

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

English is not only one subject of the college entrance examination but also one of the few in which it is difficult to score high for most test-takers. As the traditional types of grammar and vocabulary tests have mostly been replaced by cloze passages in recent years, the importance of reading ability is realized through the heavy proportion of the English test items in the test construction, among which items with reading passages account for 50% (in Scholastic Aptitude English Test, 學科能力測驗英文考科) ~ 65% (in Department Required English Test, 指定科目考試英文考科) of the total score, though under different item subtitles. Thus, it stands to reason that the test-takers are required to be equipped with good reading competence.

#### 1.1 Schema Theory

Reading, as defined by Goodman (1970), is a psycholinguistic guessing game and it involves an interaction between thought and language. Following this definition, to decode a written text involves cognitive ability and linguistic competence. However, in terms of teaching EFL students in local senior high schools, most English teachers put more emphasis on word-by-word translation or sentence-by-sentence interpretation (rather than on the exploration or elaboration of the whole text structure). With the above-mentioned teaching method, the students have a good grasp of what every new word means and what every sentence is talking about, but they can't catch what the writer is trying to convey through the text.

Anderson et al. (1977) points out, "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well" (p.369). This statement also applies to reading comprehension. Schema theory proposes that reading comprehension involves "an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text" and goes far beyond the reader's linguistic knowledge. As stated in the following: