

清华大学“985”项目之一

可读性理论

5

# 英语教材

*Readability*

吕中舌 著

*in reading materials  
selection and coursebook design for  
college English in China*



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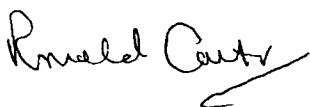
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*Lu Zhongshe's work is an original study of English language use in the context of materials and curriculum development in China, with a particular emphasis on the complex question of what makes a text readable. The study contains a very valuable review of existing work in the field of readability but then explores alternative methods of coding for readability, with particular reference to the needs of university students in China and against a background of a history of curriculum development and reform in China. There is a constant focus on the appropriacy of texts, register and levels of vocabulary and there is also innovative material on the development of thinking skills through the development of responses to text and language. The study advances our understanding of issues of textbook design and resolves a number of the complex questions of tradition and innovation in both Chinese and international educational contexts. Lu Zhongshe writes lucidly about a range of issues concerning English language use and cross-cultural communication and the study is backed up with evidence from empirical research into the attitudes of students and teachers of English in China. The work contributes much to our understanding of the relationship between English language teaching and learning.*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Professor Ronald Carter,  
School of English Studies,  
University of Nottingham, England.

## Abstract

This thesis studies the application of readability in reading materials selection and coursebook design for college English in an EFL context in China. Its aim is to develop rationales which coursebook writers can utilise in selecting materials as texts and as a basis for designing tasks.

This study, through a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, argues that readability is applicable in the EFL Chinese context, and readability plays an important role in determining the selection of materials and the task design for college English. As the term readability is used in a more comprehensive sense which includes text factors as well as reader factors, existing measures of readability should be critically examined. Objective and statistical measures such as readability formulae need to be refined in line with recent research into the relationship between lexico-grammar and discourse organisation, and with recent research into second language/foreign language acquisition. Ease of reading can be manipulated by highlighting the use of discourse signals in the text, and by raising high order questions. It is argued that high-order-tasks such as "thinking skill" activities facilitate students' interaction with the text and the development of language awareness.

The application of three highly regarded formulae and the analysis of language features of the chosen texts indicate that word difficulty and sentence complexity are significant in materials selection. However, the findings in the questionnaires and interviews show that readability formulae in use today ignore the critical functions of discourse signals and organisation. Nor do they consider cognitive processing factors such as exercise design, readers' interest, motivation and prior knowledge which play an equally important part as word difficulty and sentence length. Consequently, the suggestion is that both objective and subjective research methodologies are necessary in setting up new criteria. Objective statistics gained from appropriate readability formulae serve as an index to the difficulty of a text in terms of language. However, subjective opinion from experienced teachers on reader factors functions as an aid, and exercise design functions as an adjustment to students' comprehensibility. Among the three, exercise or task design deserves more exploration and experimentation from coursebook writers.

Process-based and activity-centred approaches are suggested in raising questions and designing tasks, because they focus on the reader and emphasise developing students' interpretation of the relations between forms and meanings. It is argued that they lead students into the process of learning-learn to learn, which is the ideal goal of English teaching, to which coursebook writers of college English have so far paid insufficient attention.

Therefore, new criteria for materials selection and coursebook design for college English are proposed:

- The textbooks have to meet the requirement stated in the National English Syllabus.
- The chosen passages need to be more authentic.

- The chosen texts have to be interesting in topic, and substantial in content.
- The texts have to be right in difficulty level from the linguistic point of view.
- Task design should provide students with opportunities to make use of their prior knowledge to interact with the text.
- The exercises should explore ways of leading students to a deeper, more personal engagement.

It is hoped that these criteria will function as basic guidelines for future coursebook writing in college English.

# **Acknowledgements**

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I wish to acknowledge the participation of those who undertook my data collection, including Chinese visiting scholars, Chinese students from Nottingham University as well as students and teachers from Tsinghua University. It is their comments and opinions that make the findings of the study reliable and valid. To all of them I wish to offer a deeply-felt expression of my gratitude.

I appreciate the sincere friendship from both my Chinese friends and foreign friends who are always there for me, offering support and encouragement all the time. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance and support I have received from the staff in the Institute of Contemporary Chinese Studies and the Language Centre of Nottingham University, my colleagues in the Foreign Languages Department of Tsinghua University. I offer thanks to my family for their tolerance and understanding. I owe a great debt to my daughter for her endless love and companionship.

Last, but most important, I would like to express my appreciation for the scholarship provided by the International Office of Nottingham University, which enables me to realise my dream of doing my PhD.



# ***Dedications***

***To my daughter***

***for her companionship and love...***

# **Abbreviations**

- CELE: Centre of English Language Education of Nottingham University
- CET: College English Test
- GRE: Graduate Record Examination
- ESL: English as a Second Language
- EFL: English as a Foreign Language
- TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
- ESP: English for Specific Purposes
- WPM: Word Per Minute
- Int: Intensive reading
- Ext: Extensive reading
- SLA: Second Language Acquisition
- IELTS: International English Language Test System

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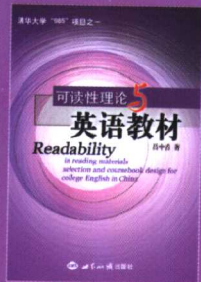
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## 作者简介

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11/26/01



## 内容简介

《可读性理论与英语教材》是应用语言学领域的学术专著。该著作从理论上系统地阐述了教材的选材标准及设计理念，探讨了英语为母语国家教材选材的标尺，并结合我国英语教学的特点，提出中国的大学英语教学应既吸收外国的经验，又有别于英语为母语的学习方法。该书所收集的数据分析结果表明：我国大学生的英语语言技能仅仅相当于英语国家11-14岁的初中生。但他们在兴趣、爱好、学习动机、知识面、理解力及其他综合素质等方面都远远高于英语国家的初中生。如何调动好学生的内在因素，充分发挥他们的主观能动性，变被动学习为主动学习，是我们英语教材、教学方法的根本变革所在。该著作通过定性、定量的分析，论证了这种变革的可行性。



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