

Although bottom-up models of reading can help students learn about the language per se, they ignore having students learn reading strategies such as "chunking" or skimming, the skills of successful readers in both first and second languages. Thus, students' prior knowledge and experience are neglected in getting the gist of the text they are learning. Applying a bottom-up approach only in learning to read in both the first and second language is

English still cling to the traditional teaching methods to teach reading.

methods Harvey points out are the reasons why most Chinese teachers of "Chinese reading methods cannot be simply dismissed as 'primitive', old-fashioned, or 'misguided'..." (p.186). The strengths of Chinese teaching learners, and for speakers of Chinese in particular. Harvey argues that grammatical framework of a language are extremely important for some Harvey (1985), suggests that emphasis on learning vocabulary and the learning to read (for example, Harvey, 1985; Sampson, 1984; Ross, 1993). have emphasized the importance of intensive method of teaching and

the Intensive Reading, the students are guided by teachers to learn the knowledge of the language *per se* rather than to integrate information and get the gist of the text by combining the print with their prior knowledge. Thus, the meaning is not made out by the readers themselves, but oftentimes taught in a detailed manner or learned with the help of dictionary or reference books. The concentrated approach to learning about the language leads to lack of responses from students for what they are reading. Since the emphasis is on the proceeding from lower-level incoming data to higher-level encodings of the text, it is difficult for students to get the overall meaning of the text. The role of prior knowledge of the text topic as a facilitating variable in word recognition and comprehension is thus rarely acknowledged.

Top-down models of reading may help teaching Chinese students improve their ability to apply prior knowledge and experience in reading. I think that the appropriate use of applying students' prior knowledge can facilitate comprehension, and moreover, contribute to students' reading speed. Fang's study (1991) in teaching an Extensive Reading course shows the effect and feasibility of the "conceptual-driven" models for teaching reading to Chinese EFL students. Fang's experiment of teaching an Extensive Reading course mainly with the top-down models of reading helped his students realize the importance of prior knowledge and experience in understanding the text, and finally, students sensed the nature of genuine reading.

The "educated guesses" of reading, however, are not only based upon prior knowledge but upon graphophonic information, especially for the context of reading in a foreign language. As Stanovich (1980) has stressed, reading is rarely totally top-down or bottom-up. Bernhardt (1991) argues that a

foreign/second language learner is rarely equipped with the knowledge to proceed in a culturally authentic, culturally specific way. For example, for some texts, the reader has little knowledge of the topic and cannot generate predictions. And actually the process of reading even for first language is also neither purely bottom-up nor top-down. There is a close connection between the amount of graphic information that a reader needs to read a text and the information that a reader requires to read a text and the information the reader has already obtained. For more effective reading, the interactive models help to explain the real nature of the reading process.

Wu's (1983) suggestion for using the eclectic approach to teach Chinese students is in accordance with the advocacy of interactive models of reading. Well informed about Western views on reading and teaching methods, Wu suggests that neither a Chinese teaching method be totally given up nor a Western (top-down) strategy to be copied in Chinese classrooms; rather, he argues that an eclectic approach might be more appropriate. He explains that a teacher may select an approach based on a model of linguistic description that he thinks is the best, or to proceed from practical needs in the classroom and take from different approaches whatever meets his own teaching objectives. I agree with Wu's opinion on how to teach Chinese students. One thing we cannot deny is that Chinese students have already formed their reading habits in their first literacy experiences. English teachers should try to improve the Intensive Reading methods and, only on this basis, a shift of teaching methods can be applied.

The interactive models of reading, it seems to me, are the most appropriate approaches we can learn to apply in teaching English reading to

Chinese EFL students, especially for an English Extensive Reading course. Such an interactive model might begin with a top-down emphasis on meaning, move to bottom-up strategies as necessary, and return to a top-down emphasis. There would be, therefore, movement from whole to part to whole (Dechant, 1991).

To be effective readers, we must know how to interact with print to understand a writer's message. These models of reading provide us with many insights of how to teach and learn to read effectively. I am most attached to the interactive models of reading because I think that this model provides us the best explanation of reading, and moreover, it can be applied to teaching either first or second languages. A thoughtful and sophisticated study of how to apply this approach to teach Chinese EFL students English reading is needed for further research. In reality, most Chinese teachers are very interested in knowing new viewpoints and developments in English teaching, though their practices are not necessarily those advocated by Western EFL specialists (Wu, 1983). Some are trying new approaches to develop students' extensive reading skills (see Fang, 1990; Jin, 1990). It is clear that the interactive models of reading will provide insights for improving English reading instruction in China.

4. Western Influences on English Reading Instruction in China

Western views on reading and teaching reading have influenced English teaching in China since the open-door policy to the West in 1978. With thousands of Western teachers going to work and teach in Chinese universities in the last ten years or so, new teaching methodology and materials have been used to teach Chinese students and train teachers. In the past decade, China has printed a large amount and variety of teaching materials from Britain, the United States, and other English-speaking countries. Many of the materials have teacher's manuals, in which there are guidelines for teaching, so that the Western methods and strategies for teaching and learning to read English have been naturally introduced to Chinese English learners. Besides, Chinese authorities also stress the improvement of teaching methods. Many academic conferences are held to discuss the best ways to improve English in China. During the years of 1979 to 1982 alone, four major English teaching conferences were held in big cities such as Beijing, Yantai, Nanjing and Wuhan (Wu, 1983). In academic journals, there is an increase in the number of articles discussing new ideas of theories and practices on English teaching, and even some applications of new approaches to English teaching (see Fang, 1991; and Dzau, 1990).

But the current Western views about reading emphasizing speed and comprehension has influenced Chinese methods for learning and teaching to read, I think, mainly through the use of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Graduate Record Examination (GRE) in China. As more and more Chinese scholars and students come to English-speaking countries for further study and research, thousands of students have taken

TOEFL in recent years. It is reported (Zhu et al., 1991) that the total number of TOEFL candidates in China has increased from a few thousand in 1980 to some 60,000 in 1989. Those students taking TOEFL strongly feel the need to improve their English reading skills.

TOEFL requires a good command of grammar and vocabulary as well as the ability to read at a fairly quick speed. Liu Yi (1991), a Taiwanese English specialist who has written several books on the GRE and TOEFL, suggests that those who wish to get a 650 score or more (a perfect score is 680) should be able to read 650 words per minute and comprehend 90-100% of what they have read. Accordingly, those who want to get a TOEFL score of 570 to 600 points should be able to read about 400-500 words per minute. The average scores of TOEFL that universities in North America, such as Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia in Canada, require international students for admission is 575-600. Undoubtedly, the ability to read quickly is a key to success for TOEFL and thus, a necessary step for a student pursuing the goal of studying in a university in North America.

TOEFL is not only taken as a goal for individual candidates, but used as a criterion of English proficiency and a model of standardized tests in China. Other examinations like the English Proficiency Test (EPT) are designed more or less after the format of TOEFL. Only those who succeed in EPT may go abroad for further research. With the practices of those standardized English tests, more and more students and teachers of English in China are coming to realize that learning to read in English involves more than the language of the text.

5. Implications of the Study

This paper intends to provide some insights for educational research and practice, specifically for teaching ESL/EFL students with Chinese educational background. This study, mainly with Western readers in mind, has several implications concerning issues of ESL/EFL instruction.

First, this study has addressed a need for understanding and a greater awareness of ESL students' cultural and initial educational experiences through examining the underlying factors contributing to Chinese EFL students' reading habits. Once ESL teachers are aware that students from other cultures may have had quite different educational experiences from those that are common in the ESL teacher's own background, more effective teaching and learning will emerge. They will try to improve and adjust their teaching methods. Such an awareness of ESL students' previous learning experience and of improving their teaching methods will no doubt contribute to the benefit of ESL education in North America since there is great diversity of ESL students in North America, especially an increasing ESL population with Chinese education background in Canadian schools.

Second, this study provides insights to those Western educators or English teachers regarding teaching English in China. Over the past decade or so, there is a rapid increase in the number of native speakers of English who have gone to China to teach English. Many of them have really enjoyed their experiences of teaching and living in China. A large number of them, however, feel unsatisfied or unhappy, and some even return home from China "with dampened enthusiasm, feelings of disappointment and in some

cases bitterness and rancor" (Manly, 1983: 84). In a similar vein, some Chinese teachers and students, are often dissatisfied with foreign teachers' teaching because they feel that some foreigners do not teach them knowledge but only methodologies, and therefore, they doubt the effectiveness of foreign teachers' teaching. The disappointment regarding teaching on the part of both Chinese and of Westerners actually stems from social-cultural differences, especially, the influence of different education perspectives on the perceived effectiveness of teaching because Western teachers emphasize teaching methodologies, Chinese are accustomed to teacher-centered classes and expect the teacher to deliver knowledge to them. Wu (1983) points out that it is only through gradual and sensitive introduction of the new approaches to teaching that Chinese students will accept a radical shift in their own beliefs about learning. Therefore, the discussion of Chinese cultural and educational perspectives on learning and teaching is of importance for English teachers in China for their teaching to Chinese students. A greater contribution to educational programs involving the West and China can be made through better understanding of each other and through effective and enjoyable cross-cultural educational experiences.

Third, this study presents the ineffective aspect of English teaching in China through the review of both Western and Chinese educators studies on Chinese EFL students' slow and deliberate reading performance with current Western views on the models of reading, which are quite different from that of traditional Chinese. Knowing about current Western views on reading and how educators and researchers think about English teaching and learning in China, Chinese teachers of English should ponder how to improve English reading instruction in China.

Taking the current views of the reading process in the West, we should take the need for teaching Chinese EFL students to read English accurately, effortlessly and effectively into consideration. This study attempts to help Chinese teachers of English consider improving their reading instruction. We have many reasons to improve the teaching of English reading instruction in China. One of the most important reasons is that now we are facing an age of "information explosion". This age has brought to the fore the importance of extensive reading for Chinese teachers of English. The demand for obtaining a vast amount of information through reading literature in English requires the improvement of English teaching in China and calls for Chinese educators and teachers of English to study and improve reading instruction by thoughtfully applying current Western models of reading within the social-cultural constraints that exist. And this study considers this very important message.

Personally, the experience of writing this thesis has made me see more clearly the values as well as weaknesses of Chinese traditional approaches to teaching and learning to read. Moreover, it has intensified my aspirations and interest towards developing a program for training teachers to teach Extensive Reading to EFL Chinese students. It is surely the interactive models of reading have provided many insights regarding this.

6. Recommendations for Discussion and Further Research

This study, like many others, raises both theoretical and practical questions. First, how to teach Chinese EFL students to read quickly and effectively needs to be studied as the large number of Chinese EFL students' reading performances are affected by the way they are taught to read. While Chinese attitudes towards learning may have value, the materials and methods for teaching Extensive Reading should be considered, as usually Extensive Reading is taught like a second Intensive Reading course. Moreover, how to apply the interactive models of reading to learning and teaching to read English in China needs to be emphasized for further study.

Second, how Chinese EFL students learn to read fast despite their experiences with Intensive Reading both in Chinese and English instruction needs to be studied. Thousands of Chinese EFL students successfully pass TOEFL with a score of 600 or so on average, and conduct their graduate studies in English-speaking countries, and the majority of them are science students. How these Chinese students are able to tolerate uncertainties and engage in intelligent guessing while processing English such as in TOEFL has not been studied.

7. Concluding Remarks

This study has explored three factors underlying Chinese EFL students' reading methods: Chinese attitudes towards learning and reading; Chinese EFL students' initial learning experiences; and Intensive Reading, the widely used teaching method for teaching English. It seems that more questions and issues arise from the discussion rather than answers. It is hoped that the discussion provided in the thesis will be a source of insights for clarifying ideas about English education either in English-speaking or non-English speaking countries.

Appendix 1: Examples of Correct Stroke Order of Chinese characters

My 10
given
name
write
stroke

HEAVEN
(TIAN)

天

Man with two strokes added shows a big man whose head touches the sky

Stroke Order 一 二 天

WATER
(SHUI)

水

The ancient word for water is 𠂔, a drawing of a stream with banks on either side

Stroke Order 丨 亠 水

WOMAN
(NU)

女

The above word is the modern version of 𡥉.

Stroke Order ㇇ 女 女

RAIN
(YU)

雨

The ancient word for rain is a cloud with drops of water falling 𩇛

Stroke Order 一 冂 雨 雨 雨 雨 雨

ms

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For the plural, simply add men to the singular pronoun.

WE, US
(WOMEN)

我們

Stroke Order for MEN

丨 亻 亻 亻 亻 亻 亻 們

THEY, THEM
(TAMEN)

他們

YOU
(NAMEN)

你們

Appendix 2:

Lesson 20. Fleeting Time by Zhu Ziqing (trans. by Gladys Yang, 1922,
in Mei, 1985).

Swallows fly away, yet return; willows wither, yet burgeon again; peace-blossoms fade, yet bloom afresh. But tell me, you who are wise, why do our days depart never to return? Does someone steal them--if so, who? And where are they being hidden? Or have they fled of their own accord-- and if so, where are they now?

I do not know how many days have been granted me, but my hand is growing emptier all the time. In silence I compute that more than 8,000 days have already slipped through my fingers. Like a drop of water on the pint of a needle which drips into the ocean, my days have dripped noiselessly into the stream of time, leaving not a trace behind.

The past has gone whither it listed, and the future is coming as it wills; When I get up in the morning, two or three rays of sunshine slant into my chamber. The sun has feet which pad slightly, stealthily on; and I follow, revolving bemusedly on its wake. And so--when I wash my hands, my time slips out of the basin; when I eat, it slips away through my bowl; and when I am silent, it slips past my abstracted eyes. Conscious that it is fleeting away, I stretch out my hands to catch it, but it streams through my outstretched fingers; and at night when I lie in bed, it glides nimbly over my body or flies from beside my feet. When I open my eyes to see the sun again, another day has slipped past. I sigh and cover my face. But the shadow of the new come day begins to flutter off in my sign.

..... My past has been scattered like smoke by the light breeze, or dispersed like mist by the morning sun. And what traces are left me? What vestige?

Answer me, you who are wise: Why do our days depart never to return?

Appendix 3: Picture of the Chinese primary classroom



Appendix 4: The 5 Step Process for Intensive Reading teaching (Dzau, 1993)

Step 1: Assignment and Homework

Students study the new lesson for about 2-3 hours at home or in the dormitory before going to class.

- If recorders are available, students listen to a recording of the new words and the text. They learn to pronounce and spell the new words by imitating the recording. They also learn the word meaning, sometimes a Chinese equivalent, either from a list of new words in the textbook or the dictionary. Very often they will consult dictionary for more information about each word. The familiarity with the new words is usually made before actual learning of the text in class.
- Students read the text for comprehension with the help of reference books. They often analyze the difficult sentences grammatically, and make note those points they do not understand, or are not sure of, so they can ask questions in class regarding meaning, grammar and word usage.
- Students read the text aloud, trying to imitate the recording which is specially made with blank spaces after each sense group or phrase to allow them to repeat what they hear. This is carried out in those universities where there are such facilities for students to listen to such recordings. The more conscientious students get up early and practise reading aloud about an hour after doing morning exercises and an hour before breakfast. Some even attempt to memorize and recite the passage. At universities in

China, students are seen, book in hand, reading aloud or reciting, while walking slowly around campus early in the morning.

Step 2: Reading, Explanation and Analysis of the Text in Class

The text is studied in class for 3-4 periods of 45-50 minutes each.

- Some students are chosen to read selected paragraphs of the text in class so the teacher can check and correct their pronunciation and intonation, for their own as well as the class's benefit of learning the correct pronunciation. Instruction on pronunciation and help is given. Students who have special difficulties are given help outside class. Some teachers also use this time to demonstrate how the passage should be read, pointing out the words to be stressed and the intonation to be used.
- Students are usually given a chance to ask questions on difficult points of the text, which are then explained carefully with examples.
- In some classes the teacher may or may not answer the questions asked. If he or she thinks that the students should be able to answer the questions especially after a hint is given, the teacher would probably ask the student a question to call their attention to some point they have not considered, and a class discussion follows. The object is to lead the students to discover the answer themselves.
- The teacher explains and analyzes the more difficult points of vocabulary, grammar usage of words, function of words and phrases, rhetoric, style, appropriateness and perhaps content. In some classes, this explanation is

usually combined with questions, and a discussion of these points in English.

- For students after 2nd year of study, some teachers may ask questions on content, on the main idea of a paragraph or the main idea of the whole selection, the intention of the writer, or some questions involving inference. But this kind of discussion is not usually done in class.

Step 3: Word Study

This stage usually takes 1-2 periods per week, during which, the teacher goes into the question of how a word or phrase is used. Usually the teacher gives examples of the various uses and meanings of a word, each example followed by an oral translation exercise of one or more sentences in Chinese in which the word is used in the way indicated by the example. Some teachers include an explanation of when the word is used, and may go into questions of register and appropriateness, and questions of choice when various synonyms are considered. Also, a teacher may mention possible mistakes, due to cross-cultural problems or differences in connotation between the English word and the Chinese "equivalent".

Step 4: Consolidation

Classwork usually takes 2-3 periods per work.

Pattern drill through translation:

Commonly used sentence patterns or structures, which the teacher feel their students cannot use, are selected from the passage, analyzed and drilled one at a time through oral translation, Some teachers use a contrastive analysis, constrasting English with Chinese structures, and

sentence patterns or word order to show where mistakes are likely to occur due to the influence of the mother tongue. Where possible, the new vocabulary is incorporated in this drill and old vocabulary is reviewed.

- Oral translation to review the uses of words, phrases, phrasal verbs dealt with in Step 3 is done orally in class. Sometimes problems of usage and function are taken up.
- Questions on the text are asked, and students are expected to answer these questions according to their understanding of the text. There may be a discussion of the text at this stage.
- Students may be asked to retell the story or give a summary of the main idea of the text, ideally in their own words.
- A written quiz may be given to the students.

Homework

Written exercises:

- Blank filling: filling the blanks with the correct articles, prepositions, correct tenses, choice of words, correct form of words, plurals
- Transformation: active-passive, plural-singular, change in tense, person, word order, affirmation-negation
- Translation: sentence or paragraph translation
- Sentence making
- Answering questions on content

Oral exercises

- Reading the text aloud
- Reading phonetic exercises aloud
- This may be recorded in a language laboratory if the equipment is available. Some are checked by the teacher and individual help may be given to the students with special difficulties.
- Recitation of short dialogues, speeches and stories. Preparation for extracurricular activities such as recitation contests.

Step 5: Freer Practice

Classwork usually takes 1-2 periods per week.

- Class discussion of the text, its theme, significance, intent of the author, questions of opinion and questions involving inference, and other questions of interest
- Role playing based on a story that had been read or studied
- Debate on questions arising out of discussions of the text

Homework

- Composition based on the text

Appendix 5: The Teachers University English Department Curriculum (Ford, 1988:32)

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The Study of English in China

sive approach to language study, and is probably the main factor in explaining student gains in English proficiency.

The Teachers University English department curriculum is presented below (does not include other language courses):

<p><i>Year One:</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Intensive Reading I</td> <td style="text-align: right;">6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Intensive Reading II</td> <td style="text-align: right;">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Extensive Reading</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spoken English</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Listening Comprehension</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>2</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">16</td> </tr> </table>	Intensive Reading I	6	Intensive Reading II	4	Extensive Reading	2	Spoken English	2	Listening Comprehension	<u>2</u>		16																	
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<p><i>Year Two (1st semester):</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Intensive Reading I</td> <td style="text-align: right;">6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Intensive Reading II</td> <td style="text-align: right;">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Extensive Reading</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Listening Comprehension</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>2</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">14</td> </tr> </table>	Intensive Reading I	6	Intensive Reading II	4	Extensive Reading	2	Listening Comprehension	<u>2</u>		14	<p><i>(2nd semester - add):</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Grammar</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>2</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">16</td> </tr> </table>	Grammar	<u>2</u>		16														
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