



A POST-USE EVALUATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH-  
INTEGRATED COURSE FOR CHINESE LEARNERS

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MA IN ELT THESIS

INSTITUTE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION  
ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY OF THAILAND

NOVEMBER 2004

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I certify that all the material in this study which is not my own work has been identified and acknowledged, and that no material is included for which a degree has already been conferred upon me.

Signed: XIE NAN

Date



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## ABSTRACT

In the Chinese context, coursebooks are the sole core materials for the programme and the visible indicator to the progress of the course in the classroom. The wrong choice of materials will mean a waste of funds and may lead to a demotivating effect on the students. This research undertook an analysis of a post-use evaluation of College English - Integrated Course One (NCE). The discussion of the findings is based on various data obtained from questionnaire, interview, classroom observation, and group discussion. The context of the research involved a group of ELT teachers in Linyi Normal University, Shandong, China.

The research focuses on investigating the teacher's perceptions of the coursebook and examining to what extent there is a match between the coursebook, the syllabus, and the course objectives. It seeks to identify the book's main features, to reveal its particular strengths and weaknesses, and in general, to assess its fit with current trends in materials development. The evaluation of the coursebook in relation the syllabus enables teachers to modify, adapt, and improve the teaching materials according to the demands of the teaching and learning situation. The findings revealed that the coursebook reflects the syllabus requirements as well as coursebook objectives and maintains a good fit with the current trends in language teaching and learning theories.

The study presents a scheme for evaluation which provides a guide for teachers on how they can carry out the actual evaluation, and helps them find out whether their coursebook is really effective in achieving the course objectives and matching the syllabus requirements. The identification of the strengths and the weaknesses of the syllabus and the coursebook helps teachers and educational administrators make informed decisions about materials selection. The evaluation criteria can provide valuable feedback for material writers and researchers in carrying out improvements in future editions



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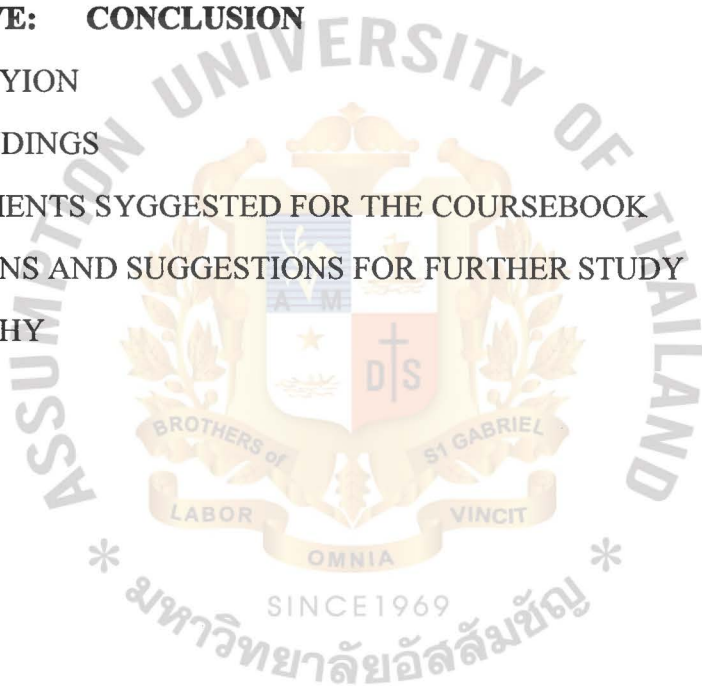
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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter sets forth the rationale, the research questions and research methods adopted for this study. It also presents a brief description of the current status of EFL teaching in China, the syllabus, course objectives, the role of teaching materials and the specific educational setting in my university, which helps the readers gain a comprehensive understanding of the background of this study.

This study attempts to evaluate the coursebook--College English – Integrated Course One, used by Linyi Teacher's University, Shandong, China. The study delineated a set of evaluation criteria, and the criteria were applied in carrying out the actual evaluation of the coursebook identified, justifying their pertinence to coursebook evaluation on the basis of theoretical insights and research findings in language teaching areas like listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. The focus of the evaluation was to gain insights into teachers' perceptions of the coursebook, and to explore whether the coursebook satisfies the teachers' expectations in relation to the syllabus and course objectives. This was done by examining the content of the National Syllabus and the book's main features, its strengths and weaknesses, and its suitability in promoting language learning and teaching in the classroom.

## 1.2 THE RATIONALE OF THIS STUDY

In the Chinese context, teachers and students rely heavily on coursebooks, and coursebooks may be the sole core materials for the programme and the visible indicator of the progress of the course in the classroom. Students learn what is presented in the coursebook, and the way the coursebook presents material is the way students learn it. The coursebook will influence the class and the learning process. Therefore, in many cases, coursebooks are the center of instruction and one of the most important influences on what goes on in the classroom. The wrong choice of materials will mean a waste of funds and may lead to a demotivating effect on the students. The ability to evaluate a coursebook and make appropriate decisions to use it is a very important professional activity for all ELT teachers (Chambers, 1997:29). Such decisions are usually made on the basis of models of what constitute good materials. Thus, materials evaluation enables teachers to gain an insight into the organizational principles of the coursebooks, which will guide teachers on how to choose the best material for instruction, how to make supplementary materials for the class, and how to adapt materials.

No coursebook can expect to appeal to all teachers or learners at a particular level. Each different group of learners is unique and coursebooks which are not generally designed to be used by a particular group of the learners, may therefore end up not meeting the needs of any group. Especially in my university, teachers have to deal with varying levels of English proficiency, ranging from very poor to the very fluent in a class of around 40. Furthermore, the students' learning purposes vary widely. Some of them learn English for entry into universities abroad and others for more

specific purposes. Very often, the coursebook does not match the students' divergent needs for learning English. With such a vast number of EFL coursebooks in the market today, it is imperative for teachers to be able to exercise their professional judgment in choosing a coursebook that is most suited to their students. This means that teachers should be guided in evaluating coursebooks. The evaluation will provide practical theories for teachers and teacher trainers in their materials selection.

For decades, teacher trainers have stressed the importance of the teachers' involvement in program design, methodology, materials selection and adaptation in EFL/ESL classroom. Yet in reality, many teacher trainers have only provided rather superficial and somewhat contradictory ideas on how to give teachers an active role in materials evaluation and development. It is hoped that this evaluation will prod teacher's enthusiasm and give the teachers more control in any of these processes in the materials development.

In China, all materials development has to be based on the National Syllabus. The new revised syllabus came out on January 1, 2004, with a view to incorporating new methodological ideas in achieving course objectives. One of these is the enhancement of the skills of listening and speaking. Given that the aim of the new syllabus is to raise the teacher's awareness of this teaching focus, this mounts a challenge to the materials delivery. Matching up the teaching objectives with their current teaching materials becomes the crucial task for EFL teachers in my university, even as it does in the other universities in the whole country.

Prior to this, for decades, teachers focused their teaching on language structures and



reading comprehension based on the previous syllabus. Little was done to heighten the importance of listening and speaking. As a result, although most students managed to pass the National Band 4 Exam, however, more often than not, they cannot communicate in the target language.

As stated early, coursebooks play a crucial role in the realm of language teaching and learning in ELT circles in China. In order to address the needs of the new syllabus, all the powerful publishers have already started to publish new coursebooks and hold conference to display their coursebooks. Thus selecting a suitable coursebook which can fully match the syllabus and coursebook objectives remains a challenging task for EFL teachers.

Numerous evaluation checklists have been designed over the years to help teachers make a systematic selection of coursebook (Tucker, 1975; Van Lier, 1979; Williams, 1983; Breen and Candlin, 1987; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Sheldon, 1988; McDonough and Shaw, 1993; Cunningsworth, 1984, 1995; Littlejohn, 1988). In addition to considering criteria provided by the scholars, this evaluation will be based on current trends in materials development and my own teaching and learning situation and will offer practical evaluation criteria for teachers and education administrators to assist them in their materials evaluation and selection.

The coursebook I will evaluate is meant for English Grade I students. Most instructors who teach this course are Bachelor degree holders with very little teaching experience or training. Many lack the expertise in coursebook evaluation, are unqualified to interpret its intentions or evaluate its content and method, and simply to use the



coursebook as the only teaching material in the classroom. By carrying out the evaluation exercise, teachers will become better-equipped to adapt the coursebook realistically.

### **1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

This research aims to examine the content of the National Syllabus since there is only one syllabus which dominates the teaching objectives and curriculum design. It will investigate the teacher's perceptions of the coursebook and examine to what extent there is a match between the coursebook, the syllabus, and the course objectives. The study seeks to identify the book's main features, to reveal its particular strengths and weaknesses, and in general, to assess its fit with current trends in materials development. The evaluation of the coursebook in relation the syllabus should enable teachers to modify, adapt, and improve the teaching materials according to the demands of the teaching and learning situation. Hence, my study has been guided by the following research questions:

- (1) Does the coursebook reflect the syllabus objectives and course objectives, and is it congruent with current trends in materials development?
- (2) What are EFL teachers' views about the coursebook, College English Integrated Course? How relevant is the coursebook to their teaching needs?
- (3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook in terms of the five skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation)?

## 1.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will present a scheme for evaluation which can be used to draw up a checklist of items for assessing teaching materials and provide appropriate guidance for teachers in their materials selection and materials delivery in classroom teaching. It will provide further suggestions on carrying out materials evaluation, and offer some insights on materials adaptation. In this way the evaluation criteria developed for the research could function as a yardstick for teachers in their efforts at materials evaluation and adaptation.

Hopefully the study will provide a guide for teachers on how they can carry out the actual evaluation and help them find out whether their coursebook is really effective in achieving the course objectives and matching the syllabus requirement. The identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the syllabus and the coursebook will help teachers and educational administrators make informed decisions about materials selection. The evaluation criteria can also provide valuable feedback for materials writers and researchers in carrying out improvements in future editions. I feel that teachers should be equipped with such criteria so that they can become more responsible and active educators.

It is hoped that the findings of the study will be of value to the teachers in my university, especially those who wish to benefit from materials evaluation and adaptation to improve their EFL/ESL teaching in China.

## 1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following methods of investigation have been used in this study:

**Checklist:** This was used as evaluation criteria to find out the strengths and limitations of the coursebook, and whether there is a good match between the coursebook and the national syllabus and course objectives.

**Questionnaire:** The questionnaire elicited teachers' perceptions about the kind of coursebooks that they feel would be relevant to their students and their own needs as well as the extent to which this was fulfilled by the College English Integrated Course. The questionnaire was distributed to 30 teachers in my university.

**Group discussion:** The 30 teachers were divided into 5 groups, and face-to-face discussions were conducted to help the researcher to clarify the information obtained from the questionnaire.

**Interviews:** 5 teachers were interviewed to obtain information regarding their perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook.

**Classroom observations** of 5 teachers' classes were conducted to obtain more information as to how the materials in the coursebook are delivered in the classroom and whether they have been adapted.

## 1.6 THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### *1.6.1 The Current Status of Foreign Language Education in China*

China boasts of having the world's largest population of learners of English as a foreign language. It was in 1902 that China first introduced the teaching of foreign languages (mainly English) into schools. In the past two decades, endless efforts have been made to improve ELT efficiency and effectiveness. Thousands of teachers have been sponsored to study abroad. Thousands of foreign teachers (native speakers of English) have been flown in to teach and share skills with Chinese counterparts. Most (if not all) of the latest ELT methodologies and approaches have been introduced to China (The Communicative Approach was formally recommended in the National Syllabus for Middle Schools). Large numbers of ELT textbooks have been imported from English speaking countries, such as the UK, USA, Canada, and Australia. School curricula for all levels have been set up and revised. It is unfair to say that these efforts have been fruitless. However, influenced by feudal ideas lasting thousands of years, many people in China failed to see the importance of foreign languages. Along with the changing political situation, foreign languages were at times emphasized and at other times neglected. As a result of this fluctuating attitude, enthusiastic at certain times and indifferent at certain others, the present situation is far from satisfactory.

Since China began her open policy, she has greatly increased contact with other countries, and this has considerably raised the level of importance given to the use of foreign languages. Especially since China joined the WTO, the economy has been developing quickly, and nearly all trades and professions have begun to need people who have attained foreign language proficiency. Foreign language is included in the



university entrance exams as well as in various kinds of tests for jobs or promotions, and is receiving much more attention than ever before. Learning a foreign language is also considered conducive to the development of students' intelligence, cultural awareness, and outlook on the world. English has been the one foreign language that has been found predominantly desirable within this context.

#### *1.6.2 College English Program in China*

Normally there are two different English teaching programs, one for English language majors and the other for Non-English majors in the higher education system in China. In my university, the foreign language school is responsible for both English and Non-English majors. Their duty is to run different training programs, work on the course design and select teaching materials based on learners' needs and our own education setting.

#### *1.6.3 College English Syllabus in China*

There is a National Syllabus for both English and Non-English major students of English programs in the higher education system, designed by the Educational Authority. This kind of syllabus is prescribed nation-wide and is authoritative. The syllabus provides six progressive bands for EFL at the tertiary level outlined with graded requirements in terms of language skills. Each band covers one semester. The course design, teaching objectives, evaluation and assessment usually follow the requirements of the syllabus.

#### *1.6.4 The Role of the Teaching Materials*

In the Chinese context, the EFL coursebooks for higher education are developed by a team of famous scholar-teachers who are familiar with this particular educational system and teaching /learning setting. The books are usually prescribed for use by the educational administrators or school authorities. Often, teachers are left with the rather passive role of implementing, adapting, and supplementing coursebook materials for their students. They can only work on the coursebooks that the university chooses for them. However, since both teachers and students depend very much on the course books for examination purposes, coursebooks become the central focus of teaching and learning in the Chinese EFL classroom. Coursebooks provide a resource for both teachers and learners and serve to translate the guidelines in the official government syllabus into a rich source of content. Most Chinese teachers and students are very dependent on course books and devote their time to cover the content of the coursebook thoroughly and exhaustively. Students, teachers and coursebooks constitute the whole classroom setting.

#### *1.6.5 College English Test (CET) in China*

The College English Test (CET) is the major means of measuring the achievement of the aims and objectives set by the syllabus, and it is also the only national English proficiency test for Non-English majors in the whole country. Namely, all applicants for a degree at Bachelor's level are required to pass CET. As a consequence, students are forced to learn English reluctantly in order to get a degree. Almost all their spare time is spent on English, regardless of their major courses, because of this requirement to pass the CET Band 4 to obtain a Bachelor's degree and it being conditional upon

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their passing it to be considered for scholarships and honorary awards.

The examination paper consists of six parts: Listening comprehension, Reading comprehension, Vocabulary & Structure, Cloze test, Translation from English to Chinese, and Writing.

## 1.7 TERMINOLOGY

In this study, the following terms will be used:

### 1.7.1 Syllabus:

A syllabus is roughly, an overall specification or programme of what is to be learned (or at least taught) in a particular course or series of courses. It often consists of a comprehensive list of content of items, has explicit objectives, indicates a time schedule, a preferred methodology or approach and recommends materials. Syllabus in this research stands for the New National Syllabus for Non-English major students in China, which has had a significant effect on the domains of English teaching, testing and materials design.

### 1.7.2 Materials

‘Materials’ refers to everything designed specifically for language teaching and learning such as coursebooks, worksheets, computer software; authentic materials like off-air recordings, newspaper articles that are specially selected and exploited for teaching purposes by the classroom teachers; teacher-written materials; and learner-generated materials.

### 1.7.3 Materials evaluation

Materials evaluation refers to the assessment of the usefulness or appropriateness of the materials in relation to the needs of learners and the context of learning. In general, there are three basic types of evaluation:

**Pre-use evaluation:** establishes potential suitability

**While-use evaluation:** gathers data on planning decision, implementation and response; may stimulate preliminary reconsiderations of selection criteria

**Post-use evaluation:** uses data on in-course use and data on effects to assess suitability of selection and selection procedures.

### 1.7.4 Materials adaptation

This refers to the process whereby teachers adapt materials and use them in more systematic and principled ways, so as to make the materials become more integral to the goals and objectives of the course.

### 1.7.5 Coursebook

The term 'coursebook' is used here to mean a textbook of which the teacher and student usually have a copy, and which is in principle to be followed systematically as the basis for a language course (Ur, 1996: 183).



## 1.8 THE ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH

The research is divided into five chapters. Chapter One presents the background of the study, covering the current status of Chinese foreign language education, the rationale, the research questions, the significance of the study, the college education and test system in China, and the role of the course book. Chapter two provides a survey of related theories in this domain and includes the overview of materials evaluation schemes; the significance of materials evaluation; the approaches and procedures used in materials evaluation; and the teachers' role in materials evaluation together with the review of second language teaching theories related to this study. Finally, it offers practical criteria for coursebook evaluation. Chapter Three presents the framework used for the whole evaluation process and the research methodology adopted. Chapter Four deals with the analysis and evaluation of the materials, based on the data collected from questionnaire, interviews, classroom observation and discussions; and the final chapter, Chapter Five, summarizes the main features of the coursebook identified for the study. Limitations and suggestions for further studies are also included in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a survey of various theoretical issues related to materials evaluation. It starts with a discussion of the importance of materials evaluation, followed by an overview of the evaluation schemes designed between 1970s and 1990s; and moves on to a review of the evaluation approaches and procedures proposed by different researchers in the literatures; some issues on current trends in materials development are considered; and second language teaching theories that serve as the designing principles for NCE Book I are taken into account in relation to task-based and learner-centered approach to language teaching and the concept of learner strategy. Finally, on the basis of this discussion the criteria for carrying out the materials evaluation in this study will be formulated.

#### **2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF MATERIALS EVALUATION**

“Materials are an important component within the curriculum, and are often the most tangible and visible component of pedagogy” (Nunan, 1991: 279). However, the wealth of published materials for ELT available on the market makes selecting the right coursebook a challenging task. An ever-increasing number of books are being published across areas of ELT to the point where it is easy to become thoroughly confused and overwhelmed by their sheer variety and by the competing claims made for them. Therefore, informed and appropriate choices need be made when selecting coursebooks and supporting materials. In respect to materials evaluation and selection,

Ellis (1997: 36-42) suggests that, teachers can determine which materials are best suited to their purposes and make a decision whether it is worthwhile using the materials again, which activities ‘work’ and which do not, and how to modify the materials to make them more effective for future use. Through evaluation, particular strengths and weaknesses in the coursebooks in use may be identified, so that optimum use can be made of their strong points, whilst their weaker areas can be strengthened through adaptation or by substituting materials from other books.

It is irresponsible to select a certain coursebook merely on the basis of intuition or pure experience and then to make do with it. Besides, coursebooks nowadays are based on a variety of principles of learning theories and language descriptions. Teachers need to be cautious enough to look underneath what the coursebook claims to be so as to identify the underlying linguistic and language teaching principles from which the coursebook is generated and designed. As Chambers (1997:29) states materials evaluation and selection is a very important professional activity for all EFL teachers.

Although there are numerous evaluation checklists designed over the years to help teachers make a systematic selection of coursebooks, many EFL teachers are still unaware of the criteria used in materials selection and evaluation, especially in the selection of a core coursebook for a particular group of learners and classroom situation. Rubdy (2003:41) states that ‘materials evaluation is a matter of judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose. Materials evaluation can help teachers ‘make judgments about the effect of the materials on the people using them’ (Tomlinson, 2003:15) and in making decisions in choosing a suitable coursebook to meet the needs of learners.



Furthermore, materials evaluation is a valuable component and serves the dual purpose of sensitizing both teachers and students to some of the more important features in coursebooks in addition to helping them to gain useful insights into the nature of the materials. It can also have a significant impact on students in meeting their language learning objectives, and can affect both the process of how they learn and the outcomes. Especially in the Chinese context which has an official syllabus, selecting published materials in order to fully match the syllabus and coursebook objectives remains a challenging task for EFL teachers. In my university most teachers, even educational administrators feel a necessity to have a practical checklist based on the National Syllabus Requirements, the course objectives and our own learning/teaching situation, which will provide a guideline in their materials selection and evaluation.

In addition, many instructors, who teach College English I – the coursebook under focus in my study, are novice teachers. This study is, therefore, expected to provide a framework for the choice of materials evaluation criteria to help teachers in developing valid criteria for carrying out materials evaluation.

## **2.3 OVERVIEW OF COURSEBOOK EVALUATION SCHEMES**

The present study intends to create a practical checklist to conduct an evaluation of a coursebook already in use in a language program in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses, based on current theories on materials development and evaluation. Table 1 presents a list of evaluation schemes designed between 1970s and 1990s with a view to help teachers make a systematic selection of coursebooks, which poses a challenging task in coursebook evaluation and selection. Thus an investigation and a



close overview of available evaluation checklists and schemes can prove helpful, and will offer a guideline for the researcher in approaching to this study.

**Table 2.1: Coursebook Evaluation Schemes in three decades (Riazi, 2003: 53)**

Decade	1970s	1980s	1990s				
Year	1975	1983	1988	1991	1995	1996	1998
checklist	Davison Tucker	Daoud Cele- Murcia	Sheldon	Skierso	Cunningsworth	Ur	Littlejohn

**Table 2.2 Overview of Coursebook Evaluation Criteria**

Year	1970/ Davison	1975/ Tucker	1983/William
Characteristics	-matching the objective of curriculum with the text. -attention to effectiveness and accuracy -development of context & methodological.	-focus on text and language. -emphasis upon presentation, drills & practice	-the congruence between the psychological & linguistic principles -appropriate guidance to the teachers -catering the needs of learners & relevance to cultural environment.
Year	1988/Sheldon	Mcdonough & Shaw/ 1993	1995/Cunningsworth
Characteristics	-emphasis on locality of criteria. -addressing cultural & global lists. -the suitability of the demands of the teaching situation.	-usability: materials integrated into syllabus. -generalizability: applicable core features. -adaptability: materials to suit local condition -relevance to learners’ needs and syllabus requirements. -strategies to handle different aspects of language.	

Year	1996/Ur, 1998/Littlejohn	2001/ Tomlinson (at al)
Characteristics	-incorporating learner’s needs and environmental & cultural feature. -reflections on the wealth of expertise & the degree of complexity and sophistication of second/foreign language teaching. -promote experiential, exploratory, & reflective encounters with language	-providing learners with engaging and purposeful interaction. -catering teaching & learning style to be suited in different circumstances. -more opportunity or encouragement to adapt the materials. -calling for more cognitive or affective engagement. -empowering learners in situation -involving excitement or disturbance to stimulate the emotions of the learners.
Year	2003/ Rubdy	
Characteristics	-addressing psychological potentials to meet learners’ needs, & goals -advocating pedagogical validity to provide guidance for novice teachers. -encouraging the flexibility of materials to foster the teachers for creativity.	

The information in Table 2 provides an overview of current thinking on materials evaluation and development. The summary contained in the tables reveals that different scholars and researchers focused on different aspects of materials evaluation at different times. This is because each of these schemes reflects to a large extent the main trends in language teaching and learning at those times (Riazi, 2003: 62).

For instance, Davison’s scheme for coursebook evaluation and selection, which represents the 1970s, is divided into five major categories:

- the students/text relationship
- the teacher/text relationship

- the curriculum/text relationship
- the class size/text relationship
- the internal construction of the text

With respect to the relationship between teacher and the text, Davison ( 1975: 314 ) believes that when evaluating a coursebook, teachers should check if the text is designed in a suitable and practical manner for non-native teachers, and whether or not the coursebook is accompanied by a good Teacher's Book. He goes further by claiming that the coursebook should match the objectives of the curriculum with those of the text, the effectiveness and accuracy of allotted time to use the book, and the content of the text should conform to the latest methodological developments.

In addition, he emphasizes the importance of the relationship between class size and the text, and contends that the objectives and the methodology of the text should be reasonable, given the class size and the situation in which the text is going to be used.

Davison suggests that the coursebook should provide opportunity or encouragement to adapt the materials to the needs, wants, personalities, or styles of the learners and teachers, and provide extra possibilities, to help teachers to adapt and localize the course, in order to match the students' divergent needs for learning English. As my own study is based on teachers' perceptions, and intends to examine whether the syllabus and course objectives match, some of Davison's theories are closely related to my study.



The criteria developed by Tucker (1975:355) points out the need for an efficient and systematic approach to evaluation, and suggests drawing up 'a comprehensive set of criteria' in addition to a flexible rating system and a rating chart that provides a quick summary of the assessment of the coursebook's merits at a glance. This approach is systematic, and very much concerned with the objective, quantitative, and numerical, yet it falls short of being comprehensive, as the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are not fully covered. Issues of presentation, drills, and practice are dominant features of Tucker's scheme, making it in line with features of behaviorism and structuralism. In particular, as Riazi contends (2003: 64), Tucker's scheme represents the underlying and dominant principles of language instruction in the 1970s.

Williams proposes an evaluative scheme based on three assumptions (Williams,1983: 251-253):

- guidance for non-native teachers: The coursebook should provide appropriate guidance for the teacher of English who is not a native speaker of English.
- needs of second language learners: the coursebook should cater to the needs of the second-language learner.
- relevance to the social-cultural environment: the coursebook should suit particular and different contexts.

William's approach (1983) moves the emphasis to a consideration of culture and the environment of the learners which directs us to a more situation-bound set of materials (Riazi, 2003: 64). It provides teachers the opportunity to generate their own set of criteria relevant to their teaching and learning situations while being guided by the



framework of a scheme for evaluation. What is interesting in this scheme for me is that it attempts to provide guidance for non-native speakers of English, in catering to the needs of learners, or being relevant to the social-cultural environment. For example, by considering the learners' needs, the teacher can independently derive criteria to provide activities that learners will find interesting and useful, and consequently, they may be motivated to take part and succeed in the activities (Ur, 1988:15).

Sheldon's checklist is very comprehensive and attempts to assess all aspects of content including such diverse factors as graphics and physical characteristics as well as authenticity and flexibility. Her scheme (1988:237-246) offers as she states a bell-jar summary of common-core factors that reviewers, administrators, teachers, learners, and educational advisors most frequently use in their decision about coursebook selection. She contends that no culturally restricted, global list of criteria can ever really apply in most local environments without modifications. She suggests that the checklist is not definitive, but must be adapted to suit the particular demands of the teaching situation. Her emphasis is on the locality of textbook criteria.

With respect to localization of second language teaching materials, Dat (2003:170 citing Breen & Candlin, 1987) contends that localization is a concern with local learners' right to decide what they need and do not need from what is provided. In facilitating this right, localization aims at making materials inspiring enough to stir and enhance individual learners, needs, and abilities as well as their affective involvement (Brumfit & Robert, 1993; Breen & Candlin, 1987). Tomlinson (2003: 162-173) provides further support for why the coursebook needs to be localized. He

describes a dramatic attempt at localizing a coursebook in Liverpool 35 years ago, which was successful in producing a series of materials to facilitate both learners' language acquisition and personal involvement.

He further goes on to claim that some global coursebooks try to cater for everybody, but end up engaging nobody. The choice of topics and texts is undertaken with a view to neither disadvantage nor offends or upset any learners. The result is that the book presents 'a sanitized world which is bland and dull and in which there is very little excitement or disturbance to stimulate the emotions of the learner' (Tomlinson, 1998: 20), because 'there is, after all, no better motivation for learning a language than a burning desire to express an opinion in that language or on a subject that one really cares about' (Dat, 2003: 171 citing Eskey, 1984:67).

The coursebook evaluation schemes of Williams and Sheldon signal major changes in the views of second/foreign language instruction. For example, issues on authenticity, the provision of opportunity for using and practicing language for communication, learner needs and considerations of culture and the environment of the learners are all taken into consideration. Both of these schemes in my view are more practical and trendy in terms of materials development and evaluation, and will be applied to the present study.

Cunningsworth's scheme (1984) touches upon the importance of relating materials to course objectives and the learner's needs and processes. According to Cunningsworth, the context in which teaching materials will be used should be taken as the starting point for the evaluation. The following is a summary of his categories:

(1) Aims and objectives of the English program:

Coursebook corresponds closely with the aims of the teaching program and with the needs of the learner).

(2) Design and organization:

The content is organized and sequenced;

The grading and progression is suitable for the learners.

There is adequate recycling and revision.

(3) Skills:

All four skills are adequately covered, bearing in mind the course aims and syllabus requirements.

Activities of developing skills are suitable for students' level, interest.

(4) Topic:

There is sufficient material of genuine interest to learners.

There is enough variety and range of topics.

(5) Methodology

The approaches adopted in the teaching are appropriate to the learning and teaching situation.

(6) Teaching and learning situation:

- the role and status of English in the learners' home countries;
- allotted time;
- class size;
- resources of teaching materials, etc.

(7) The learners:

- learners' expectations,

- learning experiences
- preferred learning styles
- and ages, levels, motivations, interests, etc.

(8) The teachers:

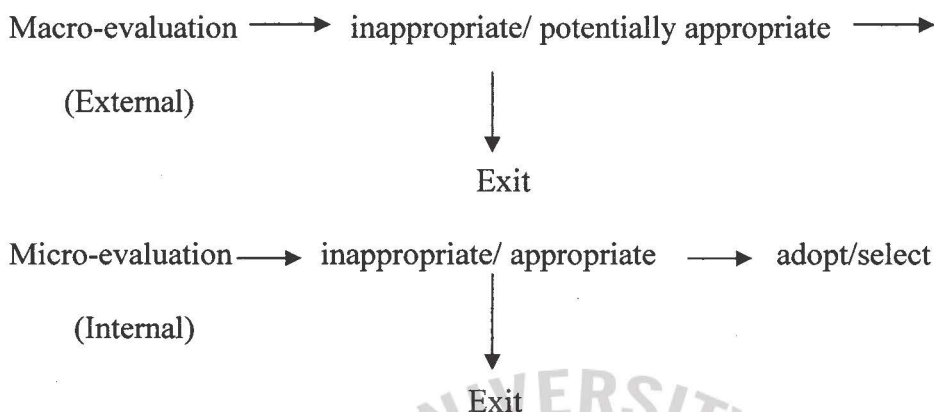
- roles
- their preferred methodologies
- their expertise at adapting or supplementing the standard course book, etc.

A reflection of extended and complex approaches to ESL/EFL can be seen in Cunningsworth's criteria for material evaluation in the form of an elaborate checklist of questions to ask about EFL teaching materials. The comprehensive checklist includes language content, presentation and practice of new language items, developing language skills and communicative abilities, supporting materials, motivation and learners. In addition, Cunningsworth suggests an "in-depth evaluation", which not only takes account of the prominent and obvious features of books, but also examines how particular items are dealt with are also examined; especially those which are related to students' learning needs, syllabus requirements, and how successful they have been in achieving their objectives. One shortcoming of this approach however, is that he does not provide adequate treatment of the skills of reading, listening and writing.

McDonough and Shaw's (1993:75) criteria comprise two stages: "External" and "Internal" as Table 2.3 illustrates:



Table 2.3: McDonough and Shaw's Framework for Evaluation (McDonough and Shaw 1993:75)



The external stage of evaluation attempts to obtain a complete overview of the materials from the outside, examining the treatment and the presentation of the skills, the sequencing and grading of the materials, and appropriation of the content. At this stage, the coursebook cover, the claims made in the 'blurb', the introduction, and the tables of contents are examined. Upon completion of the external evaluation, a decision is made as to whether the material is appropriate and whether it merits closer inspection at the internal evaluation stage.

According to McDonough and Shaw (1993), micro-evaluation is the 'internal' evaluation, which looks at what is actually presented 'inside' the materials. At this stage, materials are examined in depth. Several factors concerning aspects of reading, listening and speaking materials; appropriation of tests and exercises; self-study provision and teacher-learner balance in the use of the materials and also grading and sequencing are taken into consideration in evaluating the book.

The overall evaluation stage in this approach includes the following factors:

- Usability factor (to what extent the materials can be integrated into the syllabus);
- The generalizability factor (whether there are core features which are generally applicable);
- The adaptability factor (modifying to suit local conditions);
- The flexibility factor (whether entry into materials can be made at different points).

To comment, this model is flexible enough to be used worldwide and can be adapted to suit different purposes. One good feature of this approach is its focus on efficiency: several coursebooks can be examined at the external evaluation stage to be shortlisted for consideration in the internal evaluation stage.

The significance of each criterion in Ur's scheme (1996) is to be determined by the teacher, before the application of the checklist, which, as I believe, is more practical and handy for teachers in selecting a suitable coursebook. This can show that the teachers' standpoint on the evaluation criteria plays an important role in materials evaluation and selection.

Ur's scheme (1990s) seeks to ensure that teaching methodologies and materials promote experiential, exploratory, and reflective encounters with language, which means that the methods, the materials and the activities should meet the complexities of the language learners' goals and objectives.

Tomlinson's framework (2001: 80-89; 2003:162-173;) deals with some challenging issues for materials evaluation and development. The assumption underlying his criteria is that the materials should consider what learners and teachers need and want.

The characteristics of Tomlinson's framework can be summarized as follows:

- encouraging teacher's involvement in materials evaluation and development.
- catering for different teaching and learning styles to be suited to different circumstances.
- providing teachers with a sense of confidence, security and guidance
- encouraging teachers to search for imaginative and intelligent solutions, and creativity in the process of materials evaluation and selection.

Many of the other principles found in Tomlinson (2003:21) are based on second language acquisition theory and research (SLA):

- 'Materials should achieve impact' (through novelty, variety, attractive presentation and appealing content)
- 'Materials should help learners to feel at ease' (e.g., through the use of white space to prevent clutter, through a supportive approach which is not always testing them in tasks and through the use of a personal voice)
- 'Materials should help learners to develop confidence' (e.g., through 'pushing' learners slightly beyond their existing proficiency by involving them in tasks which are challenging but achievable)
- 'Materials should require and facilitate learner self-investment' (e.g., through giving learners responsibility for making decisions and through encouraging

them to make discoveries about the language for themselves)

- ‘Materials should expose the learners to language in authentic use’ (ideally to a rich and varied input which includes unplanned, semi-planned and planned discourse and which stimulates mental response).
- ‘Materials should provide the learners with opportunities to use target language to achieve communicative purpose’ (in order to automatize existing procedural knowledge, to check the effectiveness of their existing hypotheses (Swain, 1985) and to develop strategic competence (Canale and Swain, 1980)).
- ‘Materials should take into account that learners differ in learning styles’ (Oxford and Anderson, 1995) (and should therefore ensure that they cater for learners who are predominantly visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, studial, experiential, analytic, global, dependent or independent).
- ‘Materials should maximize learning potential by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement which stimulates both right and left brain activities’ (through a variety of non-trivial activities requiring a range of different type of processing).
- ‘Materials should provide opportunities for outcome feedback’ (i.e., feedback on the effectiveness of the learner in achieving communication objectives rather than just feedback on the accuracy of the output).

Tomlinson’s theory reflects the emergence of new currents in materials evaluation. Because the present study seeks to analyze teacher’s perceptions about what they feel would be relevant to their students, Tomlinson’s criteria will be used as a valuable yardstick in the present study.



Rubdy's framework (2003:45) for evaluation and selection of coursebooks maintains that coursebooks should have the potential to motivate both teachers and learners, and considers the following three broad categories, each assessing the potential validity of the materials in relation to:

- the learners' needs, goals and pedagogical requirements
- the teacher's skills, abilities, theories, and beliefs; and
- the thinking underlying the materials writer's presentation of the content and approach to teaching and learning respectively.

Rubdy terms these as (i) psychological validity, (ii) pedagogical validity and (iii) process and content validity. Psychological validity takes into account the needs of learners to raise awareness of their different styles and strategies and enables them to take advantage of any opportunity to learn both in class and out of the classroom. Pedagogical validity provides practical guidance for teachers, especially for novice teachers, on how to deal with particular texts and activities, suggests innovative methods and approaches and offers alternative plans and procedures to enable teachers to maintain students' motivation. Process and Content validity relates to the overall view of the coursebook about the nature of the language, the nature of language learning, and its educational philosophy in general.

Rubdy goes further to contend that materials evaluation should engage teachers in constantly evolving a critical standpoint and facilitate the expanding and refining of the teachers' schemata in the process. This aspect of Rubdy's framework will be applied to my study in attempting to raise teachers' awareness towards the importance of being critical and flexible in materials evaluation and selection, since my study makes use of group discussion to clarify teachers' viewpoints and encourages

teachers' involvement in materials evaluation, with the view to developing a critical stance towards evaluation.

This overview of existing materials evaluation schemes shows, as Riazi states (2003:65) that models of language teaching in the past were simple and more language-oriented; while today we have more complex and communication-based models in which not only language skills and components are incorporated, but pragmatic aspects of language use are also included.

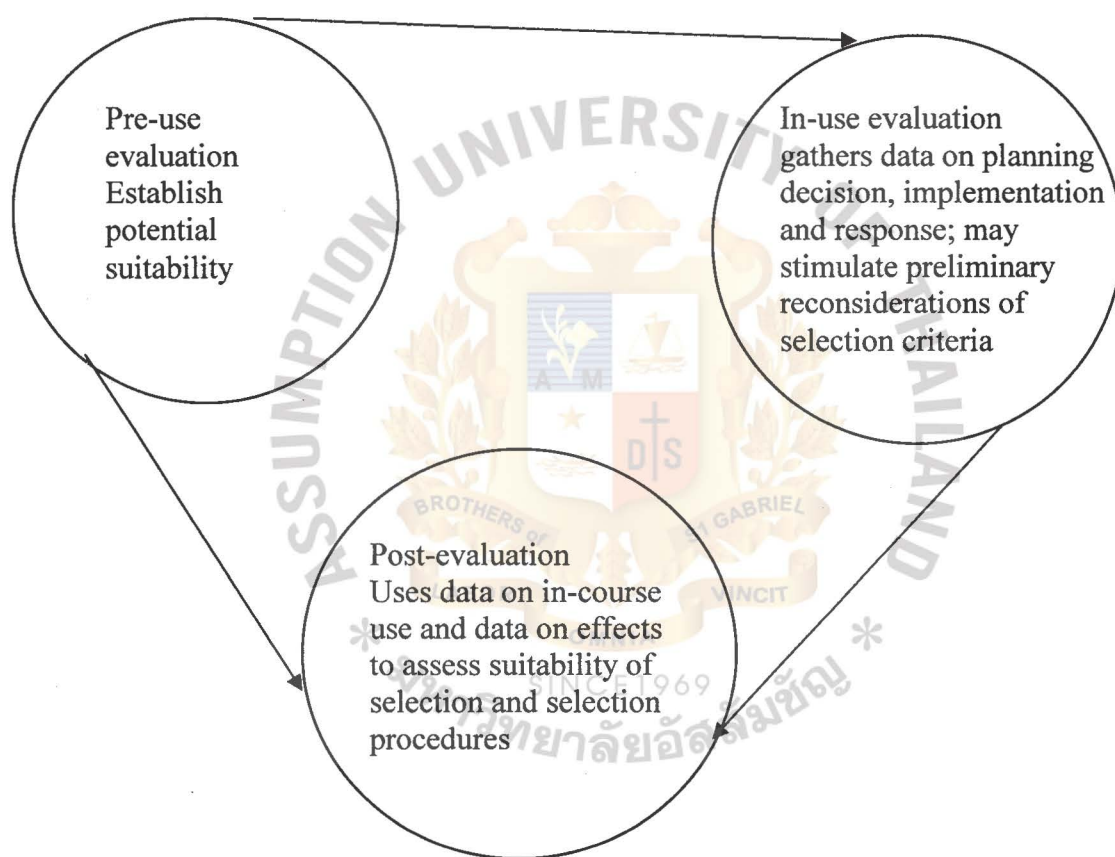
The historical review of materials evaluation schemes shows that the major question in materials evaluation is: "To what extent are the materials sensitive to the situation?" Therefore whether or not the methodology and content of the materials is appropriate for a particular language teaching context will be based on situation and purpose, teachers, learners, curriculum, and socio-cultural context (Riazi, 2003: 66).

Since the present study involves a post-use evaluation of a coursebook and aims to assess its strengths and weaknesses as well as general effectiveness, these schemes, in particular, Tomlinson's and Rubdy's evaluation criteria, are found to be most relevant to the purposes of this study. Based on the overview of the schemes and the specific teaching/learning situation in my university, I have created a practical checklist for application to my own study.

## **2.4 EVALUATION APPROACHES AND PROCEDURES ADOPTED IN THE LITERATURE**

Materials evaluation should be approached in principled, systematic and rigorous ways (Tomlinson, 2003: 33). As Rubdy states (2003: 54), coursebook evaluation is

not a straightforward exercise and depending on its purpose and the context of use it can embrace different perspectives (prospective, ongoing and/or retrospective) and can be multi-dimensional (external and/or internal; static and/or dynamic). Therefore, language teaching materials should be analyzed and evaluated in a comprehensive way (McDonough and Shaw 1993) in light of current views and research in language acquisition (Hutchinson 1987). In general, there are three basic types of evaluation:



**Figure 2. 1: Evaluation Types (McGrath, 2002:187)**

Regarding the type of evaluation to employ, Tomlinson states (Tomlinson *et al*, 2001:83) that only a thorough ‘while-use’ evaluation and a rigorous longitudinal post-use evaluation can reveal reliable evidence about the value of the courses in affecting learner attitudes and behavior, and ultimately in contributing to the development of the communicative competence of the learners. He also states (2003:5) that in order to



ensure materials are devised, selected and adapted in reliable and valid ways, we need to ensure that materials evaluation establishes procedures which are thorough, rigorous, systematic and principled.

Riazi (2003: 52-53) suggests that coursebook evaluation can be carried out at the following stages:

- Selection of coursebooks for a newly started language program.
- Evaluation of books already in use in language program to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the books.
- Evaluation of books after a course of instruction with the objective of retaining, updating, and/or substituting the books.
- Contribution to the knowledge of the field of second/foreign language education by unfolding the underlying structure and methodology used in the coursebook and their efficiency and effectiveness on students' learning.

Ellis (1997: 36-37) distinguishes two types of materials evaluation: a predictive evaluation, designed to make a decision regarding what materials to use, and a retrospective evaluation, designed to examine materials that have actually been used. It is suggested that retrospective evaluation takes on special importance. Such an evaluation provides the teacher with information which can be used to determine whether it is worthwhile using the materials again, which activities 'work' and which do not, and how to modify the materials to make them more effective for future use. A retrospective evaluation also provides as a means of 'testing' the validity of a predictive evaluation, and may point to ways in which the predictive instruments can be improved for future use. Therefore, teachers can carry out the evaluation of their



teaching materials during the course as they assess whether particular activities ‘work’, while at the end of the course they make summative judgments of the materials.

In the survey of different evaluation criteria and evaluation frameworks discussed above, varying orientations and approaches have been observed. The approach to the evaluation adopted in this study has features in common with some of the above approaches. Three basic methods will be discerned in this study: the impressionistic method, the checklist method, and the in-depth method (McGrath, 2002).

An impressionistic analysis is concerned with obtaining a general impression of the materials. This form is wide-ranging but relatively superficial (Cunningsworth, 1995). Like the impressionistic method, the checklist method is not a watertight category. In its most literal sense, a checklist consists of a list of items which is referred to for comparison, identification or verification (McGrath, 2002). Compared with the most obvious alternatives, impressionistic evaluation involving dipping into a book and in-depth evaluation based on the close analysis of features, the checklist has at least four advantages:

- (1) It is systematic, ensuring that all elements that are deemed to be important are considered.
- (2) It is cost effective, permitting a good deal of information to be recorded in a relatively short space of time.
- (3) The information is recorded in a convenient format, allowing for easy comparison between competing sets of materials.
- (4) It is explicit, and provided the categories which are well understood by all involved in the evaluation, and offers a common framework for decision-making.

The in-depth evaluation is more penetrating in its approach and has its own agenda (Cunningsworth, 1995: 2). It sees what is prominent and obvious in a coursebook and examines how specific items are dealt with, particularly those which relate to learners' needs, syllabus requirements, how different aspects of language are dealt with, etc. The in-depth techniques go beneath the publisher's and the author's claims to look at, for instance, the kind of language description, underlying assumptions about learning or values on which the materials are based, or in a broader sense, whether the materials seem likely to live up to the claims that are being made for them.

As my study involves a post-use evaluation of College English - the coursebook under investigation with the aim of assessing its effectiveness and weaknesses, in order to make a decision whether it is worthwhile to use the coursebook again, or whether it needs to modifications to bring about, all the suggested evaluation approaches discussed above are found to be relevant to the study.

## **2.5 TEACHERS' ROLES IN MATERIALS EVALUATION**

Materials evaluation is a time-consuming and difficult undertaking but if it is demanding, it is also rewarding. The teacher's particular situation should be considered in making decisions about the appropriacy of the materials. Masuhara (1998: 239) claims that teachers are in a crucial position in language teaching and learning and are often expected to be in charge of vital stages of curriculum development. Teachers can even be said to be the central figures in materials development – for they are the ones who select materials (or, at least, have some influence in the selection process). She identifies three kinds of teachers' needs:

- (1) **Self- perceived needs:** the needs which are reported by the teacher. These are what the teachers themselves can articulate.
- (2) **Needs perceived by others:** the needs of the teachers which they are not aware of and thus cannot articulate themselves and which are identified by others (e.g. colleagues, teacher-trainers, researchers) in response to qualitative data (e.g. observation of the teacher's teaching, analyzing the tendencies in interview and questionnaire responses of the teacher).
- (3) **Objectively measured needs:** the needs which are identified in objective studies in which quantified data is collected, analyzed and interpreted by a third party who tries to be detached, unbiased and accurate.

Masuhara's study of teachers' needs provides useful information for the content, coverage and format of teachers' guides. She shows that teachers' commitment and involvement is often influenced by their preference for certain materials and methods. However, the crucial problem is how can teachers' needs and wants be tapped and catered for in the materials production process (1998: 248-49). \*

On the other hand, Prabhu (cited in Tomlinson, 1998) points out that teachers' efficiency, confidence, experience, and teaching style may actually be constrained by teaching materials. In the classroom, materials can preempt all the important decisions which teachers themselves might otherwise be expected to make.

In this study, teachers' responses from questionnaire, interview, and discussion will therefore be crucial instruments in finding out relevant information on what teachers need and want from materials.

The review of materials evaluation principles and methods indicates that whatever the material is, the starting point in ELT materials evaluation is to try and answer two basic questions: What and how to evaluate? What constitutes useful and effective instructional materials? The focus of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which the coursebook under study is relevant to the teaching learning needs, and whether the coursebook satisfactory reflects aspects of the syllabus requirements, appropriate treatment of the four language skills as well as that of the task design in the coursebook. The strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook will be examined from this perspective. The criteria constructed below have been formulated by making selective use of the theories, procedures and approaches reviewed in the literature and research in ESL/EFL teaching/learning of language skills. In addition, I will consider to what extent the materials match the National Syllabus course objectives and the English teaching and learning situation in China. The following chapter, Chapter Three will provide the practical evaluation framework to be applied to this present study.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will present the research design and methodology underpinning this study. The data collection procedure and method of analysis will also be described.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

As stated in Chapter One, this study aims to find out whether the coursebook, *College English – Integrated Course I*, is appropriate to the target audience, i.e. whether it meets teachers' needs and wants. In doing so, it will attempt to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook. Thus it has been guided by the following three research questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' views about the coursebook *College English –Integrated Course*? How relevant is the coursebook to their teaching needs?
2. Does the coursebook reflect the syllabus objectives and course objectives of my university?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook in terms of the five skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating)?

Five types of data were collected in order to answer the three research questions above: checklist, questionnaire, group discussion, interview, and classroom observation. This data was collected at the Institute for English Language Education, Linyi Normal University, Shandong, China.

### 3.3 BACKGROUND OF THE SUBJECTS

Due to the limitations of time and ability, the questionnaires were distributed to only 30 teachers who are teaching English on the undergraduate program, and 218 second-year non-major college students in Linyi Teacher's University, Shandong, China. For the sake of better understanding, some of the items in the questionnaire were written in Chinese. The students under investigation had used NCE Book I for one year.

### 3.4 INSTRUMENT OF DATA COLLECTION

The data for the study was collected through a checklist, a questionnaire survey, interviews, group discussion and classroom observations.

#### 3.4.1. *The Evaluation Checklist*

This checklist is a comprehensive set of criteria with a rating chart which was designed by the researcher herself based on the overview of the evaluation criteria developed in the literature from the 1970s to the 1990s and also on the basis of theoretical insights and research findings on teaching-learning in the language skill areas such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating. The checklist was used as criteria in evaluating the coursebook as it provided a quick summary of the assessment of the coursebook's merits and weaknesses. The researcher conducted initial evaluation of the coursebook using this checklist for comment and analysis. The analysis will be presented in the first section of Chapter Four, and form the basis of the analysis of data drawn from the questionnaire, interview, group discussion, and observation.

The checklist has two sections. Section one focuses on the student's book with a focus on whether the content and topics match the syllabus objectives in terms of the five skill areas in language teaching; whether the topics cater to the needs and wants to teachers and learners, as well as different teaching and learning styles and relevance to their social-cultural environment. Section two aims to obtain information on whether the teachers' book suggests innovative methods and approaches, encourages teacher's creativity, and offers extra possibilities to help teachers to adapt and localize the coursebook.

#### 3.4.2. *Questionnaire Data*

The questionnaire for teachers was meant to elicit teachers' perceptions about the kind of coursebook that they feel would be relevant to their students and their own needs.

The questionnaire focuses on the following two aspects:

- (1) Does the coursebook reflect the syllabus requirements?
- (2) Are the materials relevant to the teachers' teaching needs?

The questions in the questionnaire designed were based on the checklist. It can be divided into three sections. The questions in the first section are intended to obtain the teachers' point of view towards the new National Syllabus on College English to get information whether the new syllabus requirements match the coursebook objectives.

The questions in the second part of the questionnaire aimed to find out the teachers' perceptions on the coursebook concerning the following aspects:

- (1) To obtain teachers' general comments on the coursebook in terms of organization, systematic coverage of syllabus, and the relevance to teachers' and learners' needs and wants.
- (2) To gain information on whether the coursebook provides enough variety and range



of topics, which draw upon social and cultural content; and to check whether the topics cater to the needs and wants of teachers and learners, as well as their different teaching and learning styles and relevance to the social-cultural environment.

(3) To examine whether the content attempts to raise cross-cultural awareness of the learners and also investigate whether the content takes learners' own culture into consideration.

(4) To find out whether there is a balance of skills appropriate to learners and also see whether language skills are treated in an integrated way.

(5) To get information on how the coursebook deals with the design of the exercises.

Questions in Section Three aim to obtain information on whether the teachers' book suggests innovative methods and approaches, encourages teacher's creativity, and provides useful suggestions for adaptation and localization, as well as useful additional activities for the teachers to choose from.

#### *3.4.2.1. Distribution of the Questionnaire*

The actual data collection took place in June 2004. Before distributing the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted with the Dean who is in charge of the English teaching in the university and some of the experienced teachers who had once taught this course before. Based on their reactions, the questionnaire was modified for clarity and focus. The revised questionnaire was then distributed to 30 teachers.

In order to get more valid data, the following measures were taken:

Every Friday afternoon, there is a regular staff meeting in our institute. I sought permission to distribute the questionnaire to the teachers at the meeting and asked them to respond to it at home. I then met all the teachers on the following Friday at the



staff meeting and encouraged the teachers to ask for any clarification and explanation they might need about the questions in the questionnaire. This ensured that the teachers had enough time to fill in the questionnaire. In addition, they were asked to fill it at home so that they could refer to the coursebook where necessary. In total, 35 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the teachers, and all were collected. Among the 35 copies, five questionnaires were incomplete because some of the items were skipped. Therefore, 30 questionnaires were found to be valid.

#### *3.4.3 Group Discussion*

The 30 teachers were divided into 5 groups based on their age, gender, education and teaching experience, on the basis of the information obtained from the questionnaire. This made it easy for me to arrange for discussion in groups. This kind of face to face discussion was conducted to help the researcher to clarify the information obtained from the questionnaire.

#### *3.4.4 Interview Data*

In all, 30 teachers were involved in this study. During the group discussion, I had the opportunity to observe the leading teachers who were active in participating in the discussion. Therefore, one teacher from each group was chosen as my respondent for the interview. Altogether five teachers were interviewed.

Before actually conducting the interviews, a pilot interview was conducted in order to evaluate if the questions needed further editing for focus or clarification. The pilot interview was first conducted with the Dean of English Department who is currently

teaching this coursebook and two teachers who had once taught this coursebook. Based on their reactions, the interview questions were modified for clarity and focus. A semi-structured interview was used, as this kind of interview allow more flexibility and allows the researcher to seek more information, since the purpose of the study is to further explore the issues, elaborate specific information regarding their perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook and clarify the data I obtained from the questionnaire and the group discussion.

The interview questions were as follows:

- (1) Does the coursebook consider teachers' needs and wants concerning the guideline on how to teach specific items and activities?
- (2) Does the coursebook provide enough materials to improve listening and speaking since the syllabus specifies the two skills?

#### *3.4.5 Classroom Observation*

Classroom observation is another type of data collected for my study. Since teachers and students are required to use the coursebook as the main source of learning and teaching. The aim of the classroom observation was to investigate how the materials are delivered in the classroom by the teachers and whether their teaching practice actually matched their comments about using materials in the interview sessions. Another focus was to observe whether the new National Syllabus requirement had raised the teachers' awareness of the importance of improving students' listening and speaking skills?

The five teachers who were interviewed were also the ones chosen for observation.

Each teacher was observed twice, teaching the same group of students. There were altogether ten observations, and the allotted time for each lesson was two hours.

### **3.5 METHOD OF ANALYSIS**

This evaluation is conducted in three steps: 1) A critical evaluation of the coursebook with a checklist was first undertaken by the researcher herself, based on the theoretical insights from the current literature and research findings on teaching/learning in language areas like listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating; 2) An impressionistic analysis was conducted based on the data, collected from questionnaires, interviews, group discussions and classroom observation to obtain teachers' subjective perceptions towards the coursebook; and finally 3) a suggested innovation is discussed, based on current trends in materials development.

In summary, this chapter has described the rationale underlying the research design and methodology adopted for this study, as well as the identification of the criteria used for materials evaluation and the procedure employed for data collection. The following chapter will present the findings from the data analysis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the focus of this study is an evaluation of the new coursebook, College English – Integrated course I, based on my own assessment of the coursebook and the experience of teachers (my colleagues) at my university who have actually used the book in their classroom teaching.

In this Chapter, an analysis of the data collected will be presented together with significant findings from the questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and group discussions. The analysis will seek to answer the following research questions:

- (1) Does the coursebook reflect the syllabus objectives and course objectives and is it congruent with current trends in materials development?
- (2) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook in terms of the five skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation)?
- (3) What are EFL teachers' views about the coursebook?

The analysis will be presented in three sections. Section I contains an evaluation of College English – Integrated Course (NCE). It begins with the evaluation of the syllabus content and goes on to analyze the NCE with the help of the checklist of criteria prepared by the researcher (See Appendix 1). In analyzing the coursebook, reference will be made to data based on classroom observation of the five teachers' implementation of the NCE, where relevant. The aim of the classroom observation is



to investigate how the material package is delivered in the classroom by teachers, and whether and to what extent their teaching practice actually matches the syllabus requirements. In addition, I wish to observe whether the new coursebook has raised teachers' awareness of the importance of improving student's listening and speaking skills as well as the need for a more balanced distribution (integration) of skills, as required by the syllabus specification.

Section 2 contains the analysis of the questionnaire data as well as data from the interviews and group discussion. Questionnaires were distributed to 30 teachers. Five teachers were interviewed and 10 teachers participated in the group discussion. The analysis mainly focuses on the treatment of the five skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, taken together as an integrated whole within the coursebook.

Section 3 will present a summary of the main findings of these various strands of the data pooled together.

## **4.2 THE EVALUATION OF THE TEACHING MATERIALS**

### *4.2.1 The Evaluation of the New National Syllabus (NNS)*

In China, the NNS has had a significant effect on the domains of English teaching, testing and materials design. The NNS constitutes a single syllabus that forms the basis for a number of coursebooks published by different publishers for College level English. All coursebooks are expected to be designed to meet the requirements of the National College English Syllabus, as claimed by the editors of NCE in the preface.

However, not many teachers have ever consulted the syllabus or are familiar with its contents. Thus, it is necessary to take a look at the theoretical approach and the teaching objectives of the NCE in order to help teachers grasp the syllabus requirements as well as develop a critical attitude towards the syllabus in shaping their teaching programs. Teachers will be able to modify, adapt, or improve the materials and activities in the NCE, according to the syllabus requirements, and in keeping with their teaching and learning situation. The most important purpose of evaluating the syllabus is to offer guidance for teachers in their selection and evaluation of coursebooks. The evaluation of the syllabus will also form the basis for the analysis of the NCE.

#### *4.2.1.1 The Features of NNS*

In comparison with the previous syllabus, the revised syllabus has the following features:

- (1) Sufficient attention is to be paid to the development of communicative competence.
- (2) Priority is to be given to proficiency in reading, for reading is considered as the most important 'channel' through which students in China may have access to L2 input.
- (3) More emphasis is to be given to the enhancement of the abilities of listening and speaking in order to equip learners with the skills required for the economic development of China.
- (4) Learners' strategy training is to be emphasized.
- (5) Emphasis is to be given to creating a social environment for self-study and in helping learners to develop self-confidence and personality.

(6) Attention to cross-cultural aspects is an essential component of language teaching.

In general, the revisions incorporated in the syllabus were based on the investigation and research conducted in recent years in second language teaching in the Chinese context in order to meet the requirements of both syllabus reform and China's open-door economic policy. It has evolved from the government's experience of the need to strengthen what has been proved effective in the Chinese context while improving upon those factors that seem inadequate. This document, accordingly, summarizes the merits of language teaching experiences in China, and proposes the adoption of an advanced and successful foreign language teaching approach. It shifts its teaching approach from a traditionally teacher-centered one to a student-centered approach that takes learners' needs into consideration. Therefore, it has the advantage of a practical, scientific, and advanced set of principles which act as a guideline for College English teaching and learning.

As the research is intended to investigate the extent to which the coursebook reflects the syllabus objectives, and to assess whether it is congruent with the current trends in materials development, it makes sense to examine whether NCE 1 lives up to the claims made by its publishers. This kind of inspection is called an in-depth method of materials evaluation as stated in the literature review chapter.

#### *4.2.2 Coursebook Evaluation*

This section presents a general evaluation of the NCE Book One. The analysis of the coursebook is based on a checklist (see appendix) designed by the researcher herself combined with classroom observation data recording its actual use in the classroom. In applying the evaluation criteria to NCE Book One, syllabus



objectives and the theory of materials development were also taken into consideration to assess whether there is a good match between them.

#### *4.2.2.1 Aims of the Coursebook*

NCE claims, in its preface, to have taken a learner-centered approach as its nucleus in developing autonomous learning and emphasize the communicative function of language. Skills are developed in an integrated way for effective language use and communication. The book tries to match the syllabus objectives by promoting learner's personal involvement with respect to their personality, attitudes, emotions and intelligence.

#### *4.2.2.2 Design and Organization*

NCE follows a topic-based approach that integrates thematic language content with skills orientation. The students' book contains eight units and two test papers which fit perfectly with the 16 weeks of the term (each unit is meant to be covered in two weeks). Each unit comprises four parts, as Table 4.1 shows. The design follows Davison's scheme (1970) in coursebook evaluation and selection, in its aim to match the syllabus objectives, its attention to the effectiveness and accuracy of allotted time in using the book, its consideration of class size and the teaching-learning situation.

The content is well organized (i.e. sequenced according to levels of difficulty) with a systematic coverage of teaching requirements and course objectives and all new items are clearly presented and recycled. The grading and progression is suitable for



learners. The book provides opportunity and encouragement for teachers to adapt the materials to the needs, wants, personalities, or styles of the learners or teachers, thus reflecting an awareness of the new trends in materials development.

**Table 4.1. The Unit Design in NCE Book One**

Components	Type of activities
Part 1: pre-reading task	Listening practice
Part 2: Text A: Reading materials (in-class)	Vocabulary expanding Reading comprehension exercises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pair-work</li> <li>• Group discussion</li> <li>• Text organization</li> </ul>
Part 3: Text B: Reading materials (after-class)	Reading comprehension check Translation Language practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gap-filling</li> <li>• Sentence-rewriting</li> </ul>
Part 4: Theme-related language learning tasks Language focus	Essay writing Group discussion Follow-up work Checklist (self-assessment)

As indicated in the table, the coursebook is mainly based on the communicative syllabus in which learners are engaged in meaningful activities that relate to some ultimate ‘real world’ goal. Such goals inevitably involve using the language communicatively by means of tasks which simulate as far as possible real-world tasks and which involve real-world language skills. The activities are well designed and organized in each unit which practice skills in an integrated way. Many tasks are required to be done in pairs, groups, or discussion to promote meaningful student engagement with language learning, and create vibrant learning

environments that require active student involvement, stimulate higher-level thinking skills, and give students responsibility for their own learning (Stoller, 2002:107).

#### *4.2.2.3 Language Content*

##### *4.2.2.3.1 Topics*

The book contains enough variety and range of topics (see Table 4.2) so that students can link the topics (education, friendship, love) with other subjects (science, geography, ecology and history). Each unit focuses on one specific theme, which can build a large inventory of vocabulary items and stimulate students' existing knowledge relating to the particular theme. Some topics such as Romance (Unit 5) and American Dream (Unit 4) are authentic enough to involve students' feelings, attitudes and values to personalize the learning process and help learners expand awareness and enrich their experience. The choice of topics matches the requirement of Breen and Candlin's criteria (Dat, 2003: 170 citing Breen and Candlin) in materials design: materials should be inspiring enough to stir and enhance individual learners' needs, and abilities as well as their involvement. This kind of topics can keep the students motivated and engage their attention and help activate their schematic knowledge so that they can get involved in the tasks with increased motivation. However, the coursebook does not contain enough materials to enhance learners' awareness and understanding of intercultural issues.

**Table 4. 2. The Topics in NCE Book One**

Units	Topics
Unit 1	Growing up
Unit 2	Friendship
Unit 3	Understanding science
Unit 4	American dream
Unit 5	Romance
Unit 6	Animal intelligence
Unit 7	Emergency
Unit 8	Coping with an educational problem

*4.2.3.2 Vocabulary*

The most striking feature of this coursebook lies in the systematic teaching of vocabulary. Each unit contains a separate vocabulary list with adequate recycling and revision. The exercises provided for language practice are adequate, flexible and display variety. In each Unit of NCE, there is a page that focuses specifically on introducing new vocabulary. 30 words and phrases are chosen as the most important words for each Unit, which students need to learn to use based on the Band Examination Requirement. The list of passive vocabulary contains words which students need to be able to recognize and understand but are not expected to use at this stage.

In addition, the book provides adequate exercises for vocabulary expansion such as gap- filling and cloze to exploit the following techniques:

- Using synonyms in context
- Using collocations

- Word Family
- Confused words
- Word formation

There is adequate recycling and revision of vocabulary. New vocabularies are repeated in different parts of the unit after they are introduced once. For example, there are two texts in each unit which share the same related topic. Recycling of vocabulary takes place in all four skills. As a result, the recycling rate of vocabulary is sufficiently optimal to trigger students' mental association and aid memory and students can expand their vocabulary to the greatest extent.

#### 4.2.3.3 *Genre of input texts*

The editors of NCE Book One argue in favor of the importance of genre varieties in selecting reading materials. According to the researcher's observation of NCE Book One, the genres focused on in its core texts are narratives, expository essay writing, personal letters, personal description, note-taking, short stories and argumentation. The selection of genre input in the coursebook thus by and large matches the claims of the coursebook writers.

#### 4.2.3.4 *Authenticity and Suitability*

Communicative methodology has displayed an increasing tendency to use authentic materials in relation to language skills (Hedge, 2000:67), so that authenticity has come to be acknowledged as a critical criterion in assessing language teaching materials. The analysis of NCE input materials shows that most pre-reading materials in NCE



can be labeled as authentic, for instance, the *pop songs* in Unit 1, Unit 2 and Unit 6; *an interview* in Unit 4, and *the love stories* in Unit 5. All these materials reflect real life situations and help to familiarize students with samples of natural speech.

75% of reading materials come from authentic native-speakers' writings with only a few minor adaptations. Most of these materials create an information gap by involving learners' personal experiences, and reflecting their own particular feelings, attitudes and opinions, for instance, *Fable of the Teenager* in Unit 8, *Friendship* in Unit 2.

Most of the speaking activities draw upon students' personal views and attitudes in real life communication, such as the *debate* in Unit 8 which can be used to stimulate mental responses and encourage intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement. There is a widely held belief that authentic materials can help promote language acquisition. In order to find out to what extent the input materials in NCE One is in a real sense at the right level to motivate students for real life purposes, I observed one listening class. In this class, the teacher was focusing on training students' listening ability. She was using a piece of spontaneous conversation by native speakers from the BBC. I noticed that the majority of the students showed great enthusiasm and were actively involved in this listening activity, as they were asked to recount the story after they listened. The cassette was clearly recorded and the conversation was message-oriented and familiarized the learners with samples of natural speech. The students' attention was held by the music and the variety of voices and tones in the conversation.

In general, the texts selected in NCE One are authentic and reflect real life situations. In terms of 'authenticity', the book largely meets the principle.

4.2.3.5 Cultural Aspects

It is inevitable that an L2 learner is constantly influenced by his/her native culture, but “truly learning the language must go hand in hand with an understanding of the cultural setting in which it is used” (Robinett, 1979: 1057). However, in both the Students’ Book and the Teacher’s Book of NCE One, the importance of culture does not seem to receive enough attention.

In Tomalin and Stempleski’s (1993) view on culture teaching, besides the target culture of the foreign language, learners should be aware of their own culture, the source culture; and a variety of cultures in English or Non- English-speaking countries around the world. However, what was apparent is that materials related to cultural aspects in NCE Students’ Book One mainly focused on Western Culture. In the item called “Cultural Notes” which occurs in each unit in the Teacher’s Book, almost all the information is found to be focused on western culture, as Table 4.3 shows below:

**Table 4.3: “Cultural Notes” in Teacher’s Book**

Unit	Topic on Culture
Unit 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grade schools in the U.S.</li><li>• What American teachers wear in school?</li><li>• Spaghetti and the proper way of eating it.</li></ul> (Spaghetti is the Italian-style thin noodle).
Unit 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to celebrate “Halloween” in western countries.</li></ul>
Unit 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Depressions Days</li><li>• American Dreams.</li><li>• Immigrants</li></ul>
Unit 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public libraries in the US.</li></ul>
Unit 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• U. C. L. A: University of California at Los Angeles</li></ul>

Since the revised syllabus emphasizes the importance of “culture” in second language teaching, the imbalance of distribution of cultural content in the materials constitutes a potential problem for NCE Book One.

The results of the evaluation on language content in NCE Book One can be summarized and categorized as follows:

**Table 4.4 Evaluation Results of Language Content in NCE Book One**

Pors	1. Interesting and various topics 2. Authentic input materials 3. Vocabulary Recycling 4. A variety of genres of input texts
Cons	1. Imbalance of cultural aspects 2. Lack of grammar practice
Overall comment	In general, language content in NCE can meets the syllabus objectives and most of the claims made by its publishers.

4.2.4 Task Design

Task design in NCE accords with the theoretical principles of task design such as provision of adequate input and clear instructions for task completion, which follows McGrath’s (2002:143) task cycle (Figure 4.1) in a learner-centered approach and reflects the general principles of communicative methodology. There is an attempt to match the requirements of the syllabus. Most activities claim to develop learner-autonomy as the main teaching objective. The tasks are designed to avoid a teacher-centered approach by assigning pairwork or group work for cooperative learning. Six stages are involved in the task design:

Stage 1: The teacher sets a task and then students are exposed to scripts of native speaker voices, either in the form of songs, poems or short stories. This constitutes a pre-listening activity which is used to activate learners’ existing schema.

Stage 2: Enough input materials (reading materials) are provided.

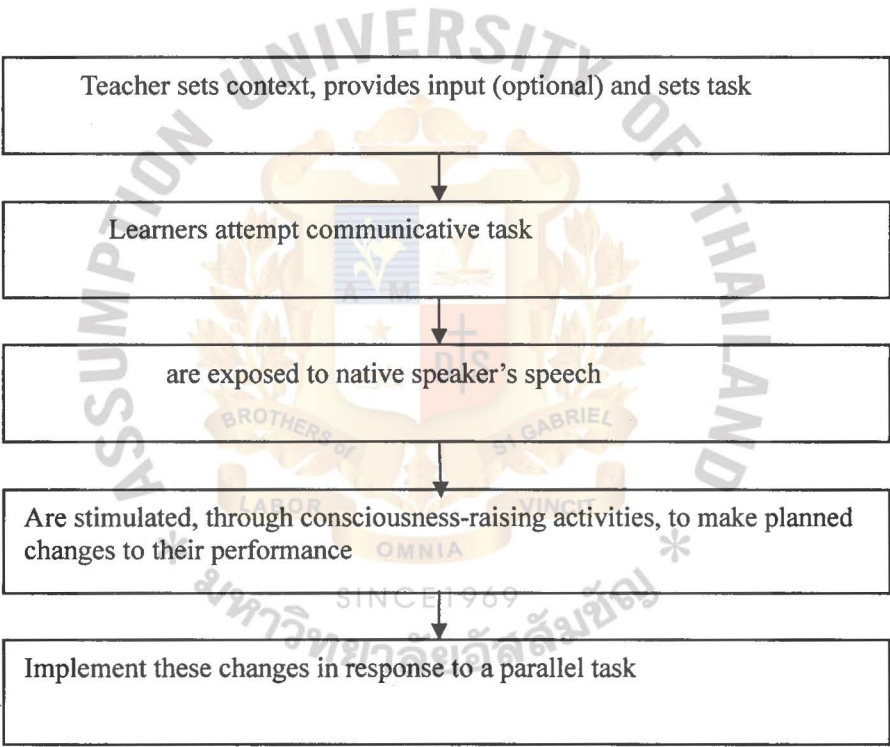
Stage 3: Students attempt the communicative task in groups or pairs.

Stage 4: Language focus. Students display the language to carry out communicative tasks and activities both orally and in written form. ( gap-filling or sentence re-writing)

Stage 5: Consciousness-raising activities. Students use their existing knowledge to produce more linguistic products. ( essay writing or translation)

Stage 6: Feedback activities for students’ self-assessment.

**Figure 4.1 Task Cycle in a Learner-centered Approach (McGrath, 2002: 143)**





Task design in the NCE is presented against William’s (1983) framework in the table below for comparison:

**Table 4.5 Comparison of Activity Design**

William’s framework for Task design	Task Design in NCE
Pre-task: -Introduction to the topic and task; -Provision of useful input (listening, reading, brainstorming, etc.); -Reactivation or provision of essential language; -Definition of the task (objective, procedures, time limits, evaluation criteria).	Pre-task -Provision of useful input (pre-reading task: listening-centered activities) -Reading-centered activities, brainstorming -Provision of essential language -Pair-work, group-work, individual work
Task: -Planning the task; -Doing the task; -Reporting the task or presenting the product of the task	Task: -Planning the task (pre-reading) -Doing the task Passage reading Reporting the task (discussion and work individually)
Post- task: -Focus on the language used; -Practice of the language as necessary; Retrospective discussion of the task; Awareness-raising.	Post-task -Language focus (vocabulary, comprehension & Translation) Language practice, follow-up work & self assessment

The results of the comparison made between the task design in the NCE with William’s framework of task design can be summarized as follows:

(1) Task design in NCE Book 1 has an adequate input of new vocabulary in the pre-task phase. It provides the introduction, the objectives, procedures and evaluation criteria of the task but without offering time limits.

(2) Task design in NCE offers adequate opportunities at the “task recycling” phase for students to report and present the product of the task in groups, pairs or individually.

(3) Task design provides content questions and comprehensive exercises with detailed direction for planning.

(4) There is adequate focus on vocabulary recycling and writing skills that offer controlled practice of the language used.

(5) Task design provides opportunities for feedback on learners’ performance with the help of checklists and follow-up activities.

In order to obtain more data to support the analysis, I observed one teacher’s class to see how she was implementing the materials in the classroom. In this class, the teacher followed a learner-centered approach and provided a relatively friendly setting in a supportive environment. After the introduction to the topic, the teacher assigned different tasks for the students to work on. All the tasks were conducted in group-work, pair-work and through discussion. It was clear that the teacher was trying to distance herself from teacher-dominated instruction and to create a student community of inquiry involving authentic communication and cooperative learning.

I was particularly interested in the last stage of the task. Students were asked to take part in a retrospective discussion of the writing task. They worked in pairs to read each other’s writing assignment. The partner was taking notes while-listening. Then with the help of a checklist provided in the coursebook, students worked in pairs to evaluate one another’s writing and then provided information that might be useful to the student when revising the piece of writing. This activity can help learners identify

and diagnose their own strengths and weaknesses in their writing. It may be used to help learners consciously examine their contribution to their own learning, and invite learners to compare their responses with peers.

In general, task design in NCE Book One takes learners’ preferred learning styles, learners’ needs and processes as well as their learning experiences into consideration which reflects Cunningsworth’s scheme (1984) in materials development. Most tasks provide adequate treatment of developing language skills and communicative abilities, and enable learners achieve their objectives successfully.

4.2.5 Skills Distribution

Activities designed for skills training in NCE have the same format in each unit, following Richards, Platt and Weber’s (1985:144) concept of integrated skills: “the teaching of the language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in conjunction with each other when a lesson involves that related listening and speaking to reading and writing”. In addition, NCE takes translating skills into consideration. In each unit, there are 27 activities in all, covering the five skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, as well as grammar and learner strategies training.

The structure of Unit One is taken as a sample for analysis in Table 4.6.

**Table 4. 6 Skills Practice in NCE Book One**

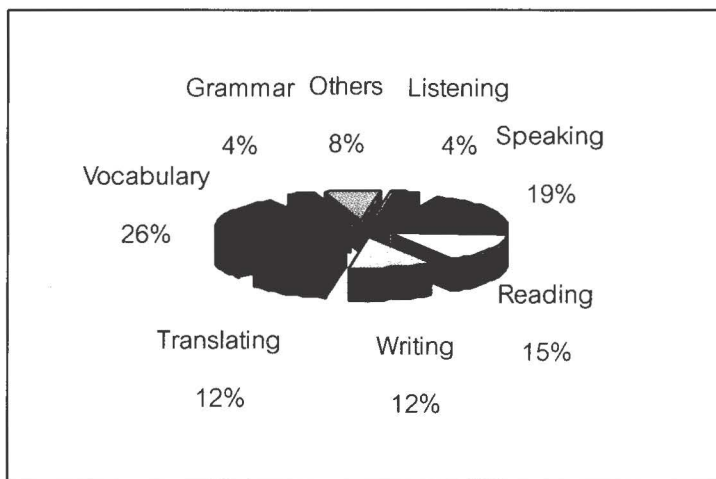
Unit	Total exercise	L	S	R	W	T	V	G	Other
1	27	1	5	4	3	3	7	1	2
	mean	3.70%	18.52%	14.29%	11.1%	11.1%	25.93%	3.70%	7.41%

L= Listening; S=Speaking; R=Reading; W=Writing; T=Translating;

V=Vocabulary; G=Grammar



The following pie chart indicates the same information in a more graphic way:



As indicated in the piechart, NCE Book One puts a great emphasis on vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing and translating, to meet the needs of learners at this stage. There is an additional listening coursebook attached to this course. Therefore, little attention is given to practice in listening in the NCE. As for grammar, the coursebook is influenced primarily by Krashen's (1982) idea that grammar can be acquired naturally from meaningful input and opportunities to interact in the classroom: in other words, it subscribes to the view that grammatical competence can develop in a fluency-oriented environment without conscious focus on language form. There is only one exercise on grammar with eight items which is adequate for recycling grammatical knowledge, since a great deal of emphasis on grammar is usually given in their high school education.

It is apparent that the claimed balance in skills distribution basically conforms to the guidelines laid down by the national syllabus. In order to discuss the way in which teachers were handling skills training in their classroom teaching, I refer here to my observation of Teacher 4's class. In this class, to my disappointment, the teacher



mainly focused his teaching on vocabulary items and reading materials without dealing with any of the other skills during the two-hour lesson. The teacher spent one hour explaining the vocabulary in the list. He then moved his teaching to the vocabulary exercises in the book. For the rest of the time, students were asked to read the text in the book. And lastly, questions concerning the text were thrown to students without any direction. Translation and writing tasks were left for homework.

After class, the teacher explained the reason why he taught in this way. In his point of view, only vocabulary and reading comprehension exercises can help students pass the Band Examination.

The communicative task-based syllabus requires an integration of the four main language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as well as attention to subsidiary language abilities and skills, such as grammar, study skills, punctuation, pronunciation, and vocabulary (Scarcella and Rebecca, 1992). The overall impression on skills distribution in NCE is that the differential emphasis on the five skills is reasonably balanced, and can safely be said to live up to the syllabus objectives.

#### *4.2.6 Learner Strategies Training*

For decades now, much of the focus of EFL in China tended to be on reading and writing, with relatively little attention paid to speaking and listening. Vocabulary was typically taught in the form of lists, with a high priority given to accuracy, and the ability to construct correct sentences. Consideration of what students might do to promote their own learning had little or no place in many classrooms. Most Chinese students have mastered the strategy of doing the examination paper. However, they

paid little attention to applying any of the learning strategies in their learning process. In addition, not many coursebooks provide enough materials to promote strategy training.

In recent times considerable progress has been achieved in language learning strategy (LLS) research. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to develop an awareness of language learning strategies and to discover how learners employ LLS to actively promote their own learning.

The evaluation shows that NCE does include language learning strategies training. This can be seen in the writing instruction materials. The writing tasks in each unit provide writing strategies in the form of guidelines for students to complete their writing assignments. For instance, the sections on “How to write a narrative” in Unit One; “How to write a personal description” in Unit 4; “Learn to use examples in essay writing” in Unit 6; and “Using cause and effect in essay writing” in Unit 8.

Notes from my classroom observation: Strategy training has received adequate attention in the coursebook. However, it is necessary to evaluate the teachers’ role in strategy training in their classroom teaching. My observation of Teacher 5 focused on investigating whether the teacher had the awareness in training her students in using language learning strategies. In addition, I intended to know whether the teacher had adequate knowledge about her students, their interests, motivation, and learning styles, as all these factors tend to affect learners’ language learning process. In this particular class which I observed, the teacher was trying to get students to be involved in conscious ways in tackling their knowledge of vocabulary and encouraged students to

relate new information to old with the help of two activities. She was teaching Unit 8: Coping with Education Problems. For example, in Activity 1, when she put new words and the words the students had already learned together, it was easy for them to guess their meaning. In Activity 2, she wrote a key word “education”, and students quickly listed more words related to education by making associations with the concept. Then she asked students to create three sentences using the words they had given. I observed that she was using **memory strategy** (Hatch & Brown, 1995:387) and **semantic mapping** (Grade & Kaplan, 1996:312) to teach vocabulary. The outstanding point of this class is that she was developing students’ creative writing by vocabulary building. Students are taught to develop an awareness of the features of writing in English by sorting out related vocabulary (Nan, 2003: 98-103).

I was particularly interested in the technique she used when conducting Part 2: Language Sense Enhancement. In this part, the coursebook requires students to read aloud a poem and learn it by heart. However, the teacher encouraged the students to focus on appreciating the beauty of the language and write a parallel poem after reading it instead of getting them to just recite and memorize it. I could see she was using affective and cognitive strategies which encouraged students to gain control over their emotions, attitudes and values, and enabled them to understand and produce new language.

In general, however, it was found that NCE matches the syllabus objectives and the course requirement with respect to strategy training.



### 4.3 SUMMARY

In this section, the analysis on the checklist data as well as data drawn from classroom observation have been combined to capture the researcher’s overall impression on NCE Book I in relation to the features specification of the New National Syllabus, NCE Book 1’s practical design of coursebook language content, task design, skills distribution and strategy training. The results show that the coursebook adequately meets the syllabus objectives and course requirements, and the selection of texts, tasks and language learning activities are in accordance with the editor’s claims and reflect the new trend of materials development.

### 4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA OBTAINED FROM THE TEACHERS

This section describes the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook in terms of the five skills based on the data drawn from the questionnaire, the interviews and group discussion. The data obtained from the questionnaire will be reported in terms of a numeral frequency format (1= least satisfying; 2= less satisfying; 3. acceptable; 4 = satisfying; 5= very satisfying).

#### 4.4.1 The Results of the Data

The teachers were asked to indicate whether they found the contents of each statement given in the questionnaire ‘very satisfying’, ‘satisfying’, ‘acceptable’, ‘less satisfying’, or ‘least satisfying’. Each response was then given a score from 1 (least satisfying) to 5 (very satisfying). The results of the questionnaire survey are indicated in tabular form (see Table 4.7). To make the results easy to read, the mean of each item in the



questionnaire is calculated since it is an effective and reliable method to measure the central tendency of the statistics data. The formula for calculating the mean is:

$$\text{Mean } \bar{x} = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$

Where,  $\bar{x}$  stands for any particular value of the sample, and for the frequency with which that value appears in the data, and N for the total number of a sample. Take the students' responses to the first item as an example:

$$\text{Mean } \bar{x} = \frac{\sum fx}{N} = \frac{3 \times 5 + 8 \times 4 + 10 \times 3 + 9 \times 2 + 1 \times 0}{30} = 3$$

On the basis of this formula, each item gets a mean as indicated in Table 4.8. If the mean is close to 4 or more than 4, the responses are positive. If the mean is close to 2 or less than 2, the responses are considered to be negative. This is the standard distinction applied to all the items.

**Table 4.7: The Results of the Questionnaire for Teachers**

	very satisfying	Satisfying	acceptable	less satisfying	least satisfying
Item	5	4	3	2	1
1	3	8	10	9	0
2	13	10	5	2	0
3	12	10	5	3	0
4	10	13	7	3	0
5	2	8	10	10	0

**Table 4.8: The Mean of Each item in Questionnaire for Teachers**

Item	Mean	Item	Mean
1	3	4	4.3
2	4.1	5	3.2
3	4		

#### 4.4.1.1 Listening Materials

##### **RQ: (1) What is your overall impression on listening materials?**

The rating for Item 1 is 3, which is lower than the other items.

There appeared two controversial views on listening materials in the NCE. 60% of the respondents (18 out of 30) claimed that the listening materials were authentic enough to hold the students' attention by its variety of voices and music. Most of the listening materials reflect real world situations such as 'interviews', 'short stories', 'poems' and 'music', with a transcript provided for reference in the Teachers' Book. Others argued that more attention should be given to practice in listening in NCE, since the revised syllabus has given a major boost to listening. In addition, there is no listening class for non-English major students in this university.

Three teachers reported that there was no time to conduct listening activities due to limited time in the class. So they mainly focused their teaching on reading materials.

Four teachers among five who were interviewed voiced their suggestions that more materials should be provided to promote students' listening strategies, for example, texts chosen with challenging or thought-provoking content which can encourage students to listen, to hypothesize, or to share their guesses.

In general, listening materials in NCE helped evoke the students' interests, trigger their background knowledge and hold their interest by its 'authenticity'. However, there is only one item for listening practice in NCE which was considered inadequate by the majority of the respondents in promoting students' listening proficiency.

#### 4.4.1.2 Speaking Materials

### **RQ 2: Does the coursebook provide enough materials to improve students speaking skill since the syllabus specifies the skill?**

The rating for this item is 4.1, which indicates that the response was positive.

For ages in the Chinese context, repetitive imitation, drills, and memorization of dialogues formed the primary focus of classroom activities. Such activities failed to address conversation as a process. They failed to teach learners how to initiate, develop, and terminate conversational encounters; how to use appropriate language; or how to negotiate and interact conversationally. NCE Book One takes speaking competence as a complex set of abilities involving many components, including pronunciation, listening, and grammar skills. According to the questionnaire data, 76% (23 out of 30) of the respondents agreed that the materials helped develop students' conversational strategies effectively such as 'disagreeing politely', 'reasoning', 'convincing', and 'clarifying', which were essential to any effective language speakers. For instance, 'pair-work' and 'group discussion' in each Unit, and 'debate' in Unit Eight worked effectively in promoting students' speaking proficiency. 90% (28 out of 30) of the respondents responded "group discussion and debate" to the questionnaire item, 'which activity do you like best in NCE?'

The respondents reported that all the activities provided students opportunities for development of vocabulary, grammatical proficiency, discourse strategies, strategies of social interaction, and awareness of cross-cultural differences. In conducting these activities, students were able to produce new sentences based on their own behavior or the spontaneous constructions produced by other students.

The section called *Language Sense Enhancement* was considered as the most interesting part in the exercise to enhance learners' speaking competence. Four tasks were provided in this part:

**Language Sense Enhancement**

Task 1: Read aloud paragraphs and learn them by heart.

Task 2: Read poetry for enjoyment.

Task 3: Appreciate well-known quotations.

Task 4: Read humorous stories for fun.

Both teachers and students enjoyed working on this section. The interview data can be summed up thus:

- (1) 'Poem' in this section helped a lot in practicing sense group and pronunciation. It captured students' imagination and expanded their language awareness.
- (2) 'Humorous story' expanded students' vocabulary, and maintained students' interest and motivation in appreciating literary works. Students were relaxed while working on this section, as the materials were a lot of fun.
- (3) 'Famous quotations' in this section encouraged to draw on students' own experiences, feelings, and opinions and develop their imaginative sensibilities.

In general, the speaking activities in NCE Book One comprise questions activities, pair/group work, discussion games, problem-solving activities and debate, which provide students enough opportunities to exchange personal views and experiences.

However, there were some weaknesses in speaking materials as various data showed:



(1) Most of the discussions were restricted to the assigned topic. Given the students' divergent language proficiency, more opportunities for free discussion can be provided for developing aspects of fluency, as students can talk about a range of topics that engage their interest, opinions, histories, and experiences. Free discussion can also personalize language. Students enjoy free discussion. It can make language learning more memorable and motivating and help learners to see the ways in which they can make use of language resources in interpersonal situation (Hedge, 2000: 276). While students demonstrate ways of giving opinions, their listening ability can be enhanced.

(2) Due to divergent language proficiency, some of the weaker students got lost during the group discussion. Materials catering for different levels of students should be provided in order to develop students' confidence through pushing students slightly beyond their existing proficiency by involving them in tasks which are challenging but achievable (Tomlinson, 2003: 21).

Pooling all the data together, the results showed that speaking materials helped most of learners improve their speaking abilities. They could have been effective and helpful if they had taken the target EFL situation into consideration, and also by maximizing learners' potential by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional involvement.

#### *4.4.1.3. Writing Materials*

### **RQ 3: Do the materials have a potentially useful writing component to develop learners' writing skills?**

The writing tasks assigned in NCE, provide a discussion topic in almost every unit, therefore writing activities can often follow the oral discussion. Students are required

to write essays based on the discussion, with a ‘Follow-up activity’ for students to check up their own writing.

The tasks in each unit has the same format as presented in Table 4.9. Students are involved in a number of activities generating ideas and setting goals through group discussion. Before writing their draft, guidelines are given in each unit to promote different writing strategies and knowledge of genres, such as narrative writing, cause and effect in essay writing. Follow-up work with a checklist was used to facilitate peer evaluation and assessment. In this activity, students worked in pairs to read each other’s assignments with the checklist and provide suggestions for improvement.

**Table 4.9    The Writing Tasks in Unit One in NCE Book One**

Tasks	Content and Requirement
Group discussion	Students are required to work in groups to express orally their own meaningful early experiences or memorable moments based on the essays in the book they have read. Three questions are given to help their discussion.
Essay writing	Based on the discussion, write an essay in 150 words or so about students’ own experience. Two key issues are given: 1. When and where the story took place 2. What happened?
Writing strategy	In introduction on strategy How to write narrative (1)
Follow-up work	Peers evaluation: 1. Go through your essay carefully and then answer the questions on the checklist below. Put down <i>yes or no</i> . 2. Exchange essays and checklist with a partner and check each other’s work. Write ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers on your partners’ checklist.

Checklist	(1) Questions: 1. Does the beginning of the essay provide a context? 2. Are the details relevant to the main idea of the essay? 3. Is the event described in a clear and orderly way? 4. Are there any mistakes in spelling? 5. Are there any mistakes in grammar?
	(2) My answer: _____
	(3) Classmate's answers: _____

The rating score is 4.

According to the questionnaire data, the majority of the respondents believed that writing essays can help to motivate students, especially when the students realized the specific purposes of the tasks and its usefulness for their exam and when the theme of the essay was within the bounds of their interest, knowledge and experience.

Half of the respondents were satisfied with the genre varieties provided in the writing materials. There were eight writing tasks in the whole book covering six genres. These were 'Narrative' in Unit 1, Unit 5; 'Personal Letter' in Unit 2; 'Expository Essay' in Unit 3; 'Personal Description' in Unit 4; 'Note Taking' in Unit 6; 'Argumentative Essay' in Unit 7; 'Cause and Effect in essay writing' in Unit 8.

Six respondents reported that most of their students viewed writing essay as an 'enjoyable' type of writing. Genres such as 'personal experience' 'personal letter' and 'argumentative essay' provided students opportunities to express their ideas, share knowledge with others, and encourage them to write.

There were, however, another two teachers who argued that students needed more



opportunities to practice these genres as they were unlikely to fully master the writing strategy with only one writing assignment for each genre.

Most of the writing tasks were essay writing based on an assigned topic. Students were required to write an essay in 150 words or so based on prior discussion, with a model text provided for reference.

However, 70% (7 out of 10) of the teachers in the group discussion did not agree that a model be provided at this stage, as they believed greater priority should be given to the students creating their own texts, rather than having them analyze finished products of other writers (White, R. & V. Arndt, 1991:1). The respondents found that students' writings were quite similar when a model was provided, and that a model paper restricted students by preventing them from writing creatively.

In the group discussion, the majority of the respondents agreed that the writing tasks in NCE helped improve their learner's writing skills. Most of them felt that students were interested in the pre-writing tasks (group discussion) as it enabled students to discover and create additional knowledge for writing in the class discussion. The time for discussion also provides teachers with opportunities to shape and extend students' ideas, giving students additional resources to use in their writing. Students also had opportunities to learn how to work in discussion groups to support one another.

In addition, 80% of the respondents showed their particular interest in the 'checklist' in the fourth part of the writing tasks. The 'Evaluation Checklist' is very short, containing a sample questionnaire for students to use when evaluating writing tasks,



as learners are surely the best people to evaluate learning tasks. In the last step, students were required to rewrite their essay with the help of the evaluation checklist, so as to enable them to work out the final version of the writing.

One dimension of good writing is the writer’s ability to visualize an audience (Seow, 2002: 317). In the group discussion, half of the respondents were interested in the “Follow up” activity in NCE, which raised students’ awareness towards writing for different audiences- teacher, peers and classmates. This activity made students aware of a central idea: while writing, they want to communicate to the audience in order to give direction to their writing. “Follow up” activity in this section provided opportunity for students to check their own work and encouraged them in carrying out peer evaluation. The instructions are as follows:

- (1) Go through your essay carefully and then answer the questions on the checklist below. Put down *yes* or *no*.
- (2) Exchange essays and checklists with a partner and check each other’s work. Write *yes* or *no* answers on your partner’s checklist.

This activity enables students to learn from each other’s strengths. It is a good opportunity for stronger students and weaker ones to share ideas and encourage each other. The teacher’s role is to move around the classroom monitoring their discussion. It is an effective way to activate students’ interest in writing.

Five teachers were interviewed on the type of writing tasks that motivate students in their writing. The results can be seen in the Table below:

**Table 4.10: Teachers’ View on Writing Types**

T1	Topics that challenge students’ creativity Collaborative writing Essay writing can motivate students to write. But it is better to write in students’ own choice of topic. Students should be given enough time to practice the same genre.
T2	Guided writing; sentence-completion, free choice It is too early to get students to write with an assigned topic. It restricts their thinking. Students have inadequate time to practice so many genres. Only one assignment is not enough to practice one genre.
T3	Provide careful direction Topics which are familiar to their knowledge, interest, and experience, as writing assignments can examine learners’ own thoughts and feelings. Correct, mark students’ writing carefully
T4	Paragraph writing and process writing, collaborative writing can be motivating
T5	Teacher and students should share the same topic and generate ideas, as students are all freshman. They need more opportunities to write freely.

As shown in Table 4.10, the five teachers mentioned many aspects that can motivate students to write. Three teachers (T1, T 2, T 5) agreed that the writing tasks should be based on students’ own choice of topics”. One teacher (T3) believed that topics that were familiar to students’ experiences, knowledge, and interests would be more motivating. And she also claimed that careful marking of students’ writing was necessity. Teacher 5 suggested that it was necessary to offer clear guidelines for freshmen students before writing. Teacher 5 was in favor of process writing and collaborative writing.

In general, most respondents were satisfied with the writing materials in NCE Book

One, as it integrates a few judiciously selected activities which provided a starting point for anyone wanting to study writing in greater depth. For each activity, there was a 'preparation' section, indicating what the students needed to prepare before the lesson, and an 'in class section', giving 'step by step' guidance on how to manage this particular lesson, including materials to cope when necessary.

However, there are some weaknesses. Half of the respondents reported that the coursebook alone was not able to cater for all the needs and interests of the students. The teachers had to supplement the coursebook with other materials and writing tasks so as to satisfy the widely differing needs of the students. Almost half of the respondents (14 out of 30) complained that the marking of all the learners' written work was an extra heavy workload, as in each classroom, there are more than 60 students. With limited allotted time, students didn't have much practice in writing.

#### *4.4.1.4 Reading Materials*

#### **(4) Are the reading materials suitable for your learners' level?**

The respondents agreed that the reading materials in NCE Book One were designed around a purpose that had significance for the students: to get the main idea, obtain specific information, understand most or all of the messages, enjoy a story, or decide whether or not to read more. Recognizing the purpose for reading would help students to select appropriate reading strategies.

80% (27 out of 30) of the respondents are satisfied with most of the activities, as the activities tackled a wide variety of skills and attitudes arranged under the main headings of motivation, learning strategies, community building (co-operation) and



self-monitoring to make sure that the activities serve a clear linguistic purpose as well, so that teachers can easily find a slot for them in their lesson plans.

47% (14 out of 30) of the respondents were satisfied with the wide range of activities following the reading materials focusing on the content of the text, such as debate, role-play, discussion, follow-up activity, and reading of contrasting texts.

In general, the reading materials in NCE intended to develop reading skills and strategies with the help of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities. Most reading materials are authentic enough to reflect real life situations, and encourage extensive reading.

#### *4.4.1.5 Translation Materials*

#### **RQ 5: Do the translating tasks keep the balance of English and Chinese?**

The rating is 32.

Each unit in the book contains two exercises on translation. There is a short passage for translation from Chinese to English in Text A with the words and phrases given. In text B in each unit, students are request to translate four English sentences excerpted from the reading text into Chinese.

Half of the respondents in the questionnaire data responded that Exercise One enables students to construct sentences with the new words and phrases. In marking their translation work, teachers found that students' translation was quite similar. Therefore, most teachers suggested that different ways of translating can be explored and that the interest of the translation text also needs to be taken into consideration. In addition, effective translating skills can be introduced as well.



Since Exercise Two in text B provides sentences which are decontextualized, most respondents reported that this kind of translation task could not help improve translating skills effectively. There is also an imbalance in the translation task. Learners' own language needs to be emphasized since learners' mother tongue is acknowledged by more and more researchers to play a crucial role in second language teaching. Hence the inclusion of some famous Chinese literature such as short stories, poems can encourage learners to appreciate their own language by undertaking the translation.

Four teachers reported in the interview that they set the translation task as homework. In group-discussion, an overwhelming majority of the subjects (80%) said their students' translation ability was quite low, especially in translating from English to Chinese.

This is apparently both due to the coursebook design as well as because teachers did not give much priority to translating practice in implementing materials.

## 4.5 SUMMARY

McDonough and Shaw (1993) suggest that it is always necessary to examine current coursebooks in order to see how far they can be integrated into the set syllabus as core materials. Especially in the Chinese context, there is only one National Syllabus with so many coursebooks. All the coursebooks for College English Level are expected to be designed to meet the requirement of the National College English Syllabus, as the Band Examination Paper is designed in accordance with the National Syllabus. Upon

carrying our present investigation the findings suggest that, NCE Book One does conform to the National Syllabus in its aim and approach, and its intention to help students lay a solid foundation of language skills essential to communication. In addition, by helping students acquire good language learning strategies, it is also supposed to nurture their liberal accomplishment, and enable them to adapt themselves to the requirements of social development and economic construction.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The wealth of published materials for ELT available on the market makes selecting the right coursebook a challenging task. Especially in the Chinese context, with the new revised syllabus coming out on January 1, 2004, an ever-increasing number of books are being published in ELT to the point where it is easy for teachers to become confused and overwhelmed by their sheer variety. Therefore, they need help in making informed and appropriate choices when selecting coursebooks and supporting materials. This research undertook an analysis of a post-use evaluation of College English - Integrated Course 1 (NCE). The discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter is based on various data obtained from questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and group discussion. In this chapter, the significant findings will be summarized, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the research. Suggestions for further research are also made.

#### **5.2 MAJOR FINDINGS**

The coursebook reflects the syllabus requirements as well as coursebook objectives and maintains a good fit with the current trends in language teaching and learning theories. The strengths of the book lie in the fact that it assists students to attain a good knowledge of the language in phonology, syntax, and grammar by providing various activities, which give enough opportunities for students to practice using the language they are exposed to, to interact with each other, or to share each other's opinions. The

tentative evaluation undertaken for this study reveals the following main features of the coursebook:

- (1) Input materials which are intended to cover various genres, and expose students to authentic materials;
- (2) Task-design conforms to the design standards of communicative tasks in terms of many aspects found in Nunan's (1999) and Willis' (1996) principles of task design. The tasks aim to enlarge students' knowledge through various activities for communication, especially in Part I - Content Questions and Part IV- Theme-related Language Learning Tasks. Students are provided enough opportunities to share experiences and offer help to each other. Both group work and discussion were reported to work effectively in promoting students' speaking proficiency.
- (3) There is a balanced distribution of skills which follows Richards, Platt and Weber's concept of practising skills in an integrated way.
- (4) The use of a multi-dimensional syllabus combined with a task-based approach (Li, 2001:5) to be followed in the classroom draws upon a socio-interactionist view of language and caters for both learners' external and psychological skills for effective communication.
- (5) The use of interesting and relevant topics, and the range of activities provided have proved to be effective in promoting reading and writing skills. Activities involving group discussion are regarded as being helpful in fostering speaking skills.
- (6) Learners' needs are given prime importance (Seedhouse, 1995) in the NCE Book One, with its aims 'to develop learner's five basic language skills of listening, reading, speaking, writing and translating for effective language use and communication.



(7) Strategy training is emphasized in NCE Book One which can be found in the writing materials.

(8) Literary texts are found to be effective in second language teaching, as appears evident from the section of *Language Sense Enhancement*. Poems, humorous stories, and famous quotations in this section help engage students' interest, provide stimulating content, heighten the students' ability to reflect on their ideas, emotions, and experiences, and whet the appetite of students by arousing their curiosity and creating suspense.

### 5.3 IMPROVEMENTS SUGGESTED FOR THE COURSEBOOK

With respect to ELT in China, teachers are given little opportunities to undertake coursebook evaluation and selection. Though the analysis results show that the coursebook is successful and satisfactory in many respects, there is still a gap between theory and practice. As Grant (1987) states, it appears that the perfect textbook does not exist. That is why systematic and scientific evaluation can help to reject and modify materials which we think are not suitable to our teaching and learning situation. Suggestions on the improvement of the College English – Integrated Course One can be summed up as follows:

(1) Certain inter-cultural issues need to be taken into consideration and a cultural studies approach to materials design needs to be adopted, since language is permeated with cultural meaning (Pulverness, 1998: 20). Unfortunately, NCE tends to be rather ethnocentric in its treatment of culture, dealing solely with western cultures. This aspect of ethnocentricity, is found even in coursebooks that are widely used in China both in elementary education and higher education.

The data results show that both teachers and students in Asian countries need to be informed by a fuller understanding of not only how native speakers interact with each other in monolingual/monocultural contexts, but also of the ways in which non-native speakers interact with each other. Students from Asian countries might become motivated in learning the target language if insights into their own culture are developed through the use of target language. It is hoped that publishers and materials designers develop language-teaching materials that are more specific to the Asian context and include texts with target, source culture, and international culture, since English has become an international language.

A good solution for this problem seems to be to encourage teachers to carry out 'materials adaptation', which is considered an effective way to modify existing coursebooks by adding suitable materials to replace materials which are considered inadequate, by providing options to the existing activities or suggesting alternative pathways through the activities. Poems, newspapers, advertisements, short stories, and so on can be used to replace the redundant sections of the existing materials in attempting to match the course objectives and meet the specific needs for the group.

(2) Learner strategies are given emphasis in the syllabus. It might be more effective if the coursebook provides some suggestions on how to train students in using these strategies. Most Chinese students only care about what is clearly essential to get a good grade and have mastered the strategy of dealing with the examination paper, however, they pay little attention to applying learning strategies to the actual learning process. In addition, not many coursebooks provide enough materials for learner strategies training. Therefore, materials should encourage teachers to learn about their

students, their attitudes, their interests, their motivation and their learning styles.

(3) As for speaking materials, the following suggestions are offered as solutions to the documented problems:

- Most speaking materials in the NCE focuses on discussing or answering questions from the text. More free discussions without teacher or textbook assigned topics can be provided so that students can produce more creative language based on their own behaviors and experiences.
- More real-life speaking materials should be added to the book to generate meaningful tasks and communicative functions, since speaking practice needs to involve the negotiation of meaning which is more context specific and help students to gain skills to function in a truly communication setting.
- An adequate set of related vocabulary and sentence structures should be provided for students in order to get them to be more confident in interacting in the target language.
- The inclusion of more challenging and inspiring topics might also help increase learner involvement.

In respect to writing materials, more writing assignments that can examine students' own thoughts and feelings should be provided to challenge students' creativity. Most written activities are assigned as individual work. More cooperative writing tasks and creative writing activities might be more effective in developing students' writing skills. During my teaching practice at Assumption University, I tried an effective way (see the Appendices) to teach writing which worked well to improve students' writing.



## 5.4 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER SYUDY

One of the limitations encountered in this study was during the data collection stage for my classroom observation. Some teachers changed their normal teaching behaviors as they had just finished answering the questionnaire and were influenced by the questions asked. It might have been different if the classroom observation had come first.

Secondly, due to the limited time and capability, the investigation in this research was mainly done in one university. Furthermore, the survey for this study was conducted with a rather small group of teachers. The results might turn out to be slightly different if more data were obtained from students or from teachers in other universities in China. Therefore my results may be applicable only to this specific setting. Therefore, I cannot claim any generality for them.

Thirdly, the evaluation criteria proposed in this research might be applicable only to the specific type of coursebook taken up for this study. Different and a larger number of criteria might need to be taken into consideration if this framework were to be extended in analyzing other type of materials.

And lastly, this research focused mainly on teachers' perceptions without giving too much attention to the learners' needs. Learners' needs analysis is another necessary area of study since the coursebook has claimed to take a learner-centered approach to teaching EFL as its nucleus.



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## **APPENDIX**

### **Appendix 1: A Checklist for Coursebook Evaluation**

Item						
		1	2	3	4	5
<b>TEACHING REQUIREMENTS</b>						
1.	-matches the course objectives: correspond closely with the aims of the teaching, and the needs of the learners					
2	-provides the course planning: offers approaches and methods for teaching					
3	-indicates the time schedule					
<b>DESIGN AND ORGANIZATION</b>						
1	-systematic coverage of Teaching Requirements and course objectives					
2	-clearly organized, (sequenced by difficulty)					
3	-suitable to learners' language proficiency level					
4	-provides a clear and coherent unit for teachers and learners to maximize the chances of learning					
5	-gives opportunity or encouragement to adapt the materials to the needs, wants, personalities, or styles of the learners or teachers					
6	Periodic review and test sections					
<b>LANGUAGE CONTENT</b>						
1	Enough variety and range of topics					
2	-culturally and socially relevant to learners					
3	-appealing and motivating to learners					
4	-help expand awareness and enrich their experiences					
<b>GENRE OF INPUT TEXTS</b>						
1	The variety of genre matches the syllabus requirements					
<b>SKILLS DISTRIBUTION</b>						

1	Skills are treated in an integrated way						
2	The balance of the skills is appropriate to the learner						
<b>AUTHENTICITY &amp; SUITABILITY</b>							
1.	-materials set in a meaningful context						
2	-materials are authentic to reflect real-life encounters						
<b>CULTURAL ASPECTS</b>							
1	-suitable for learners in terms of cultural background						
2	-keep the balance of cultural aspects						
<b>TASK DESIGN</b>							
1	Tasks are interesting.						
2	Tasks are rich in variety						
<b>STRATEGIES TRAINING</b>							
1	-adequate materials for strategies training						
2	-adequate activities for kinesthetic learners to encourage learners to develop their own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning						
<b>LANGUAGE SKILLS</b>							
<b>LISTENING</b>							
1	-intend to develop effective listening skills						
2	-has activities with comprehension questions						
3	-materials well recorded						
<b>SPEAKING</b>							
1	- range of speaking activities						
2	-intend to develop communicative strategies						
3	-authentic activities for real-life interaction						
<b>READING</b>							
1	-the range of reading texts and styles						
2	-the range of reading activities						
3	-materials suitable for your students' level						
4	-intend to nurture reading ability						
5	-has emphasis on reading on pleasure and for intellectual						



	satisfaction						
<b>WRITING</b>							
1	- range of writing tasks						
2	-guided writing?						
3	-free or semi free writing?						
4	Process writing?						
5	-activities to check students' writing						
<b>TRANSLATING</b>							
1	-reinforce the students' knowledge of the target language.						
2	-enough translating tasks						
3	-materials invite learners to use their own lives, views, and feelings to their existing knowledge and skills in their writing						
4	-tasks help explore effective translating skills						



**Appendix 2:**

**Questionnaire for Research Project  
(Coursebook Evaluation)**

Dear colleagues:

Thank you very much for your help with this research project. This is a survey on College English- Integrated Course I, published by Shanghai Foreign Language Press, PRC. The aim is to try and gain your perception on the coursebook; to explore whether the Teaching Requirements, course objectives and materials satisfy your expectations. The study also aims to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook, and its suitability in promoting language learning and teaching in the classroom.

1. Please fill in the box below with your particulars before you proceed to the questionnaire.

*(Please tick (✓) the appropriate category)*

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

Age: 20-25, ☐ 25-30 ☐ 30-35 ☐ 35-40 ☐ 40-45 ☐

Your education:

a) M.A ☐ c) Phd. ☐

b) B. A ☐

How long have you been teaching English?

a) 0 to 3 years ☐

c) over 7 years ☐

b) 4 to 6 years ☐

d) others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_ (no. of years)

How long have you been teaching using this coursebook?

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Part 1: Please feel free to rate your responses to the questions on the following rating scale. (please tick ‘√’ the one that suits you best for each statement). Your honest answers will be much appreciated.

Note: NCE stands for 全新版综合英语教程 (上海)

1. least satisfying; 2. less satisfying 3. acceptable  
4. satisfying 5. very satisfying

Items	1	2	3	4	5
1. My overall impression of NCE is good.					
2. NCE matches the requirement of the New National Syllabus.					
3. Learner-centered teaching approach is emphasized in NCE.					
4. NCE stresses the autonomous learning.					
5. Multi-dimensional syllabus is adopted in NCE.					
6. NCE provides variety of topics in reading materials.					
7. The design of exercises appear in the form of ‘interactive-style’.					
8. NCE develops learner’s grammatical competence.					
9. Task-based approach in NCE encourages self-study and can have more creative goals.					
10. Reading is taken as the most important skill training in NCE.					
11 Pre- listening activity is well designed					
12. Writing tasks are well designed to improve learner’s writing competence					
13. There are more classroom activities to train learners’ communicative competence					
14. The materials are relevant to social-cultural environment					
15. Teacher’s book helps to develop teaching skills effectively.					
16. <b>Theme-related language learning tasks</b> in Part IV intend to train the ability of speaking and writing.					
17. <b>Language Sense Enhancement</b> (poems & quotations) encourages students to appreciate the beauty of the language.					
18. <b>Language Focus</b> helps to improve self-study ability.					
11. <b>The comprehensive exercises</b> help to improve the ability to use the language in context. (在语篇中实际运用语言)					
20. The NCE helps the students prepare for the exam.					

Part 2 : Please rate your responses to the following questions with the same rating

scale in part 1 before making comments:

(1) What is your overall impression on listening materials?

Your rating \_\_\_\_\_

Your comment \_\_\_\_\_.

2: Does the coursebook provide enough materials to improve students speaking skill since the syllabus specifies the skill?

Your rating \_\_\_\_\_.

Your comment \_\_\_\_\_.

3: Do the materials have a potentially useful writing component to develop learners' writing skills?

Your rating \_\_\_\_\_.

Your comment \_\_\_\_\_.

4 Are the reading materials suitable for your learners' level?

Your rating \_\_\_\_\_.

Your comment \_\_\_\_\_.

5: Do the translating tasks keep the balance of English and Chinese?

Your rating \_\_\_\_\_.

Your comment \_\_\_\_\_.



### Appendix 3

## From Vocabulary Building to Creative Writing

**Xie Nan**

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Teaching students only rules of writing is not enough. Although they might learn about the conventions, they will most probably not be able to put them effectively in practice. To suit the level of my students, I designed four activities for this lesson plan based on *memory strategy* (Hatch & Brown, 1995: 387) and *semantic mapping* (Grade & Kaplan, 1996: 312). By sorting out related vocabulary, imitating model paragraphs, identifying or writing topic sentences, students are taught to develop an awareness of the features of writing in English. Although this lesson plan is based on a particular dramatic text, any story can be exploited similarly.

TEXT: William Shakespeare: *Much Ado About Nothing* (a simplified Oxford Bookworms version)

### ***Act 4 Scene 1: Hero's Wedding Day***

LEVEL: Intermediate

AGE: 18-20 years old

MATERIALS: 

- Pictures of characters
- OHP transparency with the sample text.

TIME: One double class period – approx. 80 minutes.

PROCEDURE:

### ***Activity 1: Brainstorming of adjectives describing personality***

(20 minutes)

1. Show pictures of characters in the story of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Students try to describe them using suitable adjectives they know.
2. Each student is asked to choose one of the previously elicited adjectives, write it on a piece of paper, fold it and put it in a box. The contents of the box will be shaken and the box will go back to the students. Each draws a piece of paper,

reads the adjective and creates a sentence about the characters in the story, using the word.

3. The students work in groups of four and share their adjectives. To ensure that their words are unique and original, the students can create new adjectives if they think that those they had originally are likely to be repeated in other groups.
4. A representative from each group comes to the blackboard. When the teacher counts to three, they must write their group's words as fast as possible (four words in all). The winner is the fastest group whose adjectives are not repeated in other groups' lists.

(You will be amazed at the variety of adjectives the students will come up with!)

Activity 2: WEDDING - Word Combinations

(20 minutes)

1. The Students are required to give more compound words with the examples given:
  - a. adjective + **wedding**  
eg: happy wedding, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. verb + **wedding**  
attend the wedding, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. **wedding** + noun  
wedding ring \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

(The following are some of the word combinations my students gave in the class:  
*happy wedding / romantic wedding / sad wedding / trouble wedding / sweet wedding / join the wedding / participate in the wedding / enjoy the wedding / attend the wedding / wedding ring / wedding party / wedding dress / wedding cake / wedding reception / wedding ceremony / wedding gift / wedding invitation / wedding celebration / wedding plan / wedding reception*)

2. Encourage the students to make sentences using the word combinations given.

(Students produced a lot of creative sentences in my class. For example:

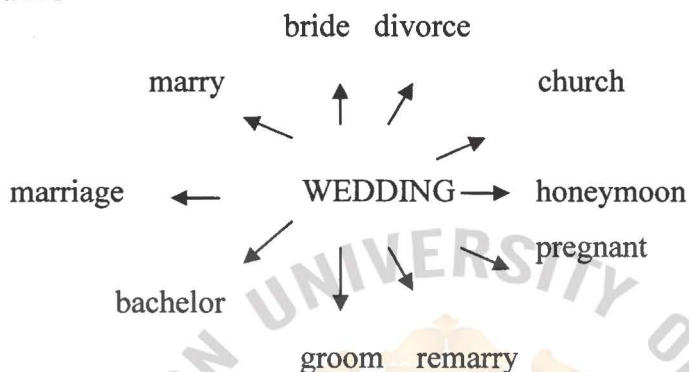
Hero's parents designed the wedding plan for Hero. I went to attend Hero's wedding ceremony and sent her some wedding gifts, but it was a trouble wedding, because the romantic wedding was destroyed by Don John's evil plan.)

Activity 3: Semantic Mapping

(20 minutes)

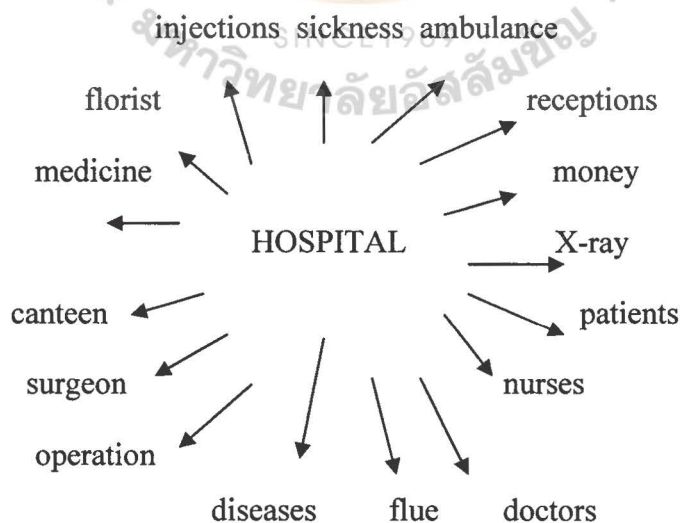
1. Write the key word **Wedding** on the blackboard. The students give other words associated with the key word.
2. You might want to show an OHP transparency with your own words (see diagram 1). Ask the students to explain the relations of these words to the key word.

Diagram 1



(Note: I benefit a lot from teaching vocabulary using Semantic Mapping. Once I give a key word like 'HOSPITAL', students can quickly give a lot of words related to the word 'HOSPITAL' as diagram.2 shows:)

Diagram 2





## Activity 4: Creative Writing

1. Prepare the following passage on an OHP transparency:

After the wedding day Hero starts her new life. She met Jade, an Indian gentleman. They fell in love. She started to **date** with him. She went out with him for three months and **got married** within six months. They held their **wedding** in a **church**. The **bride** and the **groom** spent their **honeymoon** at a beautiful beach. One year later she got **pregnant** and they had their first child, a boy. But the marriage was not successful. Lisa left one year afterwards and they got **divorced**. Two years later, Hero **remarried**, and now she is expecting a second baby. They are living happily.

2. The text is covered. Show the first sentence. Tell the students that they are now going to create a story about Hero's new life. Read the beginning of the following sentence (without the students seeing it). "She met..." and encourage the students to use their imagination in completing the sentence. After several guesses, let them see the sentence on the OHP transparency. This procedure is repeated sentence by sentence.

(The students in my class provided many interesting sentences, e.g. *Hero held her wedding day in a swimming pool. Her first child was black, etc.*)

3. Provide one or all of the following opening sentences and ask the students to create a new story using the same group of words.

**Claudio fell in love with another girl after the wedding...**

**Claudio became a bachelor after the wedding...**

**Claudio left the country and started a new life....**

4. Have the students read and present their stories in the class.

The diagram of vocabulary and the model text I showed in the OHP transparency are helpful to trigger students' vocabulary map and activate their writing interests.

The following passage is student's sample writing:

Claudio left his own country and started his new life after the wedding day. One



year later he dated with a girl named Lisa and married her. They held a wonderful wedding in the international park. But unfortunately, soon after their marriage, Lisa fell in love with a Bangladesh gentleman and eloped with the man. Claudio returned to Messina, Italy. He wished to remarry Hero. But the disappointing news came to him that Hero has got married and had her first twins—a boy and a girl. Can you imagine how Claudio will spend his rest of his life?

### Homework:

Use the new vocabulary, word combinations that we dealt with in today's class. Write a story describing your friend's life after his/her wedding.

### Reflections

The students showed great interest and were actively involved in the activities. If the topics and classroom activities are relevant to students' lives and if the students are given opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings, their motivation to work on the language is high. I could see a great improvement in their writing. "Time does fly today. I really enjoy today's writing activities!" This is what the students told me when the class was over.

### Appendix: Samples of Students' Writing

#### Student A

After the wedding day, Claudio met a Thai beautiful girl Nini who studies in ABAC now. They dated and fell in love. They started a new life in Bangkok. After five months they got married. They spent their honeymoon in Yayang, the beautiful beach. Ten months later the girl got pregnant. They had their first child. But an India girl destroyed their marriage. They divorced one year later. Claudio remarried and moved to another country. (*Note: I corrected her grammatical errors.*)

### Student B

After the Wedding Day, Claudio started a new life. He met a beautiful woman Lisa. They fell in love at first sight and made an appointment that they would date the same night at the club. Two weeks later they got married. They didn't hold their wedding in the church as the other people. Instead they did it in the Zoo because Lisa is a Zookeeper. At their wedding, the bride wears a monkey suit and the groom wears a tiger suit. After the wedding, they went to Sawana to spend their honeymoon. A month later Lisa got pregnant and they had their first child, a girl. But the marriage was not a success. Lisa has a lover and Claudio decided to divorce. Two weeks later Claudio remarried with his neighbor, Sara and she is also a Zookeeper

### Student C

After the Wedding, Claudio immediately divorced with Hero because she was not a nice wife. He started dating with a Hawaiian girl and they fell in love. They got married on a sail boat in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. They went to China for their honeymoon and they had a lot of fun together.

One year later the Hawaiian girl got pregnant, but Claudio left her because he hates babies. They didn't get divorced because the girl wouldn't let him marry again. Claudio went back to Messina to find Hero, but she was already married to another man. He went back to Hawaii and he could not find his wife. He lived lonely and unhappily after that.

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