A SURVEY OF ENGLISH TEACHERS’ ABILITY TO WRITE READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS IN CLASSROOM TEACHING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BEIJING, CHINA

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Abstract

Reading comprehension development has been a major issue in English learning and teaching in China. Since the effectiveness of reading comprehension questions will have an influence on how well students read, this study aims to investigate and evaluate how well teachers in secondary schools in Beijing write reading comprehension questions, whilst offering teachers some pragmatic frameworks or suggestions for improving their ability to develop good reading comprehension questions, so that they can guide students to comprehend appropriately and successfully. A review of relevant literature and previous studies was made to back up this study.

This dissertation is an exploratory study based on a two-year teacher training programme. It seeks to analyse a corpus of reading comprehension questions. Data was collected through a carefully designed procedure of sampling and coding. Following this, the selected reading activities and questions were analysed in different ways in order to present the current ability of secondary school teachers in Beijing.

The results of the study show that secondary school teachers in Beijing are capable of designing different reading tasks based on a given text. Despite this, teachers need to make improvements in designing effective reading comprehension activities and questions. Moreover, the research is not only about the confidentiality and limits of teaching, but the usefulness to students. Both teachers and students will derive benefit from this study.
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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the study

Reading comprehension development has been a major issue in English learning and teaching in Beijing, China since the national curriculum (2001) was implemented. For most Chinese students, reading is the main resource of information acquisition in English. Moreover, reading provides students with an opportunity to experience another literacy and culture. Meanwhile, through reading students can also cultivate their thinking ability. In a word, reading plays an important role in students’ English language learning. However, local research on students reading comprehension competence has revealed that reading is to some extent a longstanding weakness in English teaching in secondary schools. As a result, helping students to achieve the previously mentioned goals through reading has been emphasised significantly in China.

In secondary schools in Beijing, normally Chinese students read only English texts in course books of their English modules. Teachers usually guide students gradually to experience a reading process so as to help them understand appropriately what the texts mean and develop their reading competence. Therefore, in the guided reading process, as a tool of thinking, good reading comprehension questions are in great necessity. Usually, texts are followed by a series of designed questions in textbooks. However, some of the questions are not effective to all the students, so teachers will have to improve the original questions or produce alternative questions. Additionally, teachers often search and adopt passages from different resources as supplements and substitutions of the texts in course books. In this regard, teachers will also need to design original reading comprehension questions to successfully engage students into the reading process.

Observation of effective teachers and examination of relevant research clarify that teachers usually have “a tremendous influence on whether children are successful in learning to read” (Heilman, Blair and Rupley, 2002, p.23). Therefore, how efficiently students read and benefit from English texts depends largely on whether teachers can write or modify good reading comprehension questions. In Beijing, few principles have been delivered to guide and facilitate English teachers in secondary school to write high-quality reading comprehension questions. Questions that are designed by teachers are not likely to be reliable and valid for the reason that most of the time teachers construct questions relying only on experience, advice, and common sense.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate and evaluate how well teachers in secondary schools in Beijing write reading comprehension questions and whilst offering teachers with some pragmatic frameworks or suggestions on how to improve their abilities of developing good reading comprehension questions, with which they will lead students to comprehend appropriately and successfully.
1.2 Methods of the study
Under such circumstances, the investigation and evaluation of teachers’ ability to write reading comprehension questions in classroom teaching in secondary schools is of great importance. This project will make the advantages of the data collected based on a city wide teacher training programme conducted in 2013. Samples of reading comprehension questions designed by secondary school teachers will be selected from about 5,000 survey papers and analysed from various angles to find out the features related to teachers’ ability to write reading comprehension questions.

1.3 Research questions
Since the effectiveness of reading comprehension questions will have an influence on how well students read, this research project will focus on some relevant sub points, which will be revealed in the following three research questions:

(1) What questions do English teachers in secondary schools in Beijing ask when setting reading comprehension tasks?
(2) Do the questions that are set help students to understand the reading texts effectively?
(3) What principles of question design can be developed on the basis of the answers to Question 1 and 2?

1.4 Layout of the dissertation
The main part of this dissertation includes four chapters, from Chapter Two to Chapter Five, and within each one there will be a focus as is shown below. Apart from that, Chapter Six will conclude and summarize the whole study.

Chapter Two provides a literature review detailing the previous research and existing knowledge relevant to reading skills. This chapter discusses some key points in reading comprehension, including reading process, reading comprehension levels, and reading comprehension sub skills. Meanwhile, the theories in relation to reading comprehension questions are also introduced. Moreover, some concepts related to assessment and testing, such as validity, reliability, construct and item writing are also presented in this stage.

Chapter Three introduces the methodological process of this study, focusing on the research questions, research instruments, participants, and methods used to collect data and analyse data.

Chapter Four presents the data analysis, with some comparisons made between different groups of teachers, based on thousands of survey papers for a city wide teacher training programme in order to reflect teachers’ present status to design reading comprehension questions.

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the research, and the advantages and disadvantages of teachers’
ability to design effective reading comprehension questions.

Chapter Six presents the conclusions of this study. It also points out the limitations and implications of this project, and makes suggestions for further study.
Chapter Two Literature review

2.1 Introduction
This chapter comprises three sections. In Section One, some significant points pertinent to reading comprehension are introduced, including the concepts of reading process, the classifications of reading comprehension levels and reading comprehension sub skills, which back up readers to fully understand reading comprehension. Section Two mainly focuses on reading comprehension questions, including the functions, forms, types and levels of question, in order to find out the appropriately adopted items for this study. Several central concepts relevant to assessment and testing are introduced in the last section, to provide a theoretical foundation for writing effective reading comprehension questions.

2.2 The review of reading comprehension
2.2.1 Reading process
Although reading comprehension is an internal, mental process which cannot be directly observed or studied, understanding the nature of reading comprehension or the reading process is still of great importance for teachers to design good reading comprehension questions because only by knowing what happens while students are reading can teachers develop appropriate questions to involve students in the interaction with passages and generate mental activities, resulting in effective reading comprehension.

With regard to reading, three perspectives, traditionally called bottom-up, top-down, and interactive views of reading, have been dominant in the past few decades (Nassaji, 2014). In accordance with the development of reading theories, language scholars have adopted different recognitions and definitions about reading process. In the early period, reading process was seen as thinking and reasoning by Thorndike (1917, as cited in Alderson, 2000). Nowadays, focused on a cognitive basis, reading process is regarded as the highly active “interaction between a reader and the text” (Alderson, 2000, p.3) or the meaningful communication between the author and the reader (Cook, 1986; Palincsar, Ogle, Jones, Carr, & Ransom, 1985; Ringler & Weber, 1984; Rumelhart, 1976; Winograd, 1986, as cited in Marzola, 1988; Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 2002).

Most scholars agree that reading process contains two components: lower level processes of decoding and higher level processes of comprehension or constructing mental representations of the text (Chen & Vellutino, 1997; Gough, Hoover & Peterson, 1996; Grabe, 2009; Kintsch, 1998; Perfetti, 1985, 1997; Sticht & James, 1984; Alderson, 2000). Decoding refers to the processing of word recognition while comprehension is defined as the construction of meaning based on the decoded language and the reader’s prior knowledge (Lund, 1991; Alderson, 2000; Song, 2008). It is claimed that reading is a complex, fluid, and purpose-driven process (Rupp, Ferne & Choi, 2006), so effective reading comprehension questions are needed to support students to percept the printed language, build up the
meaning and monitor their own reading performance in this process (Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 2002).

2.2.2 Reading comprehension levels

In the dynamic reading process, comprehension happens at different levels. Many scholars concur that reading comprehension can be divided into different levels, but they have very controversial ideas on the ways of distinct division. As Green (2011) points out, the wide range of reading models found in the second language literature suggest that “when reading for different purposes readers may need to engage different cognitive processes, or to balance these processes in different ways” (p.191).

Based on the top-down theories, the psycholinguistic models of Goodman and Smith reveal that reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game (Goodman 1967, 1982, 1988; Smith, 1994), which “emphasized higher-level syntactic and semantic skills” and it is quite different from “basic lower-level phonological and orthographic processes” (Nassaji, 2014, p.2). Kintsch and van Dijk (1978) and Kintsch and Yarbrough (1982) also identify two levels of comprehension: “microprocesses” level, referring to “local phrase-by-phrase understanding”, and “macroprocesses” level, referring to “global understanding” (as cited in Alderson, 2000, p.9). Gray’s (1956) three-levelled distinctions take the product of reading into consideration: “reading the lines” (the literal meaning of text), reading “between the lines” (inferred meanings), and “beyond the lines” (readers’ evaluations of text) (as cited in Alderson, 2000, p.7-8). Likewise, according to students’ multiple cognitive engagement levels involved in the reading process (Best & Marcus, 2009; Ding, 2006; Kintsch, 1988), Kintsch (1988) proposes the Construction Integration Model, evaluating and dividing the reading comprehension into three levels of “surface-based level, text-based level, and situation-based level” (as cited in Tseng, Yeh and Yang, 2015, p.42). While the first two levels focus on “retrieving the information from the text”, situation-based level relates to “the integration of the text information with sequential logic” (as cited in Tseng, Yeh and Yang, 2015, p.42).

In sum, all the divisions can be broadly distributed into two categories: lower-level reading comprehension concerning identifying the surface meaning of words and higher-level reading comprehension concerning overall understanding and evaluating of passages. The latter one is defined by Cottrell (2011) as critical reading, which requires readers to pay a close attention to certain parts of texts and involves analysis, reflection, evaluation and judgment making. When teachers develop reading comprehension questions, it is necessary for them to think clearly about at what understanding level each question leads students’ mental activities to take place and appreciate the importance of assessing the higher order reading skills as well as just the skimming and scanning

2.2.3 Reading comprehension sub skills

Another significant issue in relation to reading comprehension is “how many empirically divisible sub skills exist, and what they are” (Song, 2008, p.437). Language researchers have made many attempts
to identify reading skills or abilities, and suggest different numbers and types of lists, taxonomies and hierarchies of skills with or without experimental evidence supporting their findings (Davis, 1968; Nuttall, 1982; Munby, 1978; Lunzer & Gardner, 1979; Richards, 1983; Weir, 1993; Buck, Tatsuoka, Kostin & Phelps, 1997; Alderson, 2000). As for the ways of division, scholars have dispute over how many sub skills might be empirically identifiable. Many researchers claim considerably different numbers of sub skills, ranging from three to thirty six skills (Alderson and Lukmani, 1989, as cited in Alderson, 2000). In contrast, some other scholars state that reading is a unitary, integrated skill, for the reason that there is still no consensus on the topic “whether separable comprehension sub skills exist, and what such sub skills might consist of and how they might be classified” (Alderson, 2000, p.10).

Although scholars have theoretical disagreements about the division of sub skills, in practice, English teachers and test developers have taken it for granted that sub skills of reading comprehension do exit. It is commonplace that they distinguish different comprehension sub skills as a basis for planning a syllabus, describing students’ language competence, and developing test items (Alderson, 2000; Song, 2008). In China, a particularly text-oriented context, test developers may define the constructs to be measured in terms of several sub skills and include in their tests the items intended to measure those sub skills (Song, 2008), and as a consequence, English teachers may also evaluate students’ reading ability and conduct their reading comprehension teaching accordingly. In the English national curriculum (see Appendix-1), different reading comprehension sub skills have been claimed as language skills requirement and in accordance with which, almost all the test developers design reading comprehension tasks. Since the sub skills listed are the ultimate learning outcomes required by the curriculum, when teachers design reading comprehension questions, they will have to know explicitly and exactly what reading sub skill each question is aimed for.

2.3 Reading comprehension questions

2.3.1 Functions of reading comprehension questions

In addition to a clear picture of the nature of reading comprehension, knowing reading comprehension questions well are also significant to English teachers because they need to be familiar with the functions of questions for the purpose of developing good reading comprehension questions. Research evidence has indicated that questions deeply influence the processing of instructional materials (Andre’, 1979; Hamilton, 1985; Cerdan, Vidal-Abarca, Martínez, Gilabert & Gil, 2007) and they stimulate readers to participate the reading process actively.

Recent research has revealed that questioning is a powerful metacognitive tool (Gaveleck & Raphael, 1985; King, 1989; Wong, 1985; Ishiwa, Sanjose & Otero, 2012). Actually, reading comprehension questions can promote readers to think logically, critically and creatively about and respond to the information and ideas in the material they have read (Graves, Juel & Graves, 2001). When reading to
answer specific questions, readers need to be able to “discriminate between relevant (information needed to answer the question) and irrelevant information” (Cerdan, Vidal-Abarca, Martínez, Gilabert & Gil, 2007, p.13). Nuttall (1982) argues that good questions usually make readers “work at the text” and “contribute actively to the process of making sense of it” (p.125). Besides, good questions help readers realize which bits of the text they have or have not understood, so that they will be aware of which part they should concentrate on.

Questions can boost thinking in different ways. On the one hand, they can help readers to recall and understand what has been read, and to apply, analyse, synthesise or elaborate on information and ideas; on the other hand, they can stimulate creative, interpretive or metacognitive thinking and illustrate the various perspectives among readers (Nuttall, 1982). In Cottrell’s opinion (2011), some of the skills associated with critical thinking are actually in relation to reading comprehension skills, such as “identifying other people’s position, arguments and conclusion, being able to read between the lines, reflecting on issues in a structured way, drawing conclusions and synthesising information” (p.4). Generally speaking, one way for teachers to ensure that students are engaged in thinking about a text at a variety of levels or find out the kinds of factual, inferential, or evaluative/interpretive information, is to deliberately consider different types and levels of questions. Although there may not be too many complex levels suitable for secondary school students because of the limitation of their mental and intellectual development, English teachers still need to get a clear idea of what function and purpose each question has. Subsequently, students are led effectively to comprehend the passages they read by answering these questions.

2.3.2 Forms of reading comprehension questions

Questions can be divided into various groups according to their forms. In this regard, Nuttall (1982) suggests questions are often classified into four categories: yes/no questions, alternative questions, wh-questions and how/why questions. Usually, answers to yes/no questions are short and students do not need to compose complete sentences to answer them. For the alternative question, students should provide a full sentence answer according to the structure and content of the question. Wh-questions and how/why questions also require students to give full sentence answers, but “totally different in structure and content from the questions” (Nuttall, 1982, p.128). When designing reading comprehension questions, testers should select the forms most suited to checking students’ comprehension on a particular aspect of the text. Furthermore, what teachers should also bear in mind is that whether a question form is easier or difficult usually depends on its answer, not particularly the form of it (Nuttall, 1982).

2.3.3 Types and levels of reading comprehension questions

Questions are often classified on the basis of the location of the information to be obtained (local/global text level) and the explicitness of the match between the question and the information in
the text, resulting in item categories such as identifying the main idea, locating details, or making inferences (Goldman & Durán, 1988; OECD, 2003; Song, 2008; Cerdán et al., 2009). For Alderson, “reading comprehension questions that load on the same factor are stated to measure the same skill or sub skill” (2000, p.9). However, concerning types and levels of questions in text comprehension and learning tasks, many attempts to classify reading comprehension questions have been made, but scholars’ opinions are conflicting about the divisions.

Reading comprehension questions are traditionally categorised as general or high-level questions and specific or low-level questions (Andre’, 1979; Hamilton, 1985; Rickards, 1979, as cited in Cerdán et al., 2009). According to the Quest Model (Graesser & Franklin, 1990), high level questions focus on broad conceptual structures, whereas low-level ones relate to single concepts or propositions.

More specifically, Nuttall (1982) proposes five types of questions based on whether the information needed to answer the question is explicitly stated in the passage and the complexity of reader’s mental process of identifying and synthesising the information. Type 1 questions are essential questions the answers of which are directly read and explicitly presented in the text, Type 2, 3 and 4 questions are questions that force the reader to think about what the writer has written and how he has written it and Type 5 questions are questions that involve the reader with the writer and ask the reader to formulate his action to the content based on textual evidence (Nuttall, 1982).

Similarly, Goldman and Duran (1988) identify five types of questions varying in terms of their relation to the text and the types of processing activities required to answer them. Generally, Type 1, 2, and 3 questions share a verbatim relationship with the text but vary in the kind of text processing activities needed for answering; Type 4 questions require integration across segments, and Type 5 questions demand reasoning beyond the text. However, these two types of questions are less easy to set and not so readily used. Pearson and Johnson’s model (1978) is different from the previous ones, containing three types: text explicit questions ask the reader to “recall (parts of) the text verbatim”, text implicit questions ask the reader to “draw more inferences from the text and integrate ideas within the text” and script implicit questions ask the reader to “make more interpretive and evaluative connections between the text and their own prior knowledge” (Marzola, 1988, p.245).

The other classification of three types of questions is usually adopted in English tests. Lower level items involve retrieving detailed information, located in specific text segments (Rosenshine, 1980; Vidal-Abarca et al., 1998; OECD, 2003; Song, 2008; Cerdán et al., 2009). This information is either verbatim or requires a minor conversion, concerning single, directly accessible nodes in the knowledge network (Davis, 1968; Goldman & Durán, 1988; OECD, 2003; Cerdán et al., 2009). Higher level items involve comprehending a text’s theme or main idea, the author’s general purpose, tone, or attitude and the ability to draw conclusions from or make predictions on the basis of the text,
concerning multiple nodes related on a global text level, which need to be integrated into central, superordinate nodes (Davis, 1968; Rosenshine, 1980; OECD, 2003; Song, 2008). The intermediate category taps the comprehension of the underlying relationships between local pieces of information (OECD, 2003; Rosenshine, 1980). They are related to “the integration of nodes that are not related on the global, but on the local level” (Steensel, Oostdam & Gelderen, 2013, p.5).

This project will adopt Pearson and Johnson’s (1978) questions taxonomy of three categories because students are dynamic readers and the value of this taxonomy is “its ability to capture the relationship between information presented in a text and information that has to come from a reader’s store of prior knowledge” (p.157).

2.4 Assessment of reading comprehension
Hughes (1989) suggests that in order to demonstrate that readers’ reading is a successful performance, we should give readers tasks involving them in providing evidence of effective reading. Accordingly, when the teacher asks students to read a passage and answer questions, he or she actually assesses their reading comprehension competence. Therefore, some relevant concepts will be discussed in the following part.

2.4.1 Validity
Validity is the primary and central consideration of language assessment and testing. Scholars have theoreticalized and conceptualized validity in different ways and built up different frameworks based on various theoretical perspectives of validities (Hughes, 1989; Mesick, 1989; McNamara, 1996; Bachman, 2004; Weir, 2005; Luoma, 2005; Douglas, 2010; Green, 2014). On the one hand, a test is said to be valid if “it measures accurately what it is intended to measure” (Hughes, 1989, p.22). On the other hand, validity is also a question on test score interpretations, within which testers know how far the interpretations are valid for the test takers and testing purposes. With regard to the frameworks, Bachman’s theoretical model of CLA is thought to be less empirical while the CEFR is believed to lack the theoretical basis (O’Sullivan & Weir, 2011). Weir’s socio-cognitive framework is viewed as “the first framework which allows for serious theoretical consideration of the issues but is also capable of being applied practically” (O’Sullivan & Weir, 2011, p.24).

However, this was built up for large-scaled testing, although it is very useful for small scale testing as well. Teachers should adapt it appropriately to design reading comprehension questions for their own classroom teaching. According to McNamara (2000), the content, test method and test construct, and the impact of tests are major threats to test validity. Weir’s framework contains five key elements, among which this project is more relevant to construct validity. Since it is unnecessary for teachers to score answers to questions in classroom teaching, teachers will need to focus mainly on “what are we testing?” and “how are we testing?” (O’Sullivan & Weir, 2011, p.23).

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2.4.2 Reliability
Reliability is another significant concept in assessment. Scholars define reliability as the consistency of measurement which shows the extent to which the tests provide accurate measures of whatever abilities they are designed to measure (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Bachman, 2004; Douglas 2010).

Compared with large-scaled testing, classroom assessment of reading with a variety of questions is consistent about how they perform and develop in reading comprehension, because the more items used to make an assessment, the more reliable it is to be (Pearson & Johnson, 1978; Hughes, 1989). For Pearson and Johnson (1978), teachers are likely to observe students’ learning behaviour for a period of time and get a reliable evaluation of how they are performing on a particular kind of questions.

One thing English teachers should be aware is that in their efforts to make test reliable, they must be wary of diminishing their validity. This depends partly on what exactly they are trying to measure by setting the tasks or questions. In addition, there will always be some tension between reliability and validity. The tester has to balance gains in one against losses in the other (Hughes, 1989, p.42).

2.4.3 Construct
Bachman and Palmer (1996) claim that construct validity is one of the qualities of usefulness relevant to developing test tasks. Likewise, as for designing reading comprehension questions, teachers also need to consider the construct of the question(s) for any written text.

The term test construct refers to the candidate’s knowledge, skill or ability, which is being measured based on a language theoretical hypothesis (Hughes, 1989; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; McNamara, 2000). It is needed because task writers must be clear about what kind of ability a test task is supposed to be measuring. Furthermore, teachers will also know “where a reader’s weaknesses lie” or “what stage a reader has reached in their reading development” (Alderson, 2000, p.140) according to students’ performance on these reading comprehension questions. In order to achieve the teaching goal, teachers need to have a construct or clear specifications to “delineate the tasks in terms of how they elicit cognitive processes” before they set reading comprehension tasks and questions. Nevertheless, most English teachers in secondary schools in Beijing have not recognized it yet.

In European countries, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) offers a broad and significant perspective on language proficiency and illustrates this through a group of scales composed of ascending level descriptors couched in terms of outcomes, which can be adopted for the specifications of the content of tests and examinations (Council of Europe, 2001). Similarly, for this project, the construct is broadly defined based on the Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2011 Edition) (2012), because it claims in the suggestions of assessment that teachers
should choose and determine the content and criteria of assessment according to requirements of language skills (see Appendix-1). Furthermore, since Pearson and Johnson’s (1978) questions taxonomy of three categories has been adopted in this project, the underlying ability of the construct will also be to answer text explicit questions, text implicit questions and script implicit questions on the basis of written texts. Therefore, whether teachers design or write questions covering these three types will be categorized, analysed, and evaluated. Accordingly, the construct of this study will mainly include the following skills:

1. Ability to understand readings of common text types at corresponding levels, e.g. simple stories and passages, grasping their general ideas.
2. Ability to understand practical writing matters such as simple personal letters and expositions.
3. Ability to understand sequences of events and behaviours of characters in simple readings.
4. Ability to find out related information from simple texts and understand the main idea.
5. Ability to guess the meanings of new words from their contexts.
6. Ability to understand and explain the information provided by graphs.
7. Ability to infer and understand the meanings of new words through context and word-building rules.
8. Ability to understand the logic relations between sentences in a passage.
9. Ability to find out the themes of passages, understand the plots of stories, foresee the development of the plots and possible endings of stories.
10. Ability to adopt simple reading strategies to obtain information according to different reading goals.

2.4.4 Item writing
In test development, questions to construct tests are referred to as items and the process of creating those items is accordingly referred to as item writing (Mayenga 2009, as cited in Naeem, Vleuten & Alfaris, 2012). Furthermore, Rodriguez (1997) states that item writing is mastered only through extensive and critically supervised practice (as cited in Naeem et al., 2012). Downing and Haladyna (2006) claim that proper item development is critical to ensure validity and effective item writers are trained; otherwise, item writers tend to create poor-quality, flawed, low-cognitive-level test questions that test unimportant or trivial content (as cited in Naeem et al., 2012). According to Tarrant and Ware (2008), the presence of item-writing violations is all too common in teacher-developed examinations across many disciplines and language experts agree that item-writing flaws can affect student performance.

In Beijing, formal assessment training programmes teachers attend usually focus on large-scale testing and test score interpretation, rather than the test construction strategies or item-writing rules teachers really need (Stiggins & Bridgeford, 1985; Stiggins, 1991; Frey, Petersen, Edwards, Pedrotti & Peyton, 2005).
Recent research has shown that the quality of most in-house examinations is relatively low and the quality of examination questions can be greatly improved by providing question writers with formal training and pre-established guidelines (Naeem et al., 2012), so that when writing reading comprehension questions, teachers will have a framework or a checklist to refer to, within which teacher trainers or researchers need to study and offer valid item-writing rules for teachers to obey.

According to Frey et al. (2005), “reviewing the empirical research literature for item-writing rules-of-thumb for an agreed upon list of classroom assessment rules is not overly fruitful, as few rules present themselves” (p.358). From Hughes’ angle (1989), the wording of reading comprehension items “should not add any comprehension difficulties to test takers” (p.129). Nuttall (1982) identifies a check list to assess the appropriateness of reading comprehension questions. In addition, Alderson and Cseresznyés (2005) also confirm some other principles for teachers to follow while they are writing reading comprehension questions. Combing the two series, teachers can adopt the following checklist of practical principles in the process of designing reading comprehension questions:

1. Do the students have to refer to the texts in order to answer the questions or solve the tasks?
2. Do the questions give coverage to all parts of the text, with several questions on every part?
3. Are the questions varied in type?
4. Are they written in language that is more difficult than the text?
5. Do the answers require language that is too difficult for the students to handle?
6. Do the questions attempt to help students to understand?
7. Do the items test the students’ skill(s) that are intended to assess rather than content knowledge?
8. Do some questions specifically try to make students aware of the strategies a reader needs?
9. Do the questions follow the text sequence?
10. Are all the questions independent of one another except for the ones in sequencing tasks?

To sum up, little has been written about small scale reading tests. However, a review of the research papers on large scale testing is also pertinent to this project, because item writing principles are relevant and they can be adopted and adapted to my teaching context. In the light of the review of previous researchers’ studies, reading comprehension questions designed by teachers in Beijing can be analysed and evaluated, so that a list of valid rules will be established.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviews the conception of reading comprehension, including reading process, reading comprehension levels and skills to provide a broad academic background of the study. It also focuses on relevant issues of reading comprehension questions, which introduces the central concepts of this study. Finally, assessment and testing are also discussed to lay a theoretical foundation for writing reading comprehension questions.
Chapter Three Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In order to promote the professional development of English teachers in secondary schools, Beijing Education Committee carried out a two-year teacher training programme in 2012 and 2013, during which, English teachers attended a variety of training activities, such as lectures, seminars, presentations and teaching practices. In the end, as summative evaluation of the programme, a survey to measure learning was designed for teachers to finish individually, so as to evaluate whether teachers had updated their teaching beliefs in accordance with the newly edited and revised national curriculum and improved their teaching skills. Based on the teacher training programme, the following three research questions will be addressed:

(1) What questions do English teachers in secondary schools in Beijing ask when setting reading comprehension tasks?
(2) Do the questions that are set help students to understand the reading texts effectively?
(3) What principles of question design can be developed on the basis of the answers to Question 1 and 2?

This research is exploratory about how individual teachers make sense of the situation they are in and setting questions, so it is much more constructionist. To some extent, since the research looks at frequency things, it is quantitative. Meanwhile, the research is also qualitative because it looks at non-numerical data as well. Therefore, quantitative method and qualitative method are not two distinctive sections in this study, where actually the two methods merge into each other. Thus, it is a mixed method research which will increase the accuracy of data, provide a more complete picture of the phenomenon, enable the researcher to develop the analysis and build on the original data and aid sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011; Daniel, 2012).

3.2 Instrument

The survey paper contained four sections, in the last section of which teachers were invited to finish a lesson plan based on a given text. The lesson plan included three main tasks: the first one was to establish the teaching objectives, the second one was to design reading comprehension activities in the while-reading phase, and the last one was to design comprehensive post-reading activities. This project focuses on the second task.

The given text was a 293-word story with an unexpected ending, the synopsis of which was as follows. A lady named Jenny borrowed her neighbour’s car and thought that she broke the neighbour’s vase in a gift box in the car with a sudden stop. Then she decided to buy an identical one and substituted the original one without telling her neighbour. However, when she called her neighbour and planned to explain what had happened, her neighbour told her that the broken vase was supposed to be returned to the store because it had already been broken before she borrowed the car. The copy of the story
could be found in Appendix-2.

The reason why a story was selected for teachers to design reading comprehension tasks was that in secondary school English course books, narratives are the most common genre teachers may come across in classroom teaching. Meanwhile, what the national curriculum required secondary school students to read and understand were mainly narratives. As Meek (1988) suggests, genre is a factor that can influence the reader during the reading process. Alderson (2005) also indicates that the knowledge of how texts are organised has been crucial to assisting reading as mediators when they grapple with the ideas, thoughts and reasoning of others.

Regarding the second task, teachers were instructed to design while-reading activities, stating the contents and organizations of the activities. The reading comprehension questions were designed for secondary school levelled students from Year 7 to Year 9. What exactly Year the target students were in relied on individual teacher’s own decision based on their teaching experience and text analysis of the given reading comprehension passage. Meanwhile, for each activity, teachers were also asked to claim the teaching purpose of what they wanted their students to achieve through those activities and the time allocated for students to finish the activity. Since it is a survey and all the teachers as test takers had to complete the whole paper within limited time, every teacher was equally required to design three reading comprehension activities. Furthermore, the three activities were required to cover three different reading comprehension levels. All the above requirements were clearly stated in the rubrics.

3.3 Participants

According to Daniel (2012), it is important to clearly define the target population before making sampling choices because if the target population is ambiguously defined, it may lead to population specification bias. Moreover, the definition of the target population should “explicitly clarify inclusive and exclusive criteria for participation in the study, indicating the elements included and not included” (Daniel, 2012, p9). When defining the target population, the researcher should identify four aspects: “nature of the elements, sampling units containing the elements to be selected, geographic location of the elements and time period under consideration” (Daniel, 2012, p9).

In this project, all the survey papers were collected as the corpus. The reading comprehension questions were designed by secondary school English teachers who worked in 323 public schools distributed in all the seventeen districts and counties of Beijing. The total number of the target population was 4640. From the September of 2011, they continuously received training and in July of 2013, they were spontaneously investigated with the same testing paper. However, teachers do have differences in some aspects. First of all, secondary school teachers who were born in the years after 1963 were required to attend the training programme and the investigating test, so their ages ranged
from twenty three to fifty three when they took part in the test. Next, the ratio between male teachers and female teachers are 91% to 9%. Thirdly, their degrees of education varied, 90.6% of them with bachelor degrees, 8.5% of them with master degrees, and others without any degrees. Finally, the teachers’ professional background differed from one another, with the shortest teaching experience of only one year to the longest of thirty three years. Based on the above features, teacher samples were selected from all the districts and counties.

3.4 Data collection
To a great extent, the quality of a piece of research rises or falls depending on the sampling strategy that has been adopted (Cohen et al., 2011). Therefore, researchers should take sampling decisions into account early in the study.

In terms of sampling, Daniel (2012) defines it as “the selection of a subset of a population for inclusion in study” (p.1). The samples of this project were chosen from all the teachers participated in the survey. In regard to how to select samples, scholars provide researchers with different steps and strategies (Cohen et al. 2011; Daniel, 2012). Daniel (2012) suggests six major steps in selecting a sample, four steps of which are similar to the eight strategies of planning a sample strategy put forward by Cohen et al. (2011). In this project, Daniel’s steps were adopted to illustrate the sampling procedure, because it involves both the process of sampling and what should be considered significantly before the process.

According to Daniel (2012), the six steps are “preparing to make sampling choices, choosing between taking a census and sampling, choosing nonprobability, probability, or mixed-methods sample design, choosing the type of nonprobability, probability, or mixed-method sample design, determining sample size, and selecting sample” (p.5).

3.4.1 Choosing between taking a census and sampling
Before actually making sampling choices, researchers should have a careful consideration of “the purpose of one’s study, the nature of the population, available resources, research design consideration, and ethical and legal issue considerations” (Daniel, 2012, p.9). In this project, the purpose was claimed in the introduction and the nature of the population was described in the previous part of the target population. Meanwhile, research design and ethical and legal issue were considered in advance. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained in this study and all the information would only be used for research purposes.

Furthermore, the quality of the resulting sample is “substantially dependent on this first step”, which involves selecting between “the entire target population” (taking a census) and “a subset of the target population” (sampling) (Daniel, 2012, p.9). In this project, since the whole population was about 5000
and it was difficult to study, a smaller group of samples were preferred to be the representative of the total population.

3.4.2 Choosing nonprobability, probability, or mixed-methods sample design
The next step is related to choosing nonprobability, probability, or mixed-methods sample design. For Daniel (2012), probability sampling is a sampling procedure that “gives every element in the target population a known and nonzero chance of being selected” while “nonprobability sampling does not give some elements in the population a chance to be in the sample” (p.66). In this definition, “known” indicates that the size of the population was known and any element of the population being selected into the sample could be calculated; meanwhile, “nonzero” implies that every element in the population had an equal chance to be selected. Additionally, mixed-methods sampling is a sampling method that combines different types of sampling methods into a single design.

Daniel (2012) also suggests guidelines for choosing between nonprobability sampling and probability sampling, which includes objectives of the study, nature of the population, availability of resources and research design considerations. Through the comparison and contrast of the strengths and weaknesses of probability sampling and nonprobability sampling (see Appendix-3), several advantages of probability sampling were found out in relation to this project. In terms of objectives of the study and research design considerations, the project was in accordance with most of the criteria of applying probability sampling. As for the nature of the population and availability of resources, probability sampling met the needs of all the criteria. Furthermore, a probability sample will have less risk of bias than a nonprobability sample.

3.4.3 Choosing the type of nonprobability, probability, or mixed-method sample design
Since probability sampling was selected for this project, in the following step, it was necessary to choose the specific type of probability sample design. Scholars have adopted different approaches to categorize probability sampling. In Daniel’s opinion (2012), probability sampling can be divided into four major types of probability sample designs: simple random sampling, stratified sampling, systematic sampling, and cluster sampling whereas according to Cohen et al. (2011), there are two more types of stage samples and multiphase samples.

Among them, stratified sampling is defined by Daniel (2012) as a probability sampling procedure in which “the target population is first separated into mutually exclusive, homogeneous segments (strata), and then a simple random sampling is selected from each segment (stratum)” (p.126). Stratified sampling has several strengths, such as “yielding smaller random sampling errors than those obtained with a simple random sample of the same sample size”, “being more representative of a population”, “permitting the researcher to use different sampling procedures within the different strata” and “taking into account administrative convenience in carrying out the study” (Daniel, 2012, p.138-139), all of
which made it possible to work as a suitable sampling strategy for this project. Several steps can be adopted to select stratified sampling, in which all the teachers could be firstly divided into homogeneous subgroups based on geographic distribution of the seventeen districts (see Table-1) and then chosen randomly with each subgroup, which contained teachers with similar characteristics and diversities.

**Table-1 Homogeneous Subgroups of Participant Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
<th>Populations</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District 1</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>6.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 2</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>8.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 3</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>11.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 4</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>14.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 5</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>6.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 6</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 7</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 8</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>5.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 9</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>7.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 10</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>6.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 11</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 13</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 14</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 15</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 16</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>6.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 17</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>6.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4640</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following significant consideration was the proportion of sampling elements within each subgroup, because a suitable number of samples would help represent the target population and discover the valuable information. Regarding the proportion, Daniel (2012) claims that the stratified sampling can be grouped into two major subtypes—“proportionate stratified sampling” and “disproportionate stratified sampling” (p.132). Since the teacher population in each district was in sharp contrast, if using proportionate stratification for this study, the sample size of some districts (strata) would be very small and might not yield sufficient information for detailed analysis. Consequently, it would be difficult to achieve the objectives of this project. Furthermore, Daniel (2012) also indicates that disproportionate stratified sampling may be more appropriate for most of the projects. Therefore, disproportionate stratified sampling was adopted in this project.

**3.4.4 Determining sample size**
The choice of sampling size is another very important decision. The essential requirement is that “the sample is representative of the population from which it is drawn” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.149). However, as for the correct sample size for a project, there is no clear-cut answer, because it relies on various factors such as the “purpose of the study, the nature of the population, the level of accuracy required, the anticipated response rate” and so on (Cohen et al., 2011, p.149).

In order to help researchers determine the sample size, Daniel (2012) provides a series of guidelines, including five sections and sixteen items (see Appendix-4). Some of them were closely relevant to this project and were referred to when the sample size was chosen.

As for the objectives of the study, since this research aims to provide a description and evaluation, as Daniel (2012) argues, a relatively large sample size was required. Moreover, this study is important, insofar as the results would affect the secondary school leveled classroom teaching of reading and it was necessary to conduct detailed analyses of the population, so a larger sample size was required. From an ethical point of view, Daniel (2012) suggests that a sample should be neither too large, containing more participants than necessary, nor too small, not large enough to detect a significant effect that has practical relevance. Therefore, the sample size for this study should satisfy its objectives. In terms of research design consideration, since a nonprobability sample design was already chosen for this project, ad hoc, nonstatistical methods should be used to determine sample size. All in all, the sample size for this project should accurately represent the population being targeted and comprehensively considered, the number was around fifty.

3.4.5 Selecting sample

According to steps in selecting a stratified sampling (Daniel, 2012), first, the sample size for each stratum should be determined. As previously stated, teachers were distributed in seventeen districts, so ideally, the district was actually set as the stratum so as to constitute the entire population and avoid overlapping and dependent with every element of the population being in one and only one stratum. Second, each teacher should be assigned a unique number. Since each individual teacher had already got a number before they took part in the survey assessment, and there were no identical numbers, the original numbers were preserved and used in the random selection. Third, the sample size for each stratum was determined based on four equal groups (see Table-2) because this provided a minimum number of elements for each districts to permit detailed analysis (Daniel, 2012). Last, in using the lottery method (Daniel, 2012), the targeted number of teachers from each stratum was randomly chosen (see Table-3). After the sample teachers were generated, their testing papers were picked up from the paper corpus in accordance with teachers’ unique numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Disproportionate Stratified Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table-2 Disproportionate Stratified Sample of Participant Teachers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District 1</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 2</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 3</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 4</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>14.09</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 5</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 6</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 7</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 8</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 9</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 10</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 11</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 13</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 14</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 15</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 16</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 17</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4640</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Random Stratified Sampling of Participant Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
<th>Teacher 1</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District 1</td>
<td>04010024</td>
<td>04010539</td>
<td>04011096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 2</td>
<td>04020016</td>
<td>04020654</td>
<td>04021309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 3</td>
<td>04030022</td>
<td>04031597</td>
<td>04032982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 4</td>
<td>04040021</td>
<td>04041030</td>
<td>04042117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 5</td>
<td>04050025</td>
<td>04050503</td>
<td>04050958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 6</td>
<td>04060014</td>
<td>04060228</td>
<td>04060387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 7</td>
<td>04070159</td>
<td>04070290</td>
<td>04070439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 8</td>
<td>04080015</td>
<td>04080358</td>
<td>04080725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 9</td>
<td>04090013</td>
<td>04090580</td>
<td>04090986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 10</td>
<td>04100007</td>
<td>04100427</td>
<td>04101297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 11</td>
<td>04110006</td>
<td>04110183</td>
<td>04110384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 12</td>
<td>04120022</td>
<td>04120095</td>
<td>04120201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 13</td>
<td>04130019</td>
<td>04130223</td>
<td>04130484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After the fifty one sample teachers were selected, the three activities (Item 61, 64 and 67) they designed for the reading passage were picked out from their scanned survey papers and typed out into a table (see Appendix-5). In all, one hundred and fifty three activities were coded and analysed.

### 3.5 Data analysis

Given that this project is partly qualitative research, one of its enduring problems is “the reduction of copious amounts of written data to manageable and comprehensible proportions” (Cohen et al. 2011, p.559). Therefore, data reduction works as an important element of qualitative analysis. In order to achieve effective data reduction, Weber (1990) suggests a process of classifying many words in texts into much fewer categories. The categories are usually derived from theoretical constructs or areas of interest (Cohen et al. 2011). For this project, the categories were in accordance with the types of reading comprehension questions discussed in literature review. The reading activities sample teachers designed were grouped according to task types.

As a major feature of qualitative data that enables researchers to identify similar information, coding is actually the ascription of a category label to a piece of data; moreover, it is likely that “the same piece of text has more than one code attached to it, determined by its richness and contents” (Cohen et al. 2011, p.559).

### 3.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, research methodological process of this study was introduced in details. It presented the research questions, research instruments, participants, and methods of data collection and data analysis.
Chapter Four Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction
This chapter presents the results from sampling survey papers concerning teachers’ ability to design reading comprehension tasks. The reading activities and questions written by teachers are analysed from different angles, including their types, their forms and the relevant reading comprehension levels they aimed at. Comparisons are also made between teachers in urban area and suburban area in Beijing about the reading tasks they set.

When discussed and defined in literature review, basically, question refers to the item. To narrow it down, the straight definition of question is direct question. Indeed, direct questions are often classified according to their forms, involving four different kinds of questions. The adoption of this study is more inclusive view of macro-dimensioned questions, so the item can be as free as direct question, multiple matching, filling in the gap, cloze test, and many other ways of testing. It is worthwhile to clarify that obviously for the purpose of this project, the word “question” will be defined that it includes not only direct questions, but also other types of reading comprehension activities.

4.2 Reading comprehension activities
4.2.1 Overall reading comprehension activities
In the first stage of coding, reading comprehension activities were calculated and categorized at the macro level. As is shown in Table-4, among 153 reading activities required to be set by the survey tasks in total, the actually designed activities were 151, with only two activities left blank. Based on the conception of macro-dimensioned questions, the 151 reading comprehension activities could be divided into fifteen groups, each of which contained one type of macro-dimensioned reading questions (activities). As is shown in Table-4, all the fifteen types of activities were listed according to the proportion of each type from the highest to the lowest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find out the sentence with “it” and summarize the usage of it</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True or False</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filling in the blanks</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding out how the writer told us the story</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding out how to make suggestions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table-4, it can be seen that nearly half of the activities were designed as direct questions for students to answer, which indicated that asking and answering questions was regarded as the most commonly adopted way of teaching reading by secondary school teachers in Beijing. Next, 15.7% of the activities focused on the meaning and the usage of the pronoun “it” because the passage contained nine “it” in all with obviously five different meanings and references (See Appendix-6). This type of reading activity had double functions concerning both reading comprehension and language study. Besides, two other activities, “Finding out how to make suggestions” and “Finding out the compound sentences”, were also activities of language study. This indicated that there were some teachers who paid attention to helping students to notice, learn and grasp the target language points in the process of reading and understanding the passage. The next two types of activities were “Ordering” and “Matching”, taking up the same proportion of about 6.5%. What teachers expected students to order was detailed information associated with the plot of the story. As for “Matching”, most teachers asked students to match each paragraph of the passage with a given phrase or sentence representing its main idea, aiming at improving students’ ability of summarizing. The following three types of activities that were of the same percentage were “True or false”, “Filling in the blanks” and “Multiple choices”, where students had to concentrate on a variety of relevant information in the passage so as to complete the tasks. In “True or false” exercise, students were required to decide whether the statements containing detailed information were exactly in accordance with what the passage stated or implied whereas in “Filling in the blanks” activities, teachers usually provided students with an incomplete paragraph as the summary of the story or some incomplete sentences paraphrased from the original passage. Furthermore, in “multiple choice” activities, below each question, students were offered a set of possible responses, where they had to choose one, which helped decrease the challenges and difficulties of answering the questions. Moreover, two teachers designed “reading aloud” activities while another one adopted “retelling” activity; however, they were not activities that really targeted students’ reading comprehension process. Lastly, it was difficult to categorize the remaining four activities with three concerning the development of the story, and one relevant to the writer’s writing skills and writing style.

### 4.2.2 Reading comprehension activities designed by teachers from different areas

As mentioned in Chapter Three, participant teachers of this study were from seventeen districts city
wide in Beijing, the first six of which were urban area while the rest eleven were regarded as suburban area. In this part, reading activates designed by teachers from these two large areas will be compared and analysed. Teachers shared some similarities when designing reading activities while there were some differences between them.

As presented in Table-5, teachers from urban area finished all the tasks and designed fifty-four activities totally whereas teachers from suburban area completed making up ninety-four activities with two left blank. Teachers in both areas adopted direct questions as the most common activities, with the percentages of 40.7% in urban area and 49.5% in suburban area. Additionally, the proportions of the three activities, “True or False”, “Filling in the blanks”, “Find out the sentence with ‘it’ and summarize the usage of it”, were similar to each area. In contrast to this, teachers in the two areas had different preferences in selecting the types of reading activities to design. Conversely, the percentages of “Ordering” and “Matching” designed by teachers in urban areas were almost the double of those by teachers in suburban areas while the percentage of “Multiple choice” designed by teachers in urban areas were half of that by teachers in suburban areas. As for the activities related to language study, they were all designed by teachers in suburban areas in the stage of reading comprehension. However, teacher in urban area designed some open ending activities such as “Adding an ending to the story”.

<p>| Table-5 Reading Comprehension Activities Designed by Teachers from Different Areas |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Types                                      | urban area    | suburban area | total         |
| 1 Answering questions                       | 22            | 46            | 70            |
| 2 Find out the sentence with “it” and summarize the usage of it | 10            | 14            | 24            |
| 3 Ordering                                 | 5             | 5             | 10            |
| 4 Matching                                 | 6             | 4             | 10            |
| 5 True or False                            | 2             | 3             | 9             |
| 6 Filling in the blanks                     | 4             | 5             | 9             |
| 7 Multiple choice                          | 3             | 10            | 9             |
| 8 Reading aloud                            | 0             | 2             | 2             |
| 9 Finding out how the writer told us the story | 0             | 1             | 1             |
| 10 Finding out how to make suggestions     | 0             | 1             | 1             |
| 11 Finding out the                         | 0             | 1             | 1             |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>compound sentences</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Find out people’s names, relationships and the changes of the vase</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Finding out the key words to show the development of the study</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Adding an ending to the story</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Retelling the story</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>no tasks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2.3 Reading comprehension activities and their relevant reading comprehension levels

As discussed previously in literature review, many divisions related to reading comprehension levels can be generally categorized into two main groups: lower-level reading comprehension and higher-level reading comprehension. The former one refers to the reading process concerning identifying the surface meaning of words in passages whereas the latter one refers to the reading process concerning the overall understanding and evaluating of passages and it involves analysis, reflection, evaluation and judgment making.

When teachers design reading comprehension questions, including both macro-dimensioned questions (activities) and micro-dimensioned questions (direct questions), it is of great importance for them to have a profound knowledge of at which reading comprehension level each item leads students’ mental activities to take place. The relevant reading comprehension levels of different types of reading activities will be analysed in this study. Since the relevant analysis of direct reading comprehension questions will be done in the later part of this chapter, the analytical focus of this part will be mainly on the corresponding reading comprehension levels of the reading comprehension activities except for direct questions. Table-6-1 and Table-6-2 calculated and presented the relevant data.

From Table-6-1, it can be seen that fourteen kinds of non-direct-question reading activities were designed by teachers altogether and the total number of the activities was seventy-six. Seventy-three of them could be categorized into text explicit questions, text implicit questions or script implicit questions, in accordance with their reading comprehension levels while the other three were not real activities closely related to reading comprehension process. 40.1% of the activities were text explicit ones leading students to refer to the clearly represented factual information in the passage. And they
were mostly designed as “Ordering”, “Matching”, “Filling in the blanks” and “Multiple Choice” exercises. Meanwhile, 47.4% of the activities were set as text implicit ones which helped students to infer what was not claimed based on what was explicitly stated in the passage integrated with their own ideas. Besides, of all the seventy-six activities, only one was designed as script implicit activity, with a proportion of 1.3%.

Table-6-2 presented the activities teachers set respectively in the three tasks. Text explicit activities were distributed evenly into the first two tasks, with a little fewer in Task Three. For teachers who designed text explicit reading in Task Three, it is probably true that the students were only expected to achieve understanding the lines as the highest level of their reading comprehension by reading this passage or the reading comprehension level associated with the latter activity was even lower than the previous one. Meanwhile, all the text implicit questions were allocated almost equally into three tasks. So, it was very likely that some teachers omitted text explicit activities and led their students directly to read between the lines and comprehend the passage from a higher-order level of reading comprehension in Task One. For instance, some teachers asked the students to summarize the main idea of either each paragraph or the whole passage for the first time reading. At the same time, other teachers may set the activities in Task Two or Three to lower-order reading comprehension levels. The only script implicit activity was designed in Task Three. It was to ask students to add an ending to the story according to what they read from the passage. It could be estimated that the teacher who set this activity aimed to stimulate students’ own evaluation of the story and their prior knowledge as well, which was definitely beneficial for their deeper understanding of the passage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Text explicit</th>
<th>Text implicit</th>
<th>Script implicit</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percen-tage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percen-tage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True or False</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filling</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the usage of it</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s names, relationships and the changes of the vase</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>key words to show the development of the study</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding an ending</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the writer told us the story</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to make suggestions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound sentences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retelling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table-6-2 Comprehension Levels of Reading Activities in Three Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Text explicit</th>
<th>Text implicit</th>
<th>Script implicit</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Item 61)</td>
<td>Ordering</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>True or False</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Filling in the usage of it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Item 64)</td>
<td>Ordering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>True or False</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Filling in the usage of it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How the writer told us the story</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People’s names, relationships and the changes of the</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.3 Reading comprehension questions

#### 4.3.1 Overall reading comprehension questions

Similarly, in the second stage of coding, direct reading comprehension questions were also calculated and categorized at the micro level as well. As was shown in Table-7, the questions that teachers designed covered all the four question forms. However, there was a big contrast among the proportions of different forms. First of all, wh-questions, especially questions starting with “what”, took up the largest proportion of 71.6%, which was nearly three quarters. It indicated that wh-questions were the most preferable questions by teachers. Moreover, the “what” questions teachers designed could be used to check and involve students’ “literal comprehension, reinterpretation, inference, evaluation, and personal response” (Nuttall, 1982, p.132-133). Yes/no questions came to the second place, with a percentage of 15.6%. In addition, most yes/no questions teachers wrote were relevant to detailed information of the passage, such as time, place, weather, and events. Next, the proportion of how/why questions was 12.7%, most of which concerned students’ inference, evaluation and personal response. The last form was alternative questions, and only two such questions were written by two teachers and coincidently, the two questions concerning detailed information were the same as “was the new vase cheap or expressive?”
**Table-7 Different Forms of Reading Comprehension Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 yes/no questions</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 alternative questions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 wh-questions (who, what, which, when, where)</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 how/why questions</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Total</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution of question types among all the one hundred and ninety-nine questions could be found in Table-8. As stated previously in literature review, Pearson and Johnson’s (1978) questions taxonomy of three categories were adopted in this project. Firstly, of all the questions, nearly three forth were “text explicit” questions, the answers to which were clearly stated in the passage and the information needed was mostly detailed and factual. Among them, the most typical text explicit questions were “Where was the gift box?”, “How did Jenny feel when she saw the vase was broken into pieces?”, and “What did Jenny’s neighbour say on the phone?”. They put much emphasis on the sequences of events and behaviours of characters. Next, 17.9% of the questions were designed as “text implicit” questions, allowing students to draw more inferences from the text and integrate their own ideas within the text. The questions teachers designed of this type could be divided into three subgroups based on their functions. The first subgroup included questions focusing on leading students to guess the meanings of some unknown words according to the context. For example, “From the passage, what do you think ‘sinking feeling’ means?”, “What’s the meaning of ‘ruined’ in Paragraph 2?” and “What does ‘it’ in last paragraph mean?”. The second subgroup of questions aimed at helping students to make inferences about some possible actions, words and feelings associated with different people, such as “Who broke the vase?”, “What Jenny would do or say to her neighbour after hearing her neighbour’s explanation?” and “What do the neighbour’s words mean?”. And the third question subgroup intended to ask students to summarize what they read in the passage and how they understand the passage as a whole, with questions like “What is the passage mainly about?” or “What is the main idea of the article?”. Lastly, about 11.6% of the questions were “script implicit” questions, demanding that students make more interpretive and evaluative connections between the text and their own prior knowledge. The most typical questions designed by teachers of this kind were “What do you think of Jenny?”, “If you were Jenny, what would you do?” and “What other solutions do you have for the problem?”.

**Table-8 Different Types of Reading Comprehension Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Text explicit</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Text implicit</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Script implicit</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Total</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2 Reading comprehension questions in three tasks

Since teachers designed various direct reading comprehension questions for the three tasks at three different levels, the relevant data could be seen in Table-9 and Table-10.

For Task One, teachers who preferred to adopt direct reading comprehension questions designed 55 questions in all. Regarding question forms as Nuttall (1982) suggests, nearly three quarters of questions were wh-questions, which were obviously dominant in this task. At this level, 20% questions were written into yes/no questions, mostly concerning facts and detailed information. Very few (5.5%) how/why questions were designed at this level and moreover, there were no alternative questions presented here. As for question types, mostly, text explicit questions were designed, with a proportion of 84.6%, focusing on literal understanding of the passage. Additionally, the rest questions were text implicit ones. No script implicit questions were written at this level.

In the next stage, altogether 96 direct reading comprehension questions were designed. In terms of question forms, the distribution was similar to that in Task One. Wh-questions were still the domain of all the questions, with a proportion of 70.8%. Yes/no questions and how/why questions took up the percentage of 14% respectively. Different from Task One, at this level, two alternative questions were written instead and moreover, they were the only two questions of this form among all the questions teachers designed. In regard to question types, teachers designed all the three types of questions, of which text explicit still took up the largest proportion of 73.3%, whereas the percentages of the other two were respectively 20.8% and 5.9%.

The constitution of reading comprehension questions changed in the third task. At this stage, teachers wrote 51 direct questions in total. As for question forms, the constitution of reading comprehension questions resembled the previous two tasks. Wh-questions remained the most, with the proportion of 74.5%. How/why questions were more than yes/no questions at this level, and the percentages of them were 21.3% and 4.3%. Concerning question types, although text explicit questions were still on the top, the proportion dropped to 51.9% and meanwhile, script implicit exceeded text implicit with a percentage of 33.3%. Text implicit took up the percentage of 14.8% at this level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>yes/no questions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>alternative questions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wh-questions (who, what, which, when, where)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>how/why questions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>yes/no questions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-9 Forms of Reading Comprehension Questions in Three Tasks
### Table 10: Types of Reading Comprehension Questions at Three Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Text explicit</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text implicit</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Script implicit</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Text explicit</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text implicit</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Script implicit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Text explicit</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text implicit</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Script implicit</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3.3 Reading comprehension questions designed by teachers from different areas

In each task, there were also similarities and differences between the direct questions written by teachers in urban area and those in suburban area. For Task One, teachers in both areas designed more text explicit questions than text implicit questions, and none of them adopted script implicit questions. However, over 85% of the questions written by teachers in suburban area were text explicit questions, which was 19% more than those by teachers in urban area. Likewise, the distribution of three types of questions in Task Two was similar, the only difference being that both teachers designed a small amount of script implicit questions, with the proportion of 2.9% and 5.1% respectively. Nevertheless, teachers in suburban area wrote over 20% more text explicit questions than those in urban area at this stage. In the last stage, teachers in both areas designed all three types of questions. Unlike the previous two tasks, for Task Three, the percentages of script implicit questions both increased in these two areas, reaching about 30% each. In terms of the other two types of questions, teachers in suburban area designed over 10% more text explicit questions than those in urban area whereas teachers in
urban area wrote nearly 10% more text implicit questions.

4.3.4 Reading comprehension questions and their relevant reading comprehension levels in general

It was shown in Table-7 that teachers who chose to take reading comprehension questions as reading activities wrote totally 207 direct questions. Among all the questions, text explicit questions took up the largest percentage. This type of questions is usually set to check whether students understand the literal meaning of the passage. When answering these questions, students simply recall some factual and detailed information from the passage. What is more, the information that students focus on is usually explicitly stated, and technically, in order to find out the relevant information, they need to experience a simple mental process whereby the comprehension of the passage really happens. This certainly appears to be a lower-level reading comprehension. The next type teachers wrote was text implicit questions, which stimulated students to make inferences of what the writer really meant without being clearly conveyed by explicit information in the passage, but based on what is explicitly claimed in the passage. Moreover, students still have to combine their own ideas with what is being stated in text. The mental process for answering text implicit questions is more complicated than the previous one because it provokes the analysis and reflection of what is being read in the passage and expects students’ own interpretation of the passage. Thus, it actually belongs to higher-level reading comprehension. Script implicit questions were also set by teachers even though the proportion of them was not large. In order to answer such kind of questions, students have to connect what they read in the passage with the background knowledge they have already had and establish some overall understanding and evaluation of the passage, which requires more mental contribution than the previous two question types. Therefore, undoubtedly, it is also higher-level reading comprehension. In a word, the direct questions teachers designed all promoted students’ comprehension of the passage at different levels.

4.3.5 Relevant reading comprehension levels of reading comprehension questions in individual tasks

It was stated clearly in the rubric that teachers had to design reading comprehension activities at three different levels, although there were no criteria or regulations regarding how different they should be. Teachers needed to make their own decisions about what reading comprehension levels they were to reach by designing corresponding reading activities. Table-8 dispalys how different the reading comprehension questions teachers set were in three tasks. Obviously, text explicit questions were the most commonly designed questions in all the three tasks, and their proportions were large, from over 50% to about 85%. As for text implicit questions, their percentages in three tasks remained stable between around 15% and 20%. In contrast, the proportions of script implicit questions in three tasks kept increasing, from 0% to 33.3%. It was obvious that mostly teachers adopted text explicit questions in all the three tasks and accordingly, students sustained their reading comprehension and mental
process at the level of understanding literal meaning and factual information of the passage. In particular, over half of the teachers still wrote text explicit questions in Task Three, where ideally students should be guided to think independently and critically between and beyond the lines by answering higher-order questions.

4.4 Chapter Summary
This chapter analyses the data collected from sampling reading comprehension activities and questions, in order to present the current ability of secondary school teachers in Beijing. Comparisons between teachers in urban area and suburban area are also made to find out the differences of the reading comprehension tasks they set.
CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction
This chapter discusses some findings according to the coding and analysing of the data collected from the sampling survey papers, which reflect teachers’ current status and ability to design reading comprehension questions.

5.2 Main types of reading comprehension activities teachers adopt
From the data analysis, several kinds of activities consistent with Nuttall’s (1982) classification could be seen as the major forms of macro-dimensioned reading activities that teachers in secondary schools prefer to adopt when designing reading comprehension tasks. The activity that takes the dominant place of all is asking direct questions, followed by finding out and summarizing the usage of the pronouns in the context. Other types of reading comprehension activities some teachers used are “Ordering”, “Matching”, “True or false”, “Filling in the blanks” and “Multiple choices”. Indeed, all of these activities, except for the one related to the usage of the pronoun “it”, are also the most ordinary reading comprehension activities that can be seen in English course books, which indicates that activities designed by editors of text books have a great impact on teachers on how to set reading comprehension activities independently. As for the activity to identify the usage of the pronoun “it”, most teachers selected it as a reading comprehension activity for this story for the reason that one of the given teaching objectives of this passage stated in the survey paper is that “at the end of this lesson, the students will be able to find out and summarize the usage of the pronoun ‘it’”. 

5.3 Main types of Reading comprehension questions teachers write
The data analysis also reveals that when teachers design micro-dimensioned reading questions, they have priorities in choosing different forms and types of reading comprehension questions. In terms of the forms of questions, wh-questions, starting with who, what, which, when, where, are the majority of all the questions of the four different forms. Normally, questions of this form that the teachers designed focus mainly on factual and detailed information about the story. Meanwhile, the information is usually explicitly claimed in the story. Regarding types of questions, most teachers wrote text explicit questions, concerning detailed and clearly stated information. To combine the forms and types of questions together, it can be concluded that most teachers tend to design questions relating to basic information or facts which can be easily found out and picked out from the narration of the story, which were categorised as lower level items by previous scholars (Rosenshine, 1980; Vidal-Abarca et al., 1998; Rouet et al., 2001; OECD, 2003; Song, 2008).

5.4 Irrelevance of certain types of activities
Apart from the questions and activities mentioned above, it is shown in the data that teachers also designed other types of activities, some of which are not real activities to engage students in reading and understanding the passage. Actually, as previously discussed in literature review, reading is an
internal, mental process resulting in effective reading comprehension. One of the criteria to judge whether an activity is a reading comprehension activity is that whether it leads readers to interact with the passage and generate mental activities. Against the criterion, some of the activities teachers designed are irrelevant to reading comprehension process because they are either activities for students to learn English language knowledge, such as “Finding out how to make suggestions” and “Finding out the compound sentences”, or activities for students to improve their mastery of pronunciation or their memory of the story plot, for example, “Reading aloud” and “Retelling the story”. Moreover, something noticeable is that all the irrelevant reading activities were designed by teachers from suburban area of the city. These irrelevant reading activities disagreed with Nuttall’s (1982) and Grave’s (2001) opinions on the function of good reading comprehension questions.

5.5 Reading comprehension levels most activities lead to
As discussed above, teachers usually adopt some certain kinds of reading comprehension activities in order to involve students into the reading process. Since normally different activities are associated with different reading comprehension levels, students’ performance on these activities actually represent how they read and understand the passage.

With regard to direct reading comprehension questions, which were the top choice of all the adopted reading activities, teachers are most likely to write text explicit questions as the main type of reading comprehension questions. They usually require students to read the passage and search for detailed and factual information. Thus, the reading comprehension level students are engaged in when answering these questions is mainly lower-level reading comprehension particularly defined by Gray (1956) as reading the lines. In contrast to that, only a small number of direct questions were designed to lead students to higher-level reading comprehension of Gray’s reading between the lines and beyond the lines, resulting in students’ insufficient practice of overall understanding and evaluating of passages, even though most teachers agree that assessing the higher order reading skills is as important as lower order skills such as skimming and scanning for factual information.

As the second most selection of reading comprehension activities, “Finding out and summarising the usage of ‘it’” aims at guiding students to make inference of the pronouns at word-level within the context. It is actually cohesive inference that can involve pronoun resolution and managing anaphors (Nation, 2007; Graesser et al. 1994, 2011; Clarke et al. 2014, as cited in Williams, 2015).

In the other kinds of reading comprehension activities teachers set, mostly, students were led to find out and deal with literal messages related to the characters, the time, the places, and the plot of the story, which stimulated lower-level mental activities to happen. Among them, there was one clear exception. Some of “Matching” and “Multiple choices” activities teachers designed were concerned with the main idea of either the passage or each paragraph, which required students to process the
comprehensible information covering all parts of the text as Alderson and Cseresznyés (2005) define.

5.6 The accordance of the activities and questions with the construct of this study
As previously pointed out, ten reading skills were inclusive to the construct of this study. By reviewing the reading comprehension activities and questions teachers set according to the abilities listed in the construct, it can be seen that teachers have mostly followed the construct.

First of all, teachers improved students’ competence to understand readings of common text types at corresponding levels by designing activities and questions of three types, based on Pearson and Johnson’s (1978) questions taxonomy (text explicit, text implicit and script implicit). Secondly, some of the text explicit questions, the activity of “Ordering” and “Filling in the blanks” in particular, enhance students’ ability to understand the sequences of events and behaviours of characters in the story. Besides, “Matching”, “True or false”, “Multiple choices” and most direct questions also helped students to develop ability to find out related information, understand the plots of stories, and understand and explain the information provided by graphs. Next, “Matching” and some other direct questions strengthened students’ ability to understand the main idea and find out the themes of passages. Fourthly, activities pertinent to the usage of “it” and some of the direct questions guided students to guess, infer and understand the meaning of new words from their contexts within the passage. Finally, a few activities and questions helped students to foresee the development of the plots and possible endings of stories.

However, some components of the construct have been overlooked by teachers. And these components are defined as higher level items by Rosenshine et al. (1980). For example, the ability to understand the logic relations between sentences in a passage, to explain the information provided by graphs and to foresee the development of the plots and possible endings of stories were not checked much due to lack of sufficient activities and questions. Additionally, whether the students have increased the ability to adopt simple reading strategies to obtain information according to different reading goals could not be evaluated directly.

5.7 The fulfilment of item-writing principles
As discussed in literature review, teachers can refer to a checklist of practical principles in the process of designing reading comprehension questions. By checking the reading activities and questions designed by teachers against the ten statements, it can be concluded that teachers have obeyed some of the rules accordingly whereas they have not followed the others. The activities and questions gave coverage to all parts of the text with several questions on every part, and attempted to help students to understand. Meanwhile, the activities and questions were varied in types. As for the language, they were written in language that is easier than the text and required students to answer in the language that they can handle. Most of the items tested the students’ skill(s) that are intended to assess rather
than content knowledge and students had to refer to the texts in order to answer the questions or solve these tasks. Besides, some questions specifically tried to make students aware of the strategies a reader needs. However, some of the items designed for students to guess the meanings of new words through context did not really rely much on the context; in other words, the single word guessing could lead students to guess the meaning of the words independently regardless of the context, which is not really relevant to the understanding of the passage. In addition, some of the teachers designed the questions according to the text sequence while others presented the questions randomly without following the development of the text. Likewise, some teachers achieved the outcomes that the questions independent of one another except for the ones in sequencing tasks while others failed to manage it. It can be concluded that teachers in Beijing have achieved greatly in writing reading comprehension questions according to the previous research conducted in the area by Nuttall (1982) and Alderson and Cseresznyés (2005). However, they still need to keep practising and make improvements in relevant aspects.

5.8 Chapter Summary
This chapter discusses some selective findings of teachers’ current status of designing reading comprehension questions, and some relevant features of teachers’ ability to set reading comprehension activities and questions.
CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction
This dissertation has aimed to consider teachers’ ability to write reading comprehension questions in classroom teaching. In the introduction, the research gap was introduced. In Chapter 2, an overview of literature on reading comprehension, reading comprehension questions and assessment of reading comprehension were presented. Chapter 3 introduced the research methodology, in particular the sampling strategy, which was used to set up the corpus of this study of reading comprehension questions. In Chapter 4, the data were analysed in different ways and relevant results were presented. Chapter 5 discussed the current findings related to the status of how secondary school teachers set reading comprehension questions based on data analysis.

This chapter summarises the findings of this study, with reference to the three research questions. Furthermore, it also discusses the limitations, implications and future studies on teachers’ ability to design reading comprehension activities and questions.

6.2 Conclusion
From the analysis and discussion in the previous chapters, it is obvious that secondary school teachers in Beijing are capable of designing different reading tasks based on a given text. They have adopted various types of reading comprehension activities and questions in classroom teaching so as to assess and improve students’ reading competence. The tasks are related to two major levels of reading comprehension: the lower-level reading comprehension and the higher-level comprehension. In particular, the direct reading questions designed by teachers have covered all forms of questions and involved students’ reading comprehension at three different levels, text explicit, text implicit and script implicit. Therefore, it can be concluded that secondary school teachers in Beijing have obtained a certain ability to set various reading comprehension activities and questions.

6.3 Limitations
Despite the abilities of the teachers to construct effective reading comprehension questions, as outlined in data analysis and discussion, they still need to make some improvements in designing effective reading comprehension activities and questions. Firstly, some of the activities teachers have designed are not appropriate to guide students to develop their reading ability, but more suitable for students to memorize or repeat the information from the passage. For instance, when students are asked to read the passage aloud or retell the passage, they have actually already finished the reading comprehension process and started to consolidate what they read and gained from the passage. Secondly, some activities or questions are not given in the proper stages where they should have been. Taking the main idea item as an example, some teachers have asked students to match the main idea with each of the paragraphs or summarize the main idea of the whole passage directly in Task One. However, finding out the main idea should be categories into high-order reading comprehension and it
is difficult for students to finish such activities at the beginning of the reading comprehension process. Thirdly, some activities and questions do not help students to build up understanding gradually at different levels. An example is that some teachers kept writing text explicit type of questions in all the three tasks; correspondingly, students’ understanding of the passage stayed at the same level of recalling explicitly stated factual information. In all, it seems that secondary school teachers in Beijing are still in need of relevant training and practice on how to write effective reading comprehension activities and questions.

6.4 Implications and further studies
This study benefits teachers in different aspects. On the one hand, it does have both theoretical and practical applications. Despite constrains of this study, it is obvious that good reading comprehension tasks are significant in classroom teaching. The findings of this study will be used in the future teacher training and educational programmes in Beijing. Therefore, test designers, teacher researchers, teacher trainers and English teachers should further study the related theories and participate in practice to cultivate their ability to write good reading comprehension activities and questions. Subsequently, the development of testing skills or assessment of literacy skills of teachers can be brought up to a larger scale, and more teachers might be benefit from the relevant future training programmes. On the other hand, the contribution of this study is not just in the answer, but also in the methodology, because one advantage of this research is that it has explored a careful way in which samples are set up, reflecting an innovation of the research methods in this research area. It can also be adopted and adapted in the future teacher training programmes in Beijing.

Moreover, the research is not only about the confidentiality and limits concerning teaching but also about the usefulness to the students. Even though the students are not interviewed and their voices are not being heard, this study will be very important to students because once the quality of questioning is improved and developed, that will really be beneficial to students. In classroom learning, with appropriately designed reading comprehension activities and questions, students can be guided into an effective reading process during which they will gradually develop their reading skills and abilities. Meanwhile, if a test is a fair test, it will definitely be a more ethical test and then the quality of testing becomes even better. Therefore, although there is no direct involvement of students in the research itself, yet it will still be directly beneficial to them in longer time, which will foreground the ethic of the research as well. Hopefully, more and more students will be led to a more meaningful and fruitful reading process and their reading competence will be continuously increased.
Bibliography


Appendix
Appendix-1 Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2011 Edition)

表1：分级目标描述（初中部分）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>级别</th>
<th>目标描述</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3级</td>
<td>对英语学习表现出积极性和初步的自信心。能听懂有关熟悉话题的语段和简短的故事，能与教师或同学就熟悉的话题（如学校，家庭生活）交换信息。能读懂与教材相关内容的简单书面材料。能用短语或句子描述系列图片，编写简单的故事。能根据提示简要描述一件事情，参与简单的角色表演等。能尝试使用适当的学习方法，克服学习中遇到的困难。能意识到语言交际中存在文化差异。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4级</td>
<td>有明确的学习需要和目标，对英语学习表现出较强的自信心。能在所设日常交际情境中听懂对话和简短的故事。能用简单的语言描述自己或他人的经历，能表达简单的观点。能读懂常见文体的短文和相关水平的英文报刊文章。能合作起草和修改简短的叙述，说明，指令，规则等。能尝试使用不同的教育资源，从口头和书面材料中提取信息，扩展知识，解决简单的问题并描述结果。能在学习中相互帮助，克服困难。能合理计划和安排学习任务，积极探索适合自己的学习方法。进一步增强对文化差异的理解与认识。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5级</td>
<td>有较明确的英语学习动机，积极主动的学习态度和自信心。能听懂有关熟悉话题的陈述并参与讨论。能就日常生活的相关话题与他人交换信息并陈述自己的意见。能读懂相应水平的读物和报刊，杂志，克服生词障碍，理解大意。能根据阅读目的运用适当的阅读策略。能根据提示独立起草和修改小作文。能与他人合作，解决问题并报告结果，共同完成学习任务。能对自己的学习进行评价，总结学习方法。能利用多种教育资源进行学习。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

表2：语言技能分级目标

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>级别</th>
<th>阅读技能目标描述</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3级 | 1. 能正确地朗读课文；
2. 能理解并执行有关学习活动的简短书面指令；
3. 能读懂简单故事和短文并抓住大意；
4. 能初步使用简单的工具书；
5. 课外阅读量应累计达到4万词以上。 |
| 4级 | 1. 能连贯、流畅地朗读课文；
2. 能理解简易读物中的事件发生顺序和人物行为；
3. 能从简单的文章中找到有关信息，理解大意；
4. 能根据上下文猜测生词的意思；
5. 能理解并解释图表提供的信息；
6. 能读懂简单的个人信件，说明文等应用文体材料；
7. 能使用英汉词典等工具书帮助阅读理解；
8. 课外阅读量应累计达到10万词以上。 |
| 5级 | 1. 能根据上下文和构词法推断、理解生词的含义；
2. 能理解段落中各句子之间的逻辑关系；
3. 能找出文章中的主题，理解事情的发展和可能的结局；
4. 能读懂相应水平的，常见体裁的文章；
5. 能根据不同的阅读目的运用简单的阅读策略获取信息；
6. 能利用词典等工具书进行阅读；
7. 课外阅读量应累计达到15万词以上。 |

Table 1 Objectives for Levels 3–5 (secondary school part)
**Level 4**
Clear about one’s own needs and goals in learning, showing quite strong confidence in English learning.

Able to understand dialogues and short stories in certain daily communication situations. Able to describe one’s own or others’ experiences and express simple opinions. Able to read short passages of common text types and articles in English newspapers at corresponding levels. Able to jointly draft and revise brief narratives, notes, directions, rules, etc. Able to try using different educational resources, extract information from oral and written materials, expand knowledge, solve simple problems and describe results.

Able to help each other and overcome difficulties in learning. Able to rationally plan and arrange learning tasks and actively explore suitable learning methods.

Able to realize similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures in learning and daily contacts.

**Level 5**
Having clear motives, positive attitudes and confidence in English learning.

Able to understand statements on familiar topics and participate in discussions. Able to exchange information with others and state one’s own opinions on related topics in daily life. Able to read materials, newspapers and magazines at corresponding levels, overcoming the obstacle of new words and grasping the main idea. Able to apply proper reading strategies in accordance with the reading goals. Able to draft and revise short compositions with clues.

Able to cooperate with others to solve problems and report results, accomplishing learning tasks. Able to assess one’s own learning and summarize methods. Able to use varied educational resources in learning.

Further strengthening understanding and knowledge of cultural differences.

**Table 2 Objectives for Language Skills at Each Level (reading skills part)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Reading Skills Objective Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Level 3** | 1. Able to read texts aloud and correctly.  
2. Able to understand and fulfil brief written directions related to learning activities.  
3. Able to understand simple stories and passages, grasping their general ideas.  
4. Able to use simple reference books.  
5. The amount of outside reading should total no less than 40,000 words. |
| **Level 4** | 1. Able to read texts aloud, coherently and fluently.  
2. Able to understand sequences of events and behaviours of characters in simple readings.  
3. Able to find out related information from simple texts and understand the main idea.  
4. Able to guess the meanings of new words from their contexts.  
5. Able to understand and explain the information provided by graphs.  
6. Able to understand practical writing matters such as simple personal letters and expositions.  
7. Able to use reference books like English-Chinese dictionaries to assist reading comprehension.  
8. The amount of outside reading should total no less than 100,000 words. |
| **Level 5** | 1. Able to infer and understand the meanings of new words through context and word-building rules.  
2. Able to understand the logic relations between sentences in a passage.  
3. Able to find out the themes of passages, understand the plots of stories, foresee the development of the plots and possible endings of stories.  
4. Able to understand readings of common text types at corresponding levels.  
5. Able to adopt simple reading strategies to obtain information according to different reading goals.  
6. Able to make use of reference books like dictionaries for reading.  
7. The amount of outside reading should total no less than 150,000 words. |
Aunt Fern’s vase

Have you ever had that “sinking feeling” when you realized you’d done something terrible?

A woman from Seattle, named Jenny Leigh, borrowed her neighbor’s car one afternoon. On the back seat of their car was a beautiful gift box, and she wondered what might be inside it. It was a cold and snowy day and, as Jenny was driving along, she hit a small patch of ice. The car spun around and headed straight for a tree. Luckily, Jenny was able to avoid hitting it. However, when she turned to look at the back seat, she saw that the gift box had fallen on the floor. Jenny opened up the box to see a beautiful ceramic vase, broken into several pieces.

Jenny was horrified when she saw what she had done. How could she tell her neighbor that she had ruined the vase? Then she noticed that the name of the store was written on the side of the box. So, she drove to the store and bought an identical vase. She locked the new vase away safely in the trunk of the car. It had cost a lot of money, but she knew it was the right thing to do.

After buying the vase, Jenny decided that she should call her neighbor and tell her what had happened. However, before she had a chance to explain, her neighbor said, “Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you. I bought a vase for my Aunt Fern’s birthday yesterday, and when I got home I noticed that it was broken. I left it in the car as I was planning to return it to the store today. What time will you be returning the car? I’d like to get there before it closes.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>课题</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aunt Fern’s vase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>教学目标</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>学生能够：</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 通过阅读活动，读懂关于一只花瓶的故事。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 掌握文中的指代词 it 的用法。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 结合本课所学内容，发表自己的观点。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

任务一：修改教学目标

对上述教学目标进行适当的修改，使其可操作、可达成。

● （教学目标 1）：58. ____________________________________________

● （教学目标 2）：59. ____________________________________________

● （教学目标 3）：60. ____________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>教学过程（45 分钟）</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>教学环节</th>
<th>师生活动</th>
<th>设计意图</th>
<th>时间</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lead in | ● Questions and answers  
● Have you ever done something terrible? | 引出话题 | 3’ |
| Pre-reading | ● Predicting according to the title and the first sentence  
|            | ● What happened to Aunt Fern’s vase?  
|            | 体验阅读的预测策略  
|            | 2’  

**任务二：设计阅读活动**

设计三个不同层次的阅读活动（含活动的内容和方式），并写明活动的意图及所需时间。

- **Reading Activity 1:**  
  （活动 1）：61. __________________________  
  62. ______  
  63. ___

- **Reading Activity 2:**  
  （活动 2）：64. __________________________

  65. ______

  66. ___

- **Reading Activity 3:**
  （活动 3）：67. __________________________

  68. ______

  69. ___

**Post-reading**

- **Outlining the story orally**
- **Language focus**

**任务三：设计产出活动**

设计一个在上述教学活动基础上学生能够运用所学语言做事情的活动，包括：活动的内容、活动的方式、活动的时间、活动的指示语和学习效果的评价。

- **活动内容**：70. ________________________
- **活动方式**：71. ________________________
- **活动指示语**：72. ________________________
- **学习效果评价**：73. ________________________

**归纳、传递信息**

**语言学习与实践**

**运用语言做事情**

5’

5’

74. ___
### Appendix-3 Comparison and contrast of probability sampling and nonprobability sampling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives of the study</strong></td>
<td>If the research has an exploratory purpose, it is more favourable to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If it is necessary to make a quick decision, it is more favourable to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If there is a need to target specific elements of the population, it is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more favourable to choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If there is a need for a representative sample, it is more favourable to</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If there is a need to make statistical inferences from the sample, it is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more favourable to choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to minimize selection bias. If there is a need to minimize</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>selection bias, it is more favourable to choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The more important the research problem, the more favourable it is to</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>choose probability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If the purpose of the sampling is to provide illustrative examples, the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more favourable it is to choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of the population</strong></td>
<td>If the population is extremely small, it may be more favourable to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The more heterogeneous the population with respect to the variables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of interests, the more favourable it is to choose probability sampling;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the more homogeneous the population with respect to the variables of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interests, the more favourable it is to choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The more difficult it is to gain access or locate important segments of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the target population, the more favourable it is to choose nonprobability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking into account data collection costs, the more scattered a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>population, the more favourable it is to choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Availability of resources</strong></td>
<td>The more limited one’s resources, the more favourable it is to choose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nonprobability sampling.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If the study personnel have little or no training, understanding and</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>skills in constructing and implementing probability sample designs, the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more favourable it is to choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If a sampling frame is not available and one cannot be economically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>constructed, it is more favourable to choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research design considerations</strong></td>
<td>For qualitative research, it is generally more favourable to choose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nonprobability sampling; on the other hand, for quantitative research,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it is generally more favourable to choose probability sampling.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The greater the likelihood of systematic errors, the more favourable it</td>
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<td></td>
<td>is to choose probability sampling</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The more important it is to implement simple and easy-to-carry-out</td>
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<td>operational procedures of a study; the more favourable it is to choose</td>
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<td></td>
<td>nonprobability sampling.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The smaller the projected sample size, the more favourable it is to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>choose nonprobability sampling.</td>
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## Appendix-4 Guidelines for choosing sample size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Decisions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Objectives of the study</td>
<td>(1) Objectives of the study.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical consideration</td>
<td>(2) Ethical consideration.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature of the population</td>
<td>(3) Size of the population.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(4) Homogeneity / heterogeneity of the population.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(5) Spatial distribution of the population.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Availability of resources</td>
<td>(6) Availability of resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research design considerations</td>
<td>(7) Type of research design.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(8) Data analysis design.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(9) Nonprobability sample designs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(10) Probability sample designs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(11) Sequential sampling approaches.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(12) Ineligibility / incidence rate.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(13) Nonresponse.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(14) Finite population correction factor.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(15) Design effect.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(16) Attribution / mortality rate.</td>
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### Appendix-5 Activities designed by sampling teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
<th>Teacher 1</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District 1</td>
<td>04010024</td>
<td>04010539</td>
<td>04011096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Read and answer the following questions: 1: What happened to Aunt Fern’s vase? 2: What did Jenny do with Aunt Fern’s vase? 3: Who broke it?</td>
<td>Read the text fast and match the paragraphs with the main idea.</td>
<td>Read the text quickly and answer the following questions: 1. What the passage mainly about? 2. Who broke the vase according to Jenny’s neighbor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Read and check the true sentences: 1. Jenny borrowed her neighbor’s car one afternoon. 2. Aunt Fern’s vase was in a gift box on the front seat of the car. 3. Jenny hit the car on the tree. 4. Jenny didn’t know where to buy an identical vase. 5. Jenny told her neighbor what had happened.</td>
<td>Reading sentences with pronoun “it”. Speak out what “it” refers to in each sentence.</td>
<td>Read the passage again and answer questions: 1. What happened when Jenny was driving? 2. How did Jenny feel when she saw the vase into pieces? 3. What did Jenny do then? 4. What do you think Jenny would feel after she knew the truth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Underline the sentences with “it” and write down what all “it” refer to and summarize the usage of “it”.</td>
<td>Read the text paragraph by paragraph and complete the table with proper words or phrases. (no table)</td>
<td>Read and tell what the underlined “it” refers to in each sentence. (6 sentences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District 2</td>
<td>04020016</td>
<td>04020654</td>
<td>04021309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Complete the paragraph according to the passage.</td>
<td>Read the passage and order the following information according to the development of the story:</td>
<td>Answer the questions: 1. What’s in the car when Jenny Leigh borrowed her neighbor’s car? 2. What happened to it? 3. What did Jenny do with it? 4. What did Jenny Leigh’s neighbor say about it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Read the passage and find out what “it” refers to in the following sentences.</td>
<td>Find out the sentences with “it” in the passage, explain their meaning and finish the following sentences.</td>
<td>Are they true or false? 1. Jenny had a serious accident. 2. Jenny was sorry to what she had done. 3. She paid for it. 4. She didn’t tell...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group discussion</td>
<td>Answer the questions:</td>
<td>Underline the sentences with “it” and write down what all “it” refer to.</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Based on what happened to Jenny, state your viewpoint.</td>
<td>1. Was it a fine day that day?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why do you for Jenny?</td>
<td>2. What happened to the car?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What other solutions do you have?</td>
<td>3. What did Jenny do after she found the broken vase?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| District 3 | 04030022 | 04031597 | 04032982 |

| 61 | Underline the words which “it” directed. | Read the passage and match the paragraph with the main idea. | Read and match the main idea of each paragraph. |

| 64 | Find a time line; match the people’s behavior with the time. | Read the passage and underline the word “it”, explain what it refers to. | Read and answer the 3 questions: 1. Did Jenny hit the tree? 2. What did Jenny do after she saw the vase was broken? 3. Did Jenny make the vase broken? |

| 67 | Finish exercise in pairs, including true or false questions, and some closed questions and gap filling questions. (no specific questions) | Answer the questions: 1. Who borrowed her neighbor’s car? 2. What happened when she was driving alone? 3. Why did she buy an identical vase? 4. Was the new vase cheap or expensive? 5. What did she feel after she heard her neighbor’s words? | Read and order the sentences. (9 sentences with it) |

| District 4 | 04040021 | 04041030 | 04042117 |

| 61 | Read and find the main idea of the article. What is the main idea of the article? | Read the passage and order the pictures. | Fast reading and match the main idea with each paragraph. |

| 64 | Read and answer some questions. 1. Whose car did Jenny borrow? 2. What was on the back seat of the car? 3. How many “it” are there in the second paragraph. What does each “it” mean? | Answer the questions: 1. What was the weather like? 2. Was the new vase cheap or expensive? 3. Where did Jenny lock the new vase away? 4. What does “it” in last paragraph | Put the story-line into correct order. |
4. Did Jenny know what was in the box?  
5. What did Jenny do when she saw the vase?  
6. Who broke the vase?  

mean?  
5. From the passage, what do you think “sinking feeling” means?  

67  
Read and discuss in groups what Jenny would do or say to her neighbor?  
If you were Jenny, what would you say to your neighbor?  

61  
Read the passage and decide True or False.  
1. Jenny borrow her neighbor’s care one morning.  
2. Jenny hit the tree.  
3. The gift box on the back seat of the car fell on the floor.  
4. Jenny went to the store and bought a new vase.  
5. Though Jenny spent a lot of money, she thought she was right.  

64  
Read the passage and answer the questions:  
1. Why did Jenny buy a new vase for her neighbor?  
2. If you were Jenny, would you do the same thing? Why?  

Scan the passage and underline the answers to the question:  
1. When did Jenny see the vase?  
2.Did Jenny hurt?  
3. Was the vase broken by Jenny?  
4. What does “it” refer to in the sentence “she knew it was the right…”?  

67  
Prediction: What will Jenny do after hearing her
neighbor’s explanation? 2

for the general idea):
1. Why did Jenny buy a new vase? 1
2. What do you think of Jenny? 3
3. When you realize you have done something wrong, what should you do? 3

person is Jenny? 2

Answer the following question. (Actually, the questions are 4 sentences with “it” in them, not real questions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District 6</th>
<th>04060014</th>
<th>04060228</th>
<th>04060387</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Scan the passage and order the pictures according to the story.</td>
<td>Choose the main idea of the passage. A. Borrowing a vase. B. Buying a vase. C. Breaking a vase.</td>
<td>Answer the questions: 1. Was the vase broken by the accident? 1 2. What did she do when the author found the vase broken? 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

64 | Read the passage, find out the people’s names and their relationships, and the changes of the vase. | Answer the questions: 1. What’s on the back seat of the car? 1 2. 2 3. Who broke the vase actually? 2 | Answer the questions: 1. Whose vase was it? 1 2. Did Jenny Leigh tell the truth to her neighbor? 1 |

67 | Find out the sentences with “it” and write down their meaning | Fill in the form: Items feelings Cause Process Result | Find out the sentences with “it” and write down their meaning. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District 7</th>
<th>04070159</th>
<th>04070290</th>
<th>04070439</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Choose the outline of the story.</td>
<td>Answer the questions: 1. Who ruined the vase? 2 2. What happened when Jenny Leigh was driving? 1 3. What did Jenny Leigh do after she saw what had done? 1 4. Guess how did Jenny feel after her neighbor told her the truth? 2</td>
<td>Choose the main idea of the passage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

64 | Answer the questions: 1. What does the underlined work “span” in Paragraph 2 mean? 2 2. How did Jenny find the vase store? 1 3. Who broke the vase? 2 | Discussion of the questions in 61. | Read the passage and choose the correct answers. (Get the detailed information) |
### 67
**Find out what “it” refer to with the help of the context.**

Teacher gives answers to the questions in 61. Underline the sentences of “it” and try to understand the sentences.

<table>
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<th>District 8</th>
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<th>04080358</th>
<th>04080725</th>
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### 61
**Read and choose:**

1. What’s the weather like? A. sunny and warm. B. cold and sunny. C. cold and windy. D. sunny and windy
2. What did the women’s car hit? A. a stone B. a house C. a tree D. a car
3. The vase in the beautiful gift box at first is ___ A. good B. broken C. ugly D. old

**Match the topic sentences with the paragraphs.**

Answer the questions:

1. Who borrowed a car? 1
2. What happened to the car? 1
3. Did Jenny think she broke the vase? 1

**What was happened to the neighbor’s vase in fact?**

Finish the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>weather: cold</th>
<th>car: hit</th>
<th>box: had fallen</th>
<th>vase:</th>
<th>store:</th>
<th>chance: to explain</th>
<th>result:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 64
**What does it mean in each of the following sentences? Four sentences**

Answer the questions:

1. Where was Jenny’s neighbor’s box? 1
2. What happened when she drive the car? 1
3. What did she do after she found the vase broken? Why? 1
4. What did her neighbor tell her when she called her neighbor? 1

What was happened to the neighbor’s vase in fact? 1

**Answer the questions:**

1. What was the weather like? 1
2. What happened to the gift box? 1
3. What was it in the box? 1
4. Was the gift important for her neighbor? 2
5. What did she do when she found the vase was broken? 1

### 67
**Find out the key words to show the development of the story.**

Underline the sentences with “it” and write down what it refers to.

Underline the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>weather: cold</th>
<th>car: hit</th>
<th>box: had fallen</th>
<th>vase:</th>
<th>store:</th>
<th>chance: to explain</th>
<th>result:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### District 9

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<th>04090986</th>
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### 61
**Match the topic sentences with the paragraphs.**

Answer the questions:

1. Who was the woman? 1
2. What did she borrow? 1

Answer the questions:

1. What did Jenny borrow? 1
2. What happened
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question(s)</th>
<th>Answer(s)</th>
<th>Fill in the table</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Underline the sentences with “it”, summarize the use of “it” and make sentences with “it”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Retell the story according to the questions. (no questions)</td>
<td>Underline the sentences with “it” and explain the meaning of it. Then give them some examples and practice.</td>
<td>Question: If you were Jenny, what would you do?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
sentence after the
tape.

1. How did Jenny find the name of the store? 1
2. What do the neighbor’s words mean? 2
3. What have we learned from Jenny? 3

(verbs):

Neighborhood’s sentences:

District 11 | 04110006 | 04110183 | 04110384

61

Read (Skim) the passage and choose the best title:
Aunt Fern’s Vase is ___
A. a new vase
B. a broken vase

Read and decide “T” or “F”:
1. It was a cold and rainy day. Jenny drove her neighbor’s car. 1
2. Jenny get injured badly. 1
3. Jenny sent a lot of money buying a new vase for her neighbor.
4. Her neighbor’s new vase was broken.

Give the right orders of the following sentences:
6 sentences with detailed information.

64

Answer the questions:
1. What’s the weather like that day? 1
2. What happened during driving? 1
3. What was the weather like that day? 1

Read and fill in the table:
Before the vase was broken: The weather: _____.
the accident: _____.
After the vase was broken: What did Jenny do?
What did the neighbor do?

Answer the questions:
1. What was the weather like that afternoon? 1
2. What happened to the car? 1
3. Was the vase perfect or broken at first? 1
4. What do you think of Aunt Jenny? 3

67

Focus on the language study.
Fill in the blanks:
1. _____ was a cold and sunny day.
2. I bought a vase, _____ was expensive etc.

Show opinions about the story.

Answer the questions:
1. Where was there a beautiful gift box? 1
2. How was Jenny when she saw the vase broken into pieces? 1
3. What do you think of Jenny? 3
4. What do you learn from the passage? 3

Translate the following sentences especially pay attention to what “it” refer to. (4 sentences with “it”)

District 12 | 04120022 | 04120095 | 04120201

61

Answer the questions:
1. What did Jenny borrow from her neighbor? 1
2. What happened to the car? 1
3. Why was Jenny horrified? 1
4. Did Jenny buy a

Read and number the following sentences in order:
5 sentences

Read and find out the sentences with “it”.

56
new vase?  1
5. What did Jenny’s neighbor say on the phone?  1

| 64 | Read and underline the sentences in which there is “it” and tell what “it” refers to in each sentence. Sum up the usage of “it”. | Read and circle “it” in the passage and find out what each “it” refers to. | Read and find out the what each “it” refers to. |
| 67 | Answer the questions:  
1. What do you think of Jenny? 3  
2. If you were Jenny, what would you do? 3 | Answer the questions:  
1. What did Jenny borrow from her neighbor? 1  
2. What did she hit as Jenny was driving along? 1  
3. Realizing that the vase was broken, what did Jenny do? 1  
4. What would you do, if you were Jenny? 3 | Find out how to make suggestions in the passage. Summarize the usage of should. |

| District 13 | 04130019 | 04130223 | 04130484 |
| 61 | Answer the questions:  
What did Jenny borrow from her neighbor?  
A. a vase  
B. a fit box  
C. a car | Read and get the main idea of this passage. 2 | Answer the questions:  
1. What did Jenny do one afternoon? 1  
2. What was the weather like that day? 1  
3. Did Jenny buy a new vase? 1  
4. Can you guess when Jenny heard her neighbor’s words, how did she feel? 2 |

| 64 | Answer the questions:  
1. Why did Jenny’s car head straight for a tree? 1  
2. How did Jenny know where to buy the identical vase? 1  
3. What do you think Jenny will do at last? 2 | Read and choose “T” or “F” according to the text. (no specific items) | Read and find out the sentences with “it”. Translate the sentences. |

| 67 | Answer the questions:  
1. What was Jenny able to avoid hitting? 1  
2. What had lost Jenny a lot of | Answer the questions (no questions) | Sum up the use of “it” with the sentences on the blackboard. |
money? 1
3. What was the right thing for Jenny to do? 1
4. What was Jenny’s neighbor planning to return? 1

61
Answer the questions:
1. Was the woman from Seattle? 1
2. Did she wonder what might be inside the box? 1
3. Did she hit a big tree when she was driving along? 1
4. Did she spend a lot of money on a new vase? 1
5. Was the vase on the back seat of the car good or bad? 1

64
Answer the questions:
1. What did the woman borrow from her neighbor? 1
2. What was on the back seat of the car? 1
3. What was the weather like that day? 1
4. How was she when she saw that she had done? 1
5. Why did she buy a new vase? 1
6. What do you think of the woman? 3

67
Find out the compound sentences.

Talking about the story. What’s your opinion about the story? 3

Answer the questions:
1. What was in Jenny’s neighbor’s car? 1
2. What was the weather like that day? 1
3. How did she find out the store? 1
4. What will she feel after she hears the neighbor’s words? 2
<table>
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<th>04150276</th>
<th>04150511</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **61**     | Read and match the headings with paragraphs | What happened to Aunt Fern’s vase? | Answer the questions:  
1. Did Jenny buy another vase for her neighbor?  
2. What would Jenny’s neighbor do with the broken vase? |
| **64**     | Tell true or false  
1. Her neighbor borrowed Jenny’s car.  
2. It was a cold and snowy day.  
3. Jenny saw a gift box on the floor.  
4. Jenny broke the vase on the back seat of the car.  
5. Jenny bought a new vase for her neighbor.  
6. Jenny felt terrible after she knew the truth. | Answer the questions:  
1. What did Jenny do one afternoon?  
2. What happened to the gift box?  
3. How was Jenny feeling when she saw the beautiful vase break into pieces?  
4. What did she do next?  
5. What’s the result? | Answer the questions:  
1. Was there a beautiful gift box on the back seat of the car?  
2. What happened to Jenny when she drove?  
3. Was Jenny afraid when she saw the broken vase?  
4. What did she do then?  
5. Did she explain it to her neighbor? |
| **67**     | Answer the questions:  
1. When did Jenny borrow her neighbor’s car?  
2. What happened as Jenny was driving along?  
3. Why did Jenny buy a new vase?  
4. How did Jenny feel about the matter?  
5. What do you think of the story? | Answer the questions:  
1. What do you think of Jenny?  
2. After knowing the truth, what will Jenny and her neighbor do? | Check the true sentence.  
1. Jenny drove her own car one afternoon.  
2. She hit a tree.  
3. The vase in the gift box broke into pieces.  
4. She bought an identical vase from the same store.  
5. Jenny broke the vase herself. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District 16</th>
<th>04160039</th>
<th>04160550</th>
<th>04161044</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **61**     | Answer the questions:  
1. What’s in the beautiful gift box?  
2. What’s wrong with the vase? | Match the people with what they do  
(Jenny and her neighbor, 6 actions) | Read and answer:  
What happened to Aunt Fern’s vase? |
| **64**     | Write the words that they mean.  
7 sentences with “it” | Order the sentences:  
3 sentences | Read and answer:  
(no specific questions) |
| **67**     | Answer the questions:  
1. What’s the weather like that day?  | Fill in the blanks.  
1. Jenny was able to _____ hitting it.  
2. The car _____ around and _____ | Put the sentences in right order according to the story. (no sentences) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. What happened?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3. After finding the vase was broken, what did Jenny do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If you were Jenny, what will you do?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>straight for a tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. She _____ that the box had _____ on the floor.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>District 17</th>
<th>04170016</th>
<th>04170399</th>
<th>04170868</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Answer the question: What was the trouble with Jenny? 1</td>
<td>Jenny broke the vase in the car (T / F)</td>
<td>Answer the question: 1. Where is the woman from? 1 2. What was the weather like on that afternoon? 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Answer the question: 1. What’s in the gift box? A. a small path B. a nice vase C. a beautiful broken vase D. a nice tree 2. Why did Jenny go to the gift store? A. She wanted to buy a gift for her neighbor. B. She wanted to buy a vase like the one in the car. C. She wanted to know where she could repair the car? D. She wanted to have a rest.</td>
<td>Number the following sentences according to the passage. (5 sentences)</td>
<td>Choose the best answer: 1. What was at the back seat of the car? A. a toy. B. a vase. C. a bear 2. She looked the new vase away safely in the trunk of the car. “What’s the underlined work mean?” A. 躯干 B. 象鼻 C. 行李箱 3. Which sentence is true according to the passage? A. The neighbor’s car was broken. B. The neighbor would be excited. C. Jenny needn’t to buy a vase for her neighbor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Answer the question: 1. “Jenny drove to the store and …?” She thought she did the right thing? Why? 2 2. If you were Jenny, how would you do? 3</td>
<td>Finish the table: one afternoon: Jenny _____ from her neighbor. As Jenny was driving along: She _____ a small patch ice. The car _____ She found _____ in the car. Then: She _____ from a store. Finally: The neighbor told her _____</td>
<td>1. Ask the students to read the story together. 2. Give them some time to read by themselves. 3. Ask some students to read in class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60
Appendix-6 the meanings and functions of “it” in the passage

1. On the back seat of their car was a beautiful gift box, and she wondered what might be inside it. (the box)

2. It was a cold and snowy day and, as Jenny was driving along, she hit a small patch of ice. (the weather)

3. Luckily, Jenny was able to avoid hitting it. (the tree)

4. It had cost a lot of money, but she knew it was the right thing to do. (the vase; to buy a new vase)

5. I bought a vase for my Aunt Fern’s birthday yesterday, and when I got home I noticed that it was broken. (the vase)

6. I left it in the car as I was planning to return it to the store today. (the vase; the vase)

7. I’d like to get there before it closes. (the store)
Ethical Form

(removed to retain anonymity)
Certificate of Authorization

(removed to retain anonymity)