ISSN 1916-4742

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

CCSE

Canadian Center of Science and Education

Editorial Board

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Contents

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Contents

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Teacher's Role in the Reading Apprenticeship Framework: Aid by the Side or Sage by the Stage

Noosha Mehdian
Faculty of Education, University Malaya, KL, Malaysia
A-12-1, Wisma HB, Megan Avenue 2
12 Jalan Yap Kwan Seng,
50450 KL, Malaysia
E-mail: noushamehdian@yahoo.com

Abstract

Despite decades of efforts, alarming statistics about the literacy crisis from secondary school teachers indicate that the reading abilities of the learners are inadequate for the materials to be taught and teachers wonder if adolescents are literate enough, language-wise, to leave school and enter colleges or universities.

The common mode of teaching allows students a passive role in class which leads to their being disengaged from literacy. How we teach literacy is of great importance if students are to become empowered as lifelong readers. As individuals differ in their reading abilities, teachers must move beyond testing for comprehension if students are to embrace a new way of being literate.

Although research has taught us much about what is needed to read, it has provided much less knowledge about effective means of helping students learn to read. This study hoped to design a literacy program to respond to this need through a Reading Apprenticeship Framework as a partnership of expertise, drawing on what the teacher knows and does as a reader and on pre- university students' often underestimated strengths as learners using exploratory mixed method design.

Keywords: Apprenticeship, Metacognition, Think-aloud, Scaffolding

Teacher's Role in the Reading Apprenticeship Framework: Aid by the Side or Sage by the Stage

1. Background

Random views and alarming statistics about the literacy crisis from secondary school teachers indicate that there seems to be a mismatch between the language proficiency level of the students and the syllabus that is to be covered. Often teachers declare that the reading abilities of the learners are inadequate for the materials to be taught and they wonder if adolescents are literate enough, language-wise, to leave school and enter colleges or universities.

In a world driven by information technology, the complexity of reading literacy is increasing as the format of texts becomes more diverse and increasing numbers of citizens are expected to use information from these materials in new and more complex ways. Varied texts such as CD-ROMs, Web pages, newspapers, and magazines place different demands on the reader. As information technology grows, we will encounter even more varied texts and will be called on to use information in new ways.

Alluded to within this brief statement are a number of potential sources of trouble for the adolescent reader: decoding, fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge, and critical thinking. Yet, this list does not exhaust the factors contributing to adolescents' experience of success (or failure) at literacy tasks. According to Edelson and Joseph (2004), in addition to these requisites, readers must also develop and maintain a motivation to read and learn, the strategies to monitor and correct their own comprehension during the act of reading, and the flexibility to read for a wide variety of purposes in a wide variety of media, all while developing their identities not only as readers but as members of particular social and cultural groups.

Helping students to attain the abilities fundamental to literacy is definitely challenging and a variety of instructional approaches have been developed to this end. Each of these approaches is based on the assumption that a particular key link in literacy development- motivation, purpose, knowledge of strategies and flexible utilization of them, word-reading skills, or schemata - has been weakened. To Delgado-Gaitan (1990) literacy is a socio-cultural process, and it follows that literate ability has to do with the socio-cultural knowledge and cognitive skills that are not the L2 readers' greatest points.

In the EFL context at the lower levels of most language curricula, literacy is more text-centric, rather than reader-centric. Literacy instruction at this level calls for using "functional" exercises, as well as reading stories and journalistic texts. At the higher levels, textual analysis skills and critical thought come into play (Barnett 1991; Jurasek, 1996). This is where most students underperform as they have not been prepared for such readings. According to Paul (2001) the common mode of teaching allows students a passive role in class which leads to the crisis of schools today, being disengaged from literacy. Thus, a classroom that is set out to teach for a new literacy would be one that honors all forms of representation. In such a classroom, students would be free to read in a variety of the "languages of the mind" (Tishman & Perkins, 1997). This freedom to read in various forms must be explicitly declared and modeled by the teacher. This more contemporary teacher role is represented in Kern's (2000) words as the guide by the side, not the sage on the stage. The goal is pedagogy of interpretive practice in which students and teachers use the unique literate environment of the classroom to reflect consciously and explicitly on interaction processes in various social contexts (Kramsch, 1993). Therefore, there is room for socio cognitive principles to be introduced in classrooms and that is why Kern (2000) discusses that the macro-principle of *communication* should be translated to the realities of classroom teaching and curriculum. As a result, the goal of a literacy-based curriculum should be to engage learners in activities that involve communication. Teachers in new literacy classrooms should become more aware of the literacies they bring to their expertise in order to open up resources for students' learning (Guthrie, 2001; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; and Byrnes, 1998). Acquisition of literacy is the need for socialization and interacting with texts that characterize particular discourse communities (Kern, 2000). According to Gergen (1995), learning is a social and collaborative activity, where the teacher acts as facilitator and the student is responsible for constructing her own understanding in his own mind. Thus, given opportunities involving critical dialogue, learners may develop skills which can be transferred to subsequent modes of thinking and communicating and as the interaction level is high, learners will become more engaged in the literacy tasks.

An instructional framework that best fits the criteria of a new literacy classroom could be Reading Apprenticeship. Reading apprenticeship is an approach to reading instruction that helps young people develop the knowledge, strategies, and dispositions they need to become more powerful readers (Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, and Mueller, 2001). The notion of apprenticeship has long characterized student and teacher roles in foreign language classroom. In literacy-based language teaching in Kern (2000) words, students are apprentice discourse analysts and intercultural explorers.

"In any apprenticeship, an expert practitioner or mentor models, directs, supports and shapes an apprentice's growing repertoire of practice. The apprentice actively engages in the task, learning by doing with appropriate support and gradually moving toward skillful independence in the desired practice" (Scohenbach, Braunger, Greenleaf & Litman, 2003, p.133).

Many students in today's diverse classrooms have trouble handling the conceptual demands in reading material when left to their own devices to learn from text. Through engagement in different dimensions of reading Apprenticeship framework students get to understand the acts of reading as evaluative pursuits. The Reading Apprenticeship Framework (RAF) involves teachers in integrating four interacting dimensions of classroom life that support reading development (Schoenbach, Braunger, Greenleaf, Litman, 2003. p. 135):

1. The social dimension involves developing a sense of safety in the classroom and making good use of adolescents' interest in peer interactions.

2. The personal dimension involves addressing adolescents' interest in exploring new aspects of their identities.

3. The cognitive dimension involves developing student's repertoires of specific comprehension and problem-solving strategies, with an emphasis on group discussion of when and why particular cognitive strategies are useful.

4. The knowledge-building dimension involves identifying and expanding the knowledge students bring to a text.

As such in a classroom community of readers, the metacognitive conversation is the central dynamic that animates and links the four dimensions of the Reading Apprenticeship framework. The concept of metacognition refers to one's knowledge about one's cognitive processes or anything related to those processes (Flavell, 1976, Brown, Bransford, Ferrara & Campione, 1983; Paris, 1988, Hudson 2007). In metacognitive conversation, teacher and students discuss their personal relationships to reading in the discipline, the cognitive strategies they use to solve comprehension problems, the structure and language of particular types of texts, and the kinds of knowledge required to make sense of reading materials (Schoenbach, Braunger, Greenleaf, & Litman, 2003). Through metacognition, apprentice readers begin to become aware of their reading processes (Paris & Jacobs 1984).

Thus Reading Apprenticeship is an approach to reading instruction that is believed to have the potential to help young readers develop the knowledge, strategies, and dispositions they need to become more powerful readers. In brief, the aim of Reading Apprenticeship is to help students become better readers of a variety of texts by:

- engaging them in more reading;

- making the teacher's discipline-based reading processes and knowledge visible to them;
- making the their reading processes and the social contexts, strategies, knowledge, and understandings they bring to the task of making sense of subject-matter texts visible to the teacher and to one another;
- helping them gain insight into their own reading processes; and
- helping them acquire a repertoire of problem-solving strategies with the varied texts of the academic discipline (Schoenbach, 2000, p.23).

2. The Study

Persistence, sustained attention, and cooperation are demanding for learners. Therefore, building the right context is crucial. Although research has taught us much about what is needed to read, it has provided much less knowledge about effective means of helping students learn to read. Thus, hoping to respond to this need, this study looked at the roles the teacher should adopt in a RAF to develop pre-college EFL learners' reading literacy drawing on what the teacher knows and does as a reader and on learners' often underestimated strengths. In the Reading Apprenticeship Framework of this study reading strategies were taught in a context of inquiry. Such a context affords teachers the opportunity to support motivation with the principles of: a) having knowledge goals in reading instruction, b) providing hands-on activities related to reading, c) giving students realistic choices, d) using interesting texts for instruction, and e) weaving collaboration into students' classroom lives (Guthrie, Schafer, & Huang, 2001).

2.1 Procedure

Intending to provide insights into what teaching strategies are useful in facilitating the delivery of the Reading Apprenticeship Framework, the study was carried out in an English language school over a duration of two months and in 36 sessions.

The type of *Purposeful Sampling* adopted in this study is *Typical Sampling* which, according to Creswell (2002), is a sampling in which the researcher studies a person or site that is "typical" to those unfamiliar with the situation. Finn and Achilles (1999) found that students in classes of fewer than 17 had statistically significant literacy achievement gains in all subject areas and at every level. In this study for better achievement results, it was tried to keep the number of learners fewer than seventeen.

The subjects who participated in the actual study were language learners attending an intensive course of English at intermediate level of proficiency. The subjects came from a variety of native language backgrounds: Malay, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Arabic etc. Most of the learners were secondary school leavers who wished to pursue their education at a college or university in or outside Malaysia but lacked the required English proficiency. All the students at this language school sit for a written and oral placement test upon registration. Therefore, those sitting in one class might be assumed homogenous; but the fact that the pre-test of the study showed otherwise was cherished, as the heterogeneity factor helped me to see how the framework worked for learners at different levels of proficiency. On the very first session, all seventeen learners sat for a pre test, adopted from PISA 2000. The mean and standard deviation were calculated. As the overall ability of the researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual (Creswell, 2002), six learners from different nationalities, two who scored the highest, two who scored the lowest and two whose scores were closest to the mean were selected to represent better, weaker and average students to maximize what could be learned from the context.

Learning cognitive strategies is a challenging enterprise. To learners, the strategies are abstract. For teachers, the process of modeling and scaffolding strategies requires time and care. Nevertheless this study found that even low-achieving readers' reading can develop with effective instruction. Observation field notes, learners' reflections, insights from the final interview and feedback from the peer observation sessions all complemented the findings on the efficacy of the apprenticeship.

2.1.1 The Instruction/Apprenticeship

In light of the requirements for increased reading literacy, Reading Apprenticeship puts the teacher/researcher in the role of expert and students are "apprenticed" into the ways reading is used and the strategies and thinking that are particularly useful. Rather than offering a sequence of strategies, the RAF in this study focused on creating a classroom where students became active and effective readers and learners. It should be noted that, although reading strategies have been placed under the categories of pre-reading, while-reading and after-reading (e.g. Auerbach and Paxton, 1997; Maria and Hathaway, 1993) the focus in this RAF was on 'while-reading' strategies.

From the beginning, reading apprentices were engaged in the whole process of problem solving to make sense of written texts, even if they were initially unable to carry out on their own all the individual strategies and subtasks that go into successful reading. The hidden, cognitive dimensions in particular were drawn out and made visible to the students. The teaching and learning environment required the interaction of students and teacher in multiple dimensions of classroom life to develop students' confidence and competence as readers of various kinds of challenging texts.

Making it safe for students to discuss reading difficulties mitigated their potential embarrassment. Strategies that address individual needs involved:

- Offering personalized scaffolding.
- Using flexible means to reach defined ends
- Creating a caring classroom in which differences were seen as assets.

The overarching practice in this RAF was building ample one-on-one time into the class structure.

Adapting Hunter's (1991) lesson design mode, everyday the lesson was started by eliciting from the learners themselves how that very strategy could help them in real life and why it was important to know how to use it (*Purpose*). Then the strategy was introduced with examples for its actual usage (*Input*). Using think-aloud, an example or two would be modeled for them to see what a more proficient reader would actually do in the face of a reading problem (*Modeling*).

As Smith (1988) stresses the importance of learner's personal sense of group membership, the learners were then assigned to groups to do the tasks together. Learners acted upon cues from what they read, experimented with multiple literacies and received feedback from peers and the "novice tutors". They were given reading tasks to do in small groups, so that through interaction they could help their peers to manage the task and not just sit idol, waiting for the class to read out the correct responses as groups needing more scaffolding were monitored (*Guided Practice*). Working in small groups allowed for participation of everyone as they felt more comfortable and able to reach consensus. Research recommends no fewer than three and no more than five for small group discussions to insure the involvement of all (Miller, 1997); thus, learners were asked to sit in groups of 3-5 for the desired peer support.

A particular risk with any kind of scaffold is when its use becomes habituated. When the provided support is fixed and constantly expected, students are not given the opportunity to ever become independent (Silver & Kogut, 2006).Thus, after relative assurance was gained of their ability to handle the tasks, they were given more reading tasks and asked to try their best to handle them independently (*Independent Practice*).

In the first half of the framework, the strategies were introduced one at a time. To some of the more complex strategies more than one session were dedicated. Single strategy instruction enabled lower-achieving learners to understand, to gain command, and to transfer the strategies to a variety of texts (Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa, Von Secker & Richardson, 2001). In the second half of this 8-week framework, the strategies were combined. Learners need to be shown what teachers mean before they can effectively do what they are asked to do.

One consistent feature in the reading lessons was the encouragement of students to read and think aloud to increase students' conscious awareness of the various problems faced and strategies used during reading. Although it was not expected from all the students to be equally competent, they were expected to follow the modeling of the strategies albeit their proficiency differences. There was an even mix of different proficiencies in different groups. Groupings that are required to discuss topics require a range of perspectives that are likely to be enhanced in mixed-ability groupings (Web, 1989). With respect to the dialogue that occurs when students are working together, Wells (2002) notes:

"It is not necessary for there to be a clear difference in expertise for participants to assist each other…whenever the dialogue that occurs in joint activity leads to an increase in individual as well as collective understanding, there is an opportunity for each participant to appropriate new ways of doing, speaking, and thinking, and thus to augment the…resources they can draw on, both in the present and in their future activities" (p. 61)

However, it was observed that having a more competent learner in each group who subtly took on the role of the "expert" and shared his think-alouds with his other peers can prove more beneficial. This allows apprenticeship to happen at two levels: At one level, the teacher as the expert and all learners as apprentices and at the second level, the more proficient readers in the groups as the mentors allowing the less proficient readers constant access to a model.

Besides the use of think-aloud, metacognitive discussion was another prominent feature of the reading sessions. Most of the discussion whether instructor-led at the first level of apprenticeship, or peer-led at the second level of the apprenticeship, revolved around the detection of what was hindering comprehension, awareness and use of learned strategies and finding contextual clues for resolving reading problems.

The description above provides a general view of the dimensions of RAF. While each reading session differed somewhat from one another depending on the specific objectives of each lesson, the following dimensions of RAF adapted from Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller (2001) underscores a typical reading session.

Insert Figure 1 Here.

Dimensions of Apprenticeship Framework (Greenleaf et al, 2001)

3. Findings

On the last day of the semester the learners were given the same pre test to compare their performance on the exact same test that they had taken 2 months ago. All learners' post-test scores showed improvement compared to their pre-test results. On average, the mean progress of the 6 learners was 14.4%. Observation field notes, learners' reflections, insights from the final interview and feedback from the peer observation sessions all complemented the findings on the efficacy of the apprenticeship and signposted the roles the teacher should take up to better utilize the potential of the RAF and therefore to aim for higher reading literacy development on learners' side.

3.1 Modeling of reading strategies

First and foremost, modeling the strategy played an important role in the RAF. For each strategy, a sample paragraph was given out, read out loud, and the metacognitive think-aloud shared with the learners; only then would the learners be asked to get on task with their group-mates.

On learners' reflections on the effectiveness of the modeling and instruction, they were consistently giving responses such as "clear"," understandable", "superb", "great", "very good", etc. All students found the modeling "helpful", and "a good reference". Similar comments from students with different proficiencies added confidence that the modeling was actually helpful. One of the more proficient readers, DH, mentioned that he "couldn't do the tasks without it". A student with average proficiency, HM, also wrote that "it happened in his brain as well." The feedback from the peer observers revealed the modeling had been "very clear", "step by step" and "useful".

On marrying strategy instruction and think-aloud, the findings are in line with studies by Oster (2001) who advocates the use of think-aloud in reading instruction, as well as Baumann, Jones and Seifert- Kessel (1993), who examined the effects of think-aloud on reading strategies and comprehension. In the literature, reading teachers have been encouraged to think aloud as a form of modeling cognitive processes and by the students as a form of practice and learning (Baumann et al. 1993; Davey, 1983; Nist and Kirby 1986; Oster 2001; Womack, 1991). Empirical studies have also proved the effectiveness of using think-aloud to improve reading (Womack, 1991; Liaw, 1995). The demonstration and modeling of strategies is a key feature of instructional scaffolding that students need to be successful with texts. Learning is mediated through language by differences in perspectives among co-participants (Bakhtin, 1984; Habermas, 1984).

3.2 Making good use of peer interaction

The idea of group work was to support the social dimension of the RAF and to help learners' build confidence. Smith (1996) stresses the importance of apprenticeship and the learner's personal sense of group membership, which leads to a literate identity. There was a more competent learner in each group who subtly took on the role of the "expert" and shared his think-alouds with his other peers. Thus, apprenticeship happened at two levels: At one level, teacher as the expert and all learners as apprentices and at the second level, the more proficient readers in the groups as the mentors allowing the less proficient readers constant access to a model.

Regardless of the proficiency level, all students unanimously agreed that working with peers and sharing think-aloud proved fruitful and they all thought a maximum of 3 is ideal for such interaction. Experimental comparisons, undertaken largely in the USA, have shown positive effects of cooperative, collaborative and mastery learning for small-sized groupings as well (Slavin, 1990).

The feedback from peer observations corroborates the effectiveness of the interaction:

"Students enjoyed pair work/group work during the lesson. It helped them to understand the topic better through discussion." (Peer observer 5) or "doing practices in groups helped in building students' confidence." (Peer observer 4)

A related finding on the use of the RAF pertains to how strategies were employed as an effort of a small group. As far as the element of peer interaction is concerned, the findings support Palincsar and Brown's (1984) and Anderson and Roit's (1993) studies that provide evidence on the usefulness of combining the elements of think-aloud with collaboration. In Driscoll's words (1994), the learners' interaction with peers is an important source of cognitive development as they become aware of the inconsistencies in their thinking; this is in line with Piagetian peer teaching and social negotiation concepts.

In small groups, students were able to pool their resources and through metacognitive talk resolve the reading problems. A second level of apprenticeship occurred in small groups as the better readers mentored the less proficient students and constructed "a scaffold for each other's performance" (Donato, 1994). Mercer (2000) also found that the think aloud and negotiation of meaning allows for such social interaction. Anderson (1991) and Kamhi-Stein (1998) advocate such collaboration among the L2 readers considering the limited vocabulary and linguistic resources that they possess. Working collaboratively allows students to compensate for each others' lack of resources in the face of reading problems (Goh, 2004).

3.3 Providing scaffolding

Another factor essential to the effective implementation and delivery of the RAF was scaffolding or in Graves and

Braaten (1996) words, **"**temporary supports that help a learner bridge the gap between what he or she can do and what he or she needs to do to succeed at a learning task". Roehler, Duffy and Applebee (1991) all agree that a key component of a strategies instructional model is scaffolding and it has to include instructional actions designed to shift responsibility for strategy use from teachers to students as a diverse learner needs not only exhortation but also a good model.

In each session, after modeling the strategy, the teacher moved around the classroom and spent some time with each group. The more introvert learners were closely monitored. With time, practice and feedback, learners would gain the knowledge and motivation to use independently what they have learned. The goal was for students to become self-regulated in their strategy use (Vygotsky, 1978).

Two levels of apprenticeship took place in the form of expert-novice relationships- one at the teacher-student level, the other at the peers level.

The students' reflections on issues of scaffolding were consistent with the researcher's observations. For every single strategy, the whole class found the offered scaffolding "easy and fast to understand", "good to improve reading", "effective", "makes understanding better", etc.

Not only the weaker students, but also the better readers benefited from the 2-level apprenticeship. In DH's words "when you hear yourself explain something to your friend, you understand it better also".

Feedback from other observers on the scaffolding factor was just as positive.

"The scaffolding provided was effective. It had been carefully and systematically prepared in advance. It was progressively removed once students were ready." (Peer observer 2)

The significance of scaffolding in the RAF is in tone with Vygotsky's (1986) zone of proximal development- what a child can do in cooperation today he can do tomorrow alone. One version of ZDP had attained influence in UK's literacy policy. The teacher's role is to provide 'scaffolding' for the learner's linguistic development to 'support pupils' early efforts and to build confidence (DfEE, 2001). The important factor in scaffolding is for the teacher/coach to be present at the moment of need to prompt the strategy use, or else the 'teachable moment' (Moses, 1998) passes the student by.

The procedure of instruction in the RAF was a) model the strategy, b) do the first reading task together with the class, c) on the second task, let peers help each other and discuss their think-aloud while the teacher monitored, observed and listened carefully to identify where, when and to whom 'scaffolding' should be offered and d) have learners do the reading tasks with minimum support from both their peers and the teacher. Wary and Lewis (2000) proceed to redefine the ZPD as a four-stage process as well where expertise is transferred from expert to novice, which is the corner stone of apprenticeship: 1) demonstration, 2) joint activity, 3) supported activity, 4) individual activity (p.26).

At the end of the process, the reason that the expert can withdraw is because learners themselves have become the expert or in Greig's (2000) words the process of learning enables the replication of teacher's expertise.

In 36 hours of apprenticeship, through the modeling of each strategy and sharing of think-aloud, teacher's discipline-based reading processes were successfully made visible to the learners. What is more, working in small groups, benefiting from a second level of apprenticeship, thinking together and having constant access to a model (either the teacher or the better reader of the group), made learners' reading processes visible to themselves and to each other; and finally with direct strategy instruction, gradual removal of scaffolding and learners' growing confidence, learners at different proficiency levels became more capable of handling authentic texts and more enabled to "break the code" (Schoenbach, Braunger, Greenleaf, & Litman, 2003) of academic language.

4. Discussion

There is a wide gap between research and practice, with little strategy instruction happening across classrooms (Pressley, 2000). The positive impact of the RAF implies that teachers potentially have a useful instructional technique to help learners improve their reading literacy and deal with various text types.

4.1 Reading instruction

A number of educators have discussed characteristics of instruction designed to encourage learners to become more strategic (Baker 1994; Rosenshine and Meister, 1994; Rhoder, 2002). First, instruction is most effective when the instructor 1) carefully explains the nature and purpose of strategy; 2) models its use through thinking aloud; 3) provides ample practice; 4) lets peers remind each other of the benefits of strategy use through interaction; 5) provides a content base embedded in authentic purposes. Instructional time for direct-strategy instruction and modeling must be made available. Hence, if the objective of the reading lesson is to encourage fluent reading or reading for leisure, the procedure may not be suitable.

4.2 Peer interaction

A key factor in successful delivery of the RAF is good utilization of peer interaction. While peer interaction proves beneficial for most learners, there are some who are possibly not comfortable to ask for support in the face of a difficulty, especially if they sit in groups of learners with different proficiencies. Thus, as long as the teacher ensures the presence of at least one student of higher proficiency in the group who can play the role of the 'coach', it may be beneficial to allow the learners to determine who they are willing to work with. Action and interaction within groups may be affected by group composition. Group composition may vary by attainment/ability, friendship, gender and behavior. Groupings that are required to discuss topics require a range of perspectives that are likely to be enhanced in mixed-ability groups (Web, 1989). Thus, teachers should consider individual differences in composing small groups as it can play a deterrent role in maximizing the potential of the second level of apprenticeship.

4.3 Metacognitive conversation and think-aloud

The data shows that metacognitive conversation and think-aloud are other crucial aspects of the RAF. The underlying assumption is that teachers in the RAF are themselves proficient in carrying out the think-aloud, as any uncertainty on the side of the teachers will make them unable to help learners become comfortable with using the skill. Teachers are required to model reading strategies through think-aloud and to provide examples for their students to boost their motivation to use them (McEwan, 2004). Therefore, considering the benefits of being able to model thinking-aloud implies the need for trainee teachers to master the skill prior to stepping into the classroom (Goh, 2004).

4.4 Teacher education

Along the same lines, one of the implications of this study is for teacher education. Recent research using the PISA (2000) database has shown that students in countries with an unequal distribution of qualified teachers have lower scores than those from countries with a more equitable distribution of teacher resources (Chiu & Khoo, 2005). Researchers say the biggest impact on student literacy can be achieved by simply redirecting professional development money toward training teachers to use literacy-based strategies (Brozo, 2006). By sending trained teachers who can bridge the gap between research and practice to classrooms, and by helping English learners to perform more effectively at colleges or universities, societies as a whole will be strengthened and enriched.

5. Conclusion

Close analyses of learners' and teacher's respective roles in a literacy-based classroom, classroom interaction dynamics, and the formulation and framing of instructional tasks, reveals that positive practices like RAF flourish in the classrooms of teachers who understand literacy acquisition and the richness of the L2 learner's mind. How we teach literacy is of great importance if students are to understand the acts of reading as evaluative pursuits, and if they are to become empowered as lifelong readers. Teachers must move beyond teaching skills and testing for comprehension if students are to embrace new ways of being literate (Wilhelm, 1997).

References

Anderson, N. (1991). Individual differences in strategy use in second language reading and testing. *Modern Language Journal, 75,* 460-72.

Anderson, V. & Roit, M. (1993). Planning and implementing collaborative strategy instruction for delayed readers in grades 6- 1 0. *Elementary School Journal 94*, 121-137.

Applebee, A. (1991). Environments for language teaching and learning: Contemporary issues and future directions. In J. Flood, J. Jensen, D. Lapp, & J. Squire (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English/Language arts*, 549-556. New York: Macmillian.

Auerbach, E.R. & Paxton, D. (1997). "It's not the English thing": Bringing reading research into the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 31*(2), 237-261.

Baker, L. (2002). Metacognition in comprehension instruction. In C.C. Block & M. Pressley (Eds.), *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices*, 77–95. NY: Guilford Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Barnett, C. (1991). Building a case-based curriculum to enhance the pedagogical content knowledge of mathematics teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education, 42(4),* 1- 10.

Baumann, J. F. Jones, L.A., & Seifert-Kessell, N. (1993). *Monitoring Reading Comprehension by Thinking Aloud. Instructional Resource No.1*. ERIC Document Reproduction Services, ED 360 612.

Baumann, J.F., Seifert-Kessel, N., & Jones, L.A. (1992) effect of think-aloud instruction on elementary students' comprehension monitoring abilities. *Journal of Reading Behavior, 24 (2),* 143-172.

Brown, A., Bransford, J., Ferrara, R., & Campione, J. (1983). Learning, remembering, and understanding. In J. Flavell, & E. Markman, *Handbook of child psychology: Cognitive development*, *3*, 77-166. NewYork: Wiley.

Brozo, W.G. (2006). Bridges to literacy for boys. *Educational Leadership. (September 2006).* Association for supervision and Curriculum Development.

Byrnes, H. (1998). Constructing curricula in collegiate foreign language departments. In H. Byrnes (Ed.), *Learning foreign and second languages: Perspectives in research and scholarship* (262-295). New York: MLA.

Chiu, M. M. & Khoo, L. (2005) Effects of resources, inequality and privilege bias on achievement : country, school and student-level analyses, *American Educational Journal, 42 (4),* 575-603.

Creswell, W. J. (2002). *Educational research.* Pearson: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Davey, E. (1983). Think-aloud- Modeling the cognitive processes of reading comprehension. *Journal of Reading, 27*, 44-47.

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1990). *Literacy for empowerment*. New York: Falmer Press.

DfEE (2001b) *Key Stage 3 national Strategy: framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9: management summary.* London, DfEE.

Donato, R. (1994) Collective scaffolding in second language learning. In J.P. Lantolf & G. Appel (Eds.). *Vygotskian Aprroaches to Second Language Research* (33-56). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

Driscoll, M. P. (1994). *Psychology of learning for instruction*. Needham Heights, MA, Allyn & Bacon.

Edelson, D. C., & Joseph, D. M. (2004). The interest-driven learning design framework: Motivating learning through usefulness. In Y. B. Kafai, W. A. Sandoval, N. Enyedy, A. S. Nixon & F. Herrera (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the Learning Sciences, Santa Monica, CA, June 22-26, 2004* (166-173). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Finn, J. D., & Achilles, C. M. (1999). Tennessee's class size study: Findings, implications, misconceptions. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 21*, 97–109.

Flavell, J. (1976). Metacognitive Dimensions of Problem-Solving. In L. B. Resnick (ed.), *The Nature of Intelligence.* Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum.

Gergen, K. (1995). Social construction and the educational process. In L. Steffe & J. Gale (Eds.). *Constructivism in education,* 17-39. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Goh, H.S. (2004). The use of think-aloud in a collaborative environment to enhance the reading comprehension abilities of ESL students at tertiary level. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Malaya, 2004.

Graves ,M. & Braaten, S. (1996). Scaffolded reading experiences for inclusive classes. *Educational Leadership, 53(5).* 14-16.

Greenleaf, C., Schoenbach, R., Cziko, C., & Mueller, F. (2001). Apprenticing adolescent readers to academic literacy. Harvard Educational Review, 71 (1), (79-129). [EJ 624 237].

Greig, D. (2000). Making sense of the world: language and learning in geography, in M. Lewis & D. Wray (Eds) Literacy in the secondary school (London, David Fulton).

Guthrie, J.T. (2001) *Contexts for Engagement and Motivation in Reading Handbook of reading research: Volume III* (Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson and Barr).

Guthrie, J.T., Schafer, W.D., & Huang, C. (2001). Benefits of opportunity to read and balanced reading instruction for reading achievement and engagement: A policy analysis of state NAEP in Maryland. *Journal of Educational Research, 94*(3), 145-162.

Guthrie, J.T., Wigfield, A., Barbosa, P., Von Secker, C. & Richardson, P. (2001). Increasing reading comprehension, motivation, and science knowledge through concept-oriented reading instruction in a district-wide experiment. http://www.cori.umd.edu/Research/Papers/IncrRead.htm.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of Communication Action: The Critique of* Functionalist Reason. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hudson, T. (2007). Teaching Second Language Reading. Oxford University Press.

Hunter, M. Generic Lesson Design: The Case For. (1991). *Science Teacher, 58 (7),* 26-28 Oct 1991.

John-Steiner, V., & Mahn, H. (1996). Sociocultural approaches to learning and development: A Vygotskian framework. *Educational Psychologist*, 31(3-4), 191-206.

Jurasek, R. (1996). Intermediate-Level Foreign Language Curricula: An Assessment and a New Agenda. *ADFL Bulletin*

27(2), 18–27.

Kamhi-Stein, L.D. (1998). Profiles of underprepared second-language readers. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. *41 (8),* 610-619

Kern, R. (2000). *Literacy and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Liaw, M. L. (1995). The use of think-aloud procedure for EFL instruction, ERIC Document Reproduction Service. ED394292.

Maria, K. & Hathaway, K. (1993). Using think alouds with teachers to develop awareness of reading strategies. *Journal of Reading,* 37*(1),* 0022-4102.

McEwan, E.K. (2004*). Seven Strategies of Highly effective Readers: Using cognitive research to boost K-8 achievement*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press

Mercer, N**.** (2000) *Words and Minds: how we use language to think together.* London: Routledge.

Miller, W. (1997). *Reading and writing remediation kit*. London: Prentice-Hall International.

Nist, S.L.& Kirby, K. (1986). Teaching comprehension & study strategies through modeling and thinking aloud. *Reading Research and Instruction*, *25 (4),* 254-264.

Oster, L. (2001). using the think-aloud for reading instruction. *Reading Teacher,* 55 (1), 64-69.

Palincsar, A. S., & Brown, A. L. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities. *Cognition and Instruction, 1*, 117-175.

Paris, S.G (1988). Models and metaphors of learning strategies. In C.E. Weinstein, E.T. Goetz & P.E. Alexander. (Eds.), *Learning and study strategies: Issues in assessment, instruction and evaluation (299-321).* San Diego: Academic.

Paris, S. G., & Jacobs, J. E. (1984). The benefits of informed instruction for children’s reading awareness and comprehension skills. *Child Development*, *55,* 2083–2093.

Paul, R. & Elder, L. (2000). *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking. Concepts & Tools.* The Foundation for Critical Thinking.

Pressley, M. (2000). Comprehension strategies instruction: A turn of the century status report. In C. C. Block & M. Pressley (Eds.), *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices.* New York: Guilford.

Rhoder, C**.** (2002). Mindful reading: Strategy training that facilitates transfer. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy 45 (6),* 498–512.

Roehler, L. & Duffy, G. (1991). Teachers' instructional actions. In R. Barr, M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal & P. D. Pearson (eds.) Handbook of Reading Research: Volume Two. New York: Longman.

Rosenshine, B. & Meister, C. (1995). Direct instruction. In L. Anderson (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of teaching and teacher education* (2nd ed., 143-148). Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd.

Silver, R. E., & Kogut, G. (2006). *Singapore peer work and peer talk, coding manual.* Unpublished manuscript, National Institute of Education, Singapore.

Schoenbach, R. (2000). *The Reading Apprenticeship Framework.* Reading for Understanding. San Diego: Academic.

Schoenbach, R., Braunger, J., Greenleaf, C., Litman, C. (2003). Apprenticing adolescents to reading in subject-area classroom*. Phi Delta Kappan,* (133-139).

Slavin, R. E. (1990). Ability grouping and student achievement in secondary schools: A best evidence synthesis. *Review of Educational Research, 60*, 471-499.

Smith, F. (1988*). Joining the Literacy Club*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc.

Tishman, S. & Perkins, D. (1997). The language of thinking. *Phi Delta Kappan,* (368-374).

Vygotsky, L. (1978). Mind and society: The development of higher psychological processes. Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and Language* (A. Kozulin, Ed. & Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Web, N. (1989). Peer interaction and learning in small groups, *International Journal of Educational Research, 13 (1),* 21-39.

Wells, G. (2002). The role of dialogue in activity theory. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 9*(1), 43-66.

Womack, R.J. (1991). The Effects of Think Aloud on Student Ability to Identify Main Ideas in Reading Passages.

Unpublished EdD Dissertation: University of Maryland College Park.

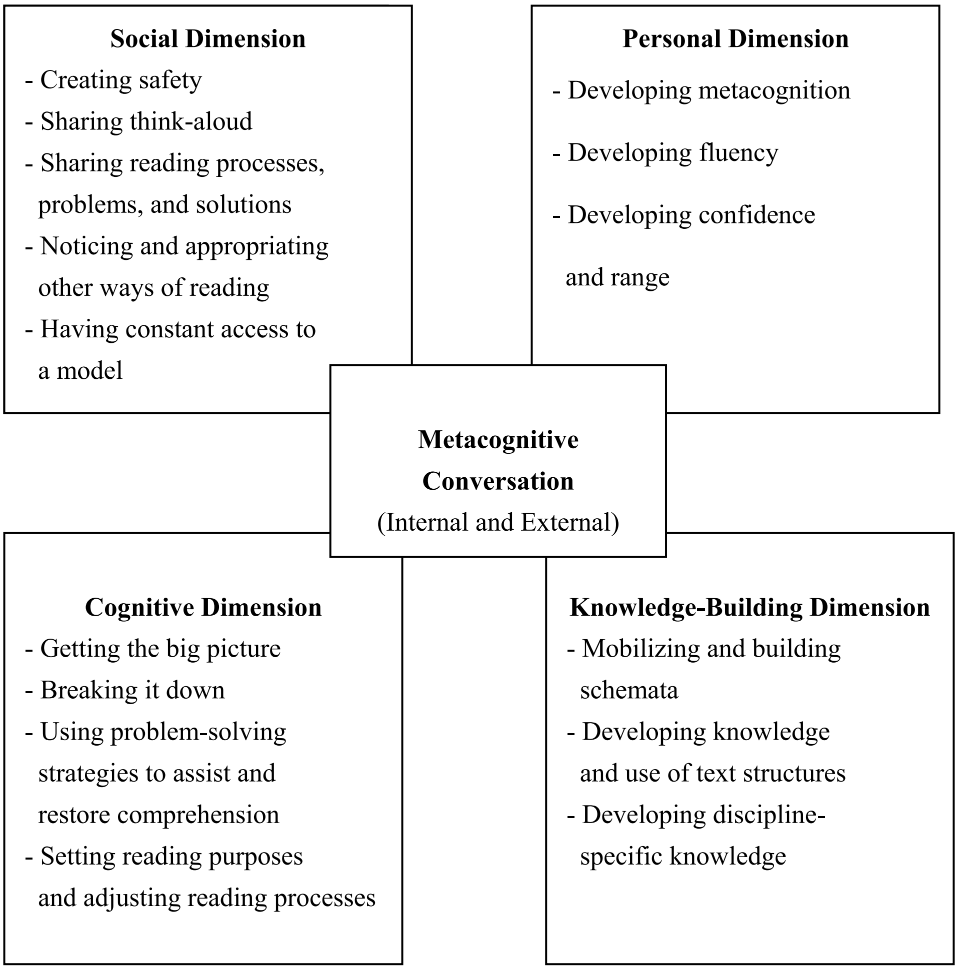


Figure 1. Dimensions of Apprenticeship Framework (Greenleaf et al, 2001)

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Learners' Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition:
A Case on Narrative and Expository Texts

Hossein Shokouhi
Department of English
Faculty of Letters and Humanities
Se Goosh
Shahid Chamran University
Ahvaz, Iran
E-mail: shokouhi_hossein@yahoo.com
Tel: 98-611-333-5005

Mahmood Maniati
Department of English
Faculty of Letters and Humanities
Se Goosh
Shahid Chamran University
Ahvaz, Iran

Abstract

This study was intended to determine whether or not the genre of a reading text affects the incidental vocabulary acquisition of L2 learners while reading. To this aim, 40 Iranian EFL students whose vocabulary knowledge was within a limited range (already determined by Nation's Vocabulary Levels Test) were divided into two groups of 20 each for the reading sections. The Narrative Group comprised the participants who read the narratives, and the Expository Group were those who read the expository texts. Three types of vocabulary tests (i.e., Form recognition, Meaning translation and Multiple-choice items) were administered after the reading sessions to assess the incidental vocabulary gains of the participants. Overall, this study demonstrated the relative superiority of expository texts over narratives in terms of enhancing readers' incidental acquisition of unknown words. It is argued that depending on the genre of a text, readers will invest processing resources with different depths and varying degrees of cognitive elaboration for the task of comprehension.

Keywords: Incidental, Intentional, Explicit, Implicit, Vocabulary, Acquisition, Narrative, Expository

1. Introduction

It is generally believed that most vocabulary, in first, second or foreign languages, is acquired incidentally. That is, vocabulary acquisition occurs as a by-product of reading and listening activities not explicitly geared to vocabulary learning (Huckin and Coady, 1999, p. 183). In this respect, the role of extensive reading as a prolific source of incidental second language vocabulary acquisition becomes evident. Through extensive reading, according to Swanborn and de Glopper (2002, pp. 95-96), "New word meanings are derived and learned even though the readers' purpose for reading is not the learning of the new vocabulary." Of course, the process of acquiring the meaning of unknown words as a by-product of extensive reading depends on many factors that have been the focus of attention of many researchers. Central to this are factors such as the resources and procedures applied in meaning inference (Nassaji, 2003), the influence of reading task and learner factors (Hulstijn and Laufer, 2001), the effect of dictionary or glossing support (Knight, 1994), or the types of texts (Gardner, 2004).

Along with the previous studies, this paper is intended to investigate, from a text analysis point of view, the effect that the two most common text genres to EFL learners, namely narrative and expository, may have on their potential incidental vocabulary acquisition. In other words, the question that this paper commits itself to address is which one of these two text types is more conducive to incidental learning. Rather than relying on intuition, teachers and L2 reading material designers can shape their instructions and materials based on the insights they receive from the findings of studies of this type.

2. Review of Literature

The literature on incidental vocabulary acquisition has witnessed a great diversity of, and sometimes controversial, views held by various researchers. These controversies principally arise from the complex nature of incidental learning and its application in L2 learning enterprise generally and incidental vocabulary acquisition in particular. Therefore, it seems in order to have an in-depth investigation of these concepts, followed by some discussion on the empirical research conducted in the field.

2.1 Types of Vocabulary Learning

Incidental and intentional learning have been naively taken to be used interchangeably and have become indistinguishable from implicit and explicit learning, respectively (For a recent study see Hunt and Beglar, 2005). Here, we firstly distinguish incidental from intentional learning and then we deal with incidental vs. implicit and intentional vs. explicit distinctions which are more complicated and subject to many misunderstandings.

The distinction between incidental and intentional learning, according to Ellis (1999), is based on the distinction between *focal* and *peripheral* attention. To him, “intentional learning requires focal attention to be placed deliberately on the linguistic code (i.e., on form or form-meaning connections),” while “incidental learning requires attention to be placed on meaning (i.e., message content) but allows peripheral attention to be directed at form” (pp. 45-46). Therefore, any learning, whether intentional or incidental, can only take place with some degree of attention (Schmidt, 1994, p. 198). By the same token, Hulstijn (2003, p. 357) claims that intentional or incidental learning requires some attention and noticing. However, attention is deliberately directed at committing new information to memory in the case of the former whereas the involvement of attention is not deliberately geared to an articulated learning goal in the case of the latter.

Gass (1999) introduces factors that are involved in learning vocabulary in a schematic representation that also captures the difference between incidental and intentional learning. The continuum that she portrays, as shown in Figure 1 below, suggests that words are more likely to be learned incidentally if (a) there are recognized cognates between the native and the target languages, (b) there is significant L2 exposure, or (c) other L2 related words are known.

Insert Figure 1 Here.

Reider (2003), relying on Schmidt’s (1990) and Ellis’s (1994b) definitions of the concept of ‘consciousness’, attributes all these confusions regarding the difference between implicit and incidental learning to the inconsistent use and unclear status of this term noted by various researchers in the literature. Based on the interpretation of the term consciousness, Reider is said to argue the types of incidental learning that can take place. That is, if we equate consciousness with intentionality, then the absence or presence of consciousness will lead to incidental and intentional learning. In a similar vein, if we consider consciousness as awareness, then we will have explicit learning in the presence of consciousness and implicit learning in its absence.

According to these definitions, the term implicit will be equated with ‘non-consciousness’ in the sense of ‘unawareness’, while incidental will be equated with ‘un-intentional’ (without any restrictions as to the role of awareness). Reider (2003, p. 28) finally concludes that “incidental learning as being composed of implicit learning processes (which happen without the learner’s awareness) and/or of explicit learning processes (which take place without learning intention but nevertheless involve online awareness and hypothesis formation).” (See the diagram below for more clarification).

Insert Figure 2 Here.

The definition presented above was, however, not satisfying because the concepts under discussion were clearly distinct from what is involved in a genuine implicit learning. DeKeyser (2003, p. 314) argues that automaticity is the result of a learning process, not a characteristic of the learning process itself. By replacing intentionality or automaticity with the construct of awareness, DeKeyser defines implicit learning as learning without awareness of what is being learned. DeKeyser, nevertheless, warns us to distinguish implicit learning from two concepts that are often confused with it, namely inductive learning and implicit memory. The former, defined as moving from particular to general, can itself be implicit or explicit. Implicit memory and implicit learning are two independent concepts, and although implicitly acquired knowledge tends to remain implicit and explicitly acquired has the tendency to be explicit, the latter can become implicit in the sense that learners can lose awareness of its structure over time.

2.2 Narrative vs. Expository

There is a long tradition of research into the differences between expository and narrative texts. Generally, Zwaan (1994, cited in Yun Dai and Wang, 2007, p. 335) suggested that the reader mentally represent and process texts differentially, depending on the genre of the text involved and their related expectations and schemas. For example, expository passages are viewed as more difficult to process than narrative passages (Zabrucky and Moore, 1999). Furthermore, expository texts are less cohesively organized by temporal and causal connections, thus demanding more explicit logical inference. Narrative texts, on the other hand, are typically more ambiguous and open to different interpretations than expository texts thus inviting personal participation and meaning interpretations.

Overall, empirical evidence indicates that for most students, expository reading poses a greater challenge than does narrative reading (Taylor and Beach, 1984). Although many factors may contribute to the difficulty students experience with expository reading, the four most commonly cited are text structure, conceptual density and familiarity, vocabulary knowledge, and prior knowledge.

2.3 The Effect of Text Types on Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition

It seems that certain kinds of texts facilitate incidental vocabulary acquisition. According to Huckin and Coady (1999, p. 188), texts which are personally interesting to the learners are more conducive to incidental vocabulary acquisition.

In a study examining the effect of topic familiarity on text comprehension and second language incidental vocabulary acquisition, Pulido (2007, p. 189) reached the conclusion that although topic familiarity does affect text processing, comprehension and lexical gain, it does not affect the role that text comprehension plays in incidental vocabulary acquisition.

Textual elaboration, by contrast, appears to have an unclear effect on incidental vocabulary learning. Chung (quoted in Urano, 2000, p. 8), in this regard prepared five different versions of a reading passage: unmodified baseline, simplified, lexically elaborated, structurally elaborated, and lexically and structurally elaborated. Three vocabulary tests were applied involving form, meaning, and delayed meaning recognition. The results showed no significant effects of textual elaboration on reading comprehension or incidental vocabulary learning.

In a similar study on Japanese learners of English, Urano (2000) investigated the effects of two different types of input modification, simplification and elaboration on second language comprehension and incidental vocabulary acquisition. Contrary to Chun's study, Urano (2000, p. v) stated that lexical elaboration triggers incidental vocabulary acquisition while simplification does not.

However, it can be readily observed that none of these studies has touched upon the issue of genre or text type in its fullest sense. That is, they were either dealing with a change in the grammatical and lexical structure (Chung, 1995; Urano, 2000) or the topic (Pulido, 2007).

Recently, by explicitly stating the concept of genre, Gardner (2004) analyzed the lexical differences between narrative and expository reading materials used in upper elementary education and explored how these differences could affect children's potential acquisition through reading. He came to the conclusion that children's narratives tend to utilize a greater proportion of General High Frequency words than their expository texts. Gardner (2004, p. 24) argues that this is because narratives place fewer lexical demands on children in general.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, the importance of depth of processing which can be quite operative in terms of L2 vocabulary learning tasks has been emphasized by Laufer & Hulstijn (2001, pp. 543-544) with the notion of *involvement*, consisting of (i) a motivational component, comprising the *need* to determine a new word's meaning, and (ii) a cognitive component, comprising *search* (e.g., dictionary look up) and *evaluation* (e.g., evaluating whether the information obtained from the dictionary applies to the verbal and non-verbal context). To this end, as the methodology section below reveals, some deeper steps into data collection were taken. First, we did a text modification which had hardly been done in the previous studies. Second, some fitting balance between familiar and unfamiliar words was made in order to adjust successful guessing. Third, some crucial and frequent words to understanding the texts were replaced by some other less ordinary ones to test the effect of comprehension under the influence of this strategy.

Since studies concerning the topic, cited above, have paid little attention to the crucial effect of genre on incidental learning of new lexical items, examining the effect of the commonest text genres found in EFL students (i.e, narrative and expository) seems to be a much needed line of inquiry and an area which has not yet been thoroughly elucidated. Therefore, this paper is intended to shed some light on this subject.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The initial participants of the study were male and female Iranian EFL students (freshmen and sophomores) enrolled at Shahid Chamran University of Ahwaz. To assess the vocabulary level of the students and make sure of the homogeneity, a modified version of Nation's (1990, 2001) Vocabulary Levels Test (Schmitt et al., 2001) was administered. Forty students whose vocabulary knowledge was within a limited range were chosen for attending the reading sessions. These students were later divided into two groups (n = 20) in the reading sections. The participants who read the narratives were referred to as the Narrative group, and those reading the expository texts are known as the Expository group.

3.1.1 Pre-testing

The Vocabulary Levels Test (Schmitt et al., 2001) was used to assess the subjects' vocabulary knowledge in order to gain a homogenous group in terms of their vocabulary knowledge. Once the tests were completed and returned, the researchers corrected them by hand. Each section of the test, which corresponds to one of Nation's frequency levels, was marked out of 30 since there were 30 questions per section, and then converted to percentages. In this way, the researchers were able to ascertain the predicted vocabulary knowledge for each of Nation's five levels (except the 10000 word).

Having scored the Vocabulary Levels Tests (VLT), the participants were divided into two equivalent (in terms of their vocabulary level) groups, namely Narrative group (those reading the narrative text) and Expository group (those reading the expository text).

3.1.2 Text Preparation

The texts chosen for this study were two pairs (Note 1) of (narrative/expository) texts. Pair I was adopted from a Ph.D. thesis investigating processing and learning of expository and narrative texts (Eng, 2002). The expository/narrative texts of this pair have the same theme, the same target words and almost the same length. What makes them different is the very genre in which they are written. Although generating an expository version out of a narrative text or vice versa might make the discourse of the text unnatural, this approach was adopted, as it was in Eng (2002), in order to control factors such as topic and vocabulary items of the text that have already been proved to be influential in incidental vocabulary acquisition (Pulido, 2007, p. 166). However, to eliminate the effect of unnatural discourse, another pair was also considered for this study. The texts of Pair II are three narrative and three expository paragraphs each on a different subject and taken from two different books. The texts of both of these pairs were later modified to control many factors that could influence vocabulary learning.

In order for learning to take place, there should be a fitting balance between known and unknown words. If the text is too difficult, successful guessing will be hard to achieve. To this aim, the words of the texts were counted. Then, 5% of the words of the text were considered as the target words. These words were selected according to two factors, namely how crucial these words were to the comprehension of the text and their frequency of occurrence. Not surprisingly, those words that were most crucial to the understanding of the text and also were repeated frequently in the text were selected. Then, these words were replaced by substitute words (see section 3.1.3 below).

However, we were not yet sure that the participants knew all the remaining (i.e., 95%) words. To come to terms with this, the texts intended for our final experiment were given to the participants two weeks prior to the experiment, and the participants were instructed to scan the texts quickly and circle any word that seemed alien to them. Then, the texts were once again modified in terms of replacing the non-target unknown words with their synonyms or, if replacing synonyms was not possible, they were deleted.

3.1.3 Pre-knowledge

One of the problems in designing vocabulary-learning experiments is controlling for pre-knowledge of the target words. When participants already have some L2 knowledge, it is hard to rule out the possibility of having (partial) knowledge of the target words that are used in the experiment. To solve this problem, it was decided that the spelling of the target words should be changed. These words which are called *substitute words* in Waring and Takaki's term (2003, p. 136) should not be confused with *nonsense* words as they are sometimes referred to in the literature. As in Waring and Takaki (2003), the substitute words were also checked by five learners, who were not part of the experiment, to ensure that that they could pronounce them fairly well so that it would not slow their reading. Implausible words, and words difficult to pronounce, were discarded.

3.1.4 Post-testing

In this study, our focus was on the very early stages of learning new words in an L2 since the students cannot be expected to go beyond this level after reading the texts for the first time. To this end, three tests were adopted from Waring and Takaki (2003). The tests include: 1) a Form recognition test; 2) a Multiple-choice (prompted recognition) test; and, 3) a Meaning translation (unprompted recognition) test. The three tests were extensively piloted with a group of eight subjects of similar ability and background. These subjects were not part of the main study. The aim of the piloting was to confirm that the tests contained enough words and the text was not too long and could be read in about one hour at a reasonable reading speed. (For more on these tests see Waring and Takaki, 2003).

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Vocabulary Levels Test

In order to determine the effect of text types on EFL learners' incidental learning of new words, the first step was to obtain a homogenous group of subjects in terms of their vocabulary knowledge. This was done by administering a modified version of Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT). Of course, VLT has been subjected to many modifications. The reliability of VLT has been increased by carefully discarding items with lower inter-item correlations and creating longer 27-item forms (Beglar and Hunt, 1999, p. 135). In terms of validity, the test has been recently validated by Schmitt et al. (2001).

3.2.2 VocabProfile

In order to make sure that the vocabulary level of the reading texts corresponds to the participants' vocabulary level (already determined by VLT), VocabProfile (VP) was used. VocabProfile is a computer program that performs lexical text analysis. It takes any text and divides its words into four categories by frequency: (1) the most frequent 1000 words of English, (2) the second most frequent thousand words of English, i.e. 1001 to 2000, (3) the academic words of English (the AWL, 550 words that are frequent in academic texts across subjects), and (4) the remainder which is not found on the other lists.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Data Analysis

Scores from the post-reading tests were subjected to a t-test to determine whether or not there are significant differences between each group's performances in terms of the specific genre of the text they have read. In each case, the independent variable was the genre of the text (i.e., narrative or expository) while the dependant variable was the students' incidental acquisition of the meaning of the target words.

4.2 The Overall Results

The following tables demonstrate the overall achievements of the participants from the two reading sessions. As shown, except for the Form recognition test, the scores obtained from the other two tests (i.e., Meaning translation and Multiple-choice) indicate a significant difference between the lexical gains of narrative readers and those of expository ones: participants of Expository Group had a significantly higher performance than those in the Narrative Group on the Meaning translation and Multiple-choice tests.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 here!

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 Mental Models of Text Comprehension

Since any incidental vocabulary acquisition from reading is intricately interwoven with and related to text comprehension, as this has been repeatedly pointed out by Pulido (2007), it seems in order to start the discussion from an understanding of overall text comprehension as well as the mechanisms involved in this process and then use this understanding as a basis in order to discuss the main dimensions of incidental vocabulary acquisition from a genre analysis point of view.

When readers set out to comprehend a text, they construct a coherent mental representation of the events, actions and states present in the written text. In cognitive psychology, these mental representations are known as *mental models* (Kintsch, 1974) or *situation models* (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983). Successful text comprehension has been equated with the construction of a coherent situation model. Readers construct and update their mental model of the textual meaning by means of interacting bottom-up and top-down processes throughout the reading process. In this process, the existing model serves as a basis for the interpretation of newly read information and is in turn continually tested and updated by this new information. In fact, readers try to alleviate any probable discontinuities in their mental model in order to maintain textual coherence.

4.3.2 Text Processing in Mental Models

One of the significant implications of situation models is when L2 learners encounter an unknown word in a text. Their mental model of the textual meaning will exhibit a discontinuity with regard to this unknown word. If this discontinuity becomes crucial for the text comprehension, the reader will normally stop and attempt to infer the meaning of that unknown word and bridge the gap in his/her mental representation of the text. However, sometimes this discontinuity becomes marginal to the readers and learners will continue constructing their mental representation of the text with the aid of factors (other than vocabulary) that contribute to the construction of the mental model. Various factors have been claimed to influence the construction of a coherent situation model among which are reader-related factors such as reading skill, fluency in the language of the text, motivation, and goals, as well as text-related factors such as text structure, vocabulary, and genre (Zwaan and Brown, 1996 cited in Roloff, 1999, pp. 14-15), and these factors may interact in such ways that it is very difficult to account for the appropriateness of this representation without considering at least some aspects of these reader and text-based factors.

4.3.3 The Effect of Genre on the Construction of a Mental Model

According to previous studies conducted on text types, systematic differences in how people respond to different types of texts, particularly narrative and expository texts, have been observed (e.g., Einstein et al., 1990; Zwaan, 1994). Therefore, it is sensible to claim that a reader attempts for constructing a mental model of the text and finally comprehending it is significantly dependent on the genre of that text. In fact, the genre of a text causes readers to allocate their processing resources in specific ways that meet the constraints of that given genre.

Needless to say, most work in this respect has been done on stories, which are the typical manifestations of situation models (i.e., experiences), accounts in conversations or news reports. Many other genres such as expository text may be representations of general knowledge, and not personal experiences, hence are not based on mental models of events referred to. However, according to van Dijk (2006), like all modes of discourse, the expository talk and text also manifest another kind of mental model: context models- subjective representations of the communicative situation- which control how we formulate discourse so that it is adapted to the communicative situation. Therefore, with the adoption of mental model in its new van Dijkian sense, we speak about the construction of mental models of expository texts although mental model in this very sense is applicable to all discourses as well.

4.3.4 Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition While Constructing a Mental Model of a Text

In addition to the claim that genre of a text has a great contribution to the way readers decide to process a text and finally form a coherent mental model of it, it is justifiable to state that if readers face a discontinuity in reading due to the presence of an unknown word in a text, the genre of that text has a great contribution to their decision for discovering the meaning of that unknown word. In fact, in texts which display an easy-to-construct state of affairs due to their very genre, readers are less likely to attempt discovering the meaning of every single unknown word because they rely on inferencing higher level text organization such as propositions rather than individual words. However, readers are likely to take refuge in finding the meaning of the unknown words in texts from which a mental model is difficult to construct and their top priority regarding text comprehension becomes ‘trying to know’, or at least ‘guess’, the meaning of individual words rather than inferencing propositions. Interestingly, this is in line with the literature on expository versus narrative distinction where there is a consensus that readers spontaneously generate causal bridging inferences when reading narrative text (e.g., Klin, 1995; Suh and Trabasso, 1993; both cited in Wiley and Myers, 2003, p. 110). However, there is considerably less evidence that similar inferences are necessarily drawn from expository texts (ibid). This can also be attributed to the way readers of the present study processed the texts. Having been exposed to the macro-structurally rich narrative texts, readers of Narrative Group (i.e., those reading the narratives) were more disposed of inference making as a central tool for text comprehension; hence instead of focusing on individual words they emphasized attaining the global thematic information through inferential strategies. Thus, their scores on the vocabulary tests were relatively lower than those of the readers of Expository Group. The readers of this Group, however, compensated for the lack of a unified global structure of their texts by trying to get the meaning of the individual unknown words in order to construct a coherent representation of the texts (see Table 1 above).

4.3.5 Text Type and Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition: a Textual Perspective

From the perspective of incidental vocabulary acquisition, an important aspect to bear in mind here is that when trying to overcome a discontinuity in reading the text, readers of expository texts will usually invest a great deal of their processing resources on the word level, and less on higher order text integration (Zubrucky and Moore, 1999, cited in Eng, 2002, p. 17). They will continue doing this until sufficient coherence is ensured. This is because expository or informational texts generally contain more unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts and fewer ideas related to personal experience as well as a variety of structures which are usually less cohesively organized by temporal and causal connections (Dai and Wang, 2007, p. 336). Zubrucky and Moore (cited in Eng, 2002, p. 17), specifically maintain that since expository texts tend to be less familiar and less predictable to readers, relatively more attention is needed for lower level processes, leaving fewer resources available for higher level text organization. However, narrative texts typically involve agents, actions, and event sequences occurring through a timeline, and are linked together by causes, reasons, motives, goals and plans and have a more prototypic organization that is well learnt through frequent exposure since childhood. Therefore, comprehending a narrative, unlike expository texts, will entail the investment of processing resources on higher level text organizations (i.e., propositions). In sum, narratives can be claimed to invite relational processing or processing directed toward understanding global and thematic information whereas expository texts invite individual item processing, directing readers’ attention to the details of the passage.

The above discussions regarding the differences between narrative and expository texts are vividly reflected in the following excerpts taken from the texts used in our study.

Excerpt 1: Narrative

There is a talk around here lately about salmon territory and hydroelectric dams. **I** remember **I used to stop the car** by the Pacific Northwest's Monroe River and watch the salmon journey upstream during spawning season. **In those days**, thousands of spawning Coho and Sockeye would **swim** up the Monroe River. **People wondered** for centuries **how salmon could find their way home** up a web of rivers to an often tiny stream bed. We **now** know salmon can detect odors; each stream is said to contain a particular "bouquet" of smells that mark themselves on the salmon before they leave for the ocean, which helps them find their way back. I am no biologist, but **this theory makes sense to me**. The aroma of pine can elicit many memories of my family home and the brief happiness of Christmas time.

Excerpt 2: Expository

A large number of hydroelectric dams have been built in the Pacific Northwest over the past 70 years to generate electricity. These power resources are operated by Pacific Power, whose profits produce income taxes that flow to the government to pay for public services in the Pacific Northwest. If power production declines, or the cost of generating power increases, then the government would receive less money from the electricity sales and therefore have less money to pay for public services. The Monroe River is representative of many river systems that produce power and salmon in the Pacific Northwest. The river and its adjoining streams provide spawning and living areas for Coho and Sockeye salmon.

As seen in these two excerpts, the narrative text involves agents (e.g., 'I', 'people', 'Coho' and 'Sockeye') actions (e.g., 'stop the car' and 'swim up'), and event sequences (e.g., 'used to' and 'in those days') occurring through a timeline, and are linked together by causes, reasons, motives, goals and plans (e.g., 'people… wondered how salmon could find their way' or 'this makes sense to me'). These characteristics, as mentioned earlier, are known to be shared virtually in any narrative. Therefore, the saliency of such prototypic characteristics in narratives directs the attention of the readers to propositions and seeks thematic information by spontaneously generating causal bridging inferences for text comprehension. However, since there is no such universally unique textual characteristics to be shared in all expository texts, readers of these texts attempt to rely on seeking the meaning of individual unknown words than to risk processing higher level textual organizations that might not be as vividly discernable as those of narratives.

Nevertheless, according to what has been discussed so far, one counterargument might consider the nature of each test to be adversely affecting the very way readers process a text. That is, one might ask if the test items of narrative texts were designed on micro-structural units (i.e., lower level textual organization) of the text and those of the expository ones were on the macro-structures (i.e., higher level textual organization), would the readers still process the texts in the way mentioned above? Such an argument is, of course, valid as far as we assume that the tests used for the two genres are intended to tap different recall of the texts and that the subjects are aware of these tests. However, the three types of tests used for each Pair tap exactly the same knowledge of the target words in both narrative and expository texts. That is, the focus of all the three types of tests in both genres was on a lexical level (*spelling* of words in the Form recognition test, their *meaning* in form of a definition in Multiple choice test, and their *L1 equivalent(s)* in the Meaning translation), and the test items were all selected regardless of their role in the construction of the micro or macro-structures of the text but with regard to their frequency of occurrence and the contribution they had to the overall understanding of the text. As with the participants, they were not informed in advance that there were going to be tests of vocabulary after reading the texts; otherwise, there was no incidental learning happening at all.

4.4 Evidence from the Present Study

The results of the present study lend support to the aforementioned discussions in that Meaning translation and Multiple-choice meaning recognition test both indicate that it was the expository texts which significantly invited the participants to invest more processing resources on word-level textual organization and consequently achieved higher scores on these tests. The relatively poor lexical recall of subjects who read the narrative texts, however, can be attributed to the almost full and consistent availability of all the macro level information they needed to form an adequate representation of the text. The inconsistent results of the Form recognition test, on the other hand, may signal the equal processing investment on the superficial text level regardless of the genre of the text. That is, the quality of vocabulary knowledge this test was intended to measure seems to be independent of the genre of the text. Or, we may consider these results to be the consequence of the methodological approach adopted in this study for the elimination of the effect of pre-knowledge of the words (i.e., our use of identical substitute words instead of the target words). Since we used the same word forms in both genres, it could have been intuitively expected that the results of the Form recognition test would be similar. However, we are still reluctant to draw any hasty conclusion based on the inconclusive results of the Form recognition test.

5. Conclusion

This paper was intended to investigate, from a text analysis point of view, the effect that the two most common text genres readily available to EFL learners, namely narrative and expository, may have on the learners' potential incidental vocabulary acquisition. In other words, the question that this paper committed itself to address was which one of these two text genres is more conducive to incidental learning. The results of this study were clearly suggestive of the paramount and fundamental role of genre of the texts in incidental vocabulary acquisition processes.

Overall, this study demonstrated the relative superiority of expository texts over narratives in terms of enhancing readers' incidental acquisition of unknown words and thus pointed to the need for repeated encounters with expository texts if teachers or material designers want to improve the L2 learners' incidental learning of new words.

What this study aimed to discover was the effect of genre on the very early stages of learning new words in an L2, and we did not attempt to study the multiplicity of other aspects or levels of L2 word knowledge (e.g., the noticing of collocations, colligations or patterns within text). The adoption of such an approach is both pedagogically and theoretically justified. In fact, when talking about incidental vocabulary acquisition, we should not expect the learners to go to levels beyond recognizing the form of those words or providing an L1 translation for it, and this seems to justify the suggestion of many researchers that incidental learning should be followed up by intentional learning.

References

Beglar, D., & Hunt, A. (1999). Revising and validating the 2000 word level and university word level vocabulary tests. *Language Testing,* 16, 131-162.

Chung, H. (1995). Effects of elaborative modification on second language reading comprehension and incidental vocabulary learning. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu.

DeKeyser, T. (2003). Implicit and explicit learning. In C. J. Doughty & M. H. Long (Eds.), The handbook of second language acquisition (pp. 313-348). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Einstein, G. O., McDaniel, M. A., Owen, P. D., & Cote, N. C. (1990). Encoding and recall of texts: the importance of material appropriate processing. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 29, 566-581.

Ellis, N. (Ed.) (1994a). *Implicit and explicit learning of languages*. London: Academic Press.

Ellis, N. (1994b). Implicit and explicit language learning– an overview. In N. Ellis (Ed.), *Implicit and explicit learning of languages* (pp. 1-31). London: Academic Press.

Ellis, R. (1999). *Learning a second language through interaction*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Eng, A. (2002). Learning and processing non-fiction expository and narrative genre. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto.

Gardner, D. (2004). Vocabulary input through extensive reading: a comparison of words found in children's narrative and expository material. *Applied Linguistics*, 25, 1-37.

Gass, S. (1999). Incidental vocabulary acquisition: discussion. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 21, 319-333.

Huckin, T., & Coady, J. (1999). Incidental vocabulary acquisition in a second language: a review. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 21, 181-193.

Hulstijn, J. H. (2003). Incidental and intentional learning. In C. Doughty, & M. H. Long (Eds.), *Handbook of second language research* (pp. 349-381). London: Blackwell.

Hulstijn, J. H., & Laufer, B. (2001). Some empirical evidence for the involvement load hypothesis in vocabulary acquisition. *Language Learning*, 51. 539-558.

Hunt, A., & Belgar, D. (2005). A framework for developing EFL reading vocabulary. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 17, 23-59.

Kintsch, W. (1974). *The representation of meaning in memory*. Hillsdale, NJ,: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Knight, S. (1994). Dictionary use while reading: the effects on comprehension and vocabulary acquisition for students of different verbal abilities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78, 285-299.

Laufer, B., & Hulstijn, J. (2001). Incidental vocabulary acquisition in a second language: the construct of task induced involvement. *Applied Linguistics*, 22, 1-26.

Nassaji, H. (2003). L2 vocabulary learning from context: strategies, knowledge sources, and their relationship with success in L2 lexical inferencing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37, 645-670.

Nation, I. S. P. (1990). *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pulido, D. (2007). The relationship between text comprehension and second language incidental vocabulary acquisition: a matter of topic familiarity? *Language Learning*, 57, 155-199.

Reider. A. (2003). Implicit and explicit learning in incidental vocabulary acquisition. *VIEWS*, 12, 24-39.

Roloff, V. L. P. (1999). Foreign language reading comprehension: text representation and the effects of text explicitness and reading ability. PhD Thesis, University of Ottawa.

Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11, 129-158.

Schmidt, R. (1994). Implicit learning and the cognitive unconscious of artificial grammars and SLA. In N. Ellis (Ed.), *Implicit and explicit learning of languages* (pp. 165-209). London: Academic Press.

Schmitt, N., Schmitt, D., & Clapham, C. (2001). Developing and exploring the behaviour of two new versions of the Vocabulary Levels Test. *Language Testing*, 18, 55-88.

Swanborn, M. S. L., & de Glopper, K. (2002). The impact of reading purpose on incidental word learning from context. *Language Learning*, 52, 95-117.

Taylor, B. M., & Beach, R. W. (1984). The effects of text structure instruction on middle-grade students' comprehension and production of expository text. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 19, 134-146.

Urano, K. (2000). Lexical simplification and elaboration: sentence comprehension and incidental vocabulary acquisition. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu.

van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Discourse, context and cognition. *Discourse Studies*, 8, 159-177.

van Dijk, T. A., & Kintsch, W. (1983). *Strategies in discourse comprehension*. New York: Academic Press.

Waring, R., & Takaki, M. (2003). At what rate do learners learn and retain new vocabulary from reading a graded reader? *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 15, 130-163.

Wiley, J., & Myers, J. L. (2003). Availability and accessibility of information and causal inferences from scientific texts. *Discourse Processes*, 36, 109-129.

Yun Dai, D., & Wang, X. (2007). The role of need for cognition and reader beliefs in text comprehension and interest development. *Contemporary Educational Psychology,* 32, 332-347.

Zabrucky, K. M., & Moore, D. (1999). Influence of text genre on adults' monitoring of understanding and recall. *Educational Gerontology*, 25, 691–710.

Zwaan, R. A. (1994). Effect of genre expectations on text comprehension. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 20, 920-933.

Notes

Note 1. In our study 'Pair' refers to the narrative and expository texts which were given to the participants in each reading session and which were supposed to be equivalent in terms of their difficulty, number of words and vocabulary level. Therefore, Pair I, represents the so-called equivalent narrative and expository texts given to the participants in the first session. Likewise, the texts given to the participants in the second session are called Pair II.

Table 1. Achievements of participants from reading Pair I (scores of each test were out of 5)

Expository Group *Number of subjects = 20*			
Test type	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Difference between Means**
Form recognition	4.2500	1.40955	Not Significant
Meaning translation	2.0000	.97333	Significant*
Multiple-choice	2.3000	.92338	Significant
Narrative Group *Number of subjects = 20*			
Test type	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Difference between Means**
Form recognition	4.0000	1.00097	Not Significant
Meaning translation	1.3000	.86450	Significant
Multiple-choice	.9500	.88704	Significant

*(α=.05)

Note. This was because there were 5 target words in this Pair.

Table 2. Achievements of participants from reading Pair II (scores of each test were out of 6)

Expository Group *Number of subjects = 20*			
Test type	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Difference between Means**
Form recognition	5.000	.52315	Not Significant
Meaning translation	4.7000	1.12858	Significant*
Multiple-choice	5.2500	1.06992	Significant
Narrative Group *Number of subjects = 20*			
Test type	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Difference between Means**
Form recognition	4.9000	.68633	Not Significant
Meaning translation	3.2500	1.29269	Significant
Multiple-choice	4.4000	1.39170	Significant

*(α=.05)

Note. This was because there were 6 target words in this Pair.

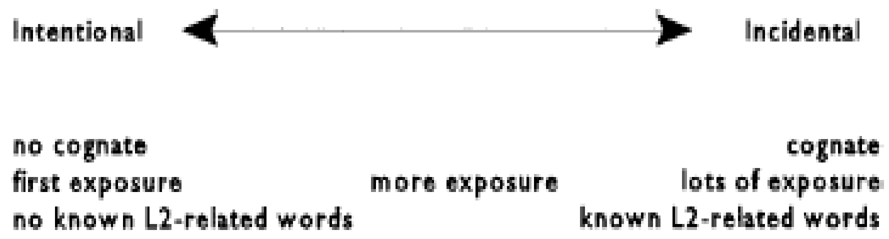


Figure1. Incidental and intentional learning (taken from Gass 1999, p. 322)

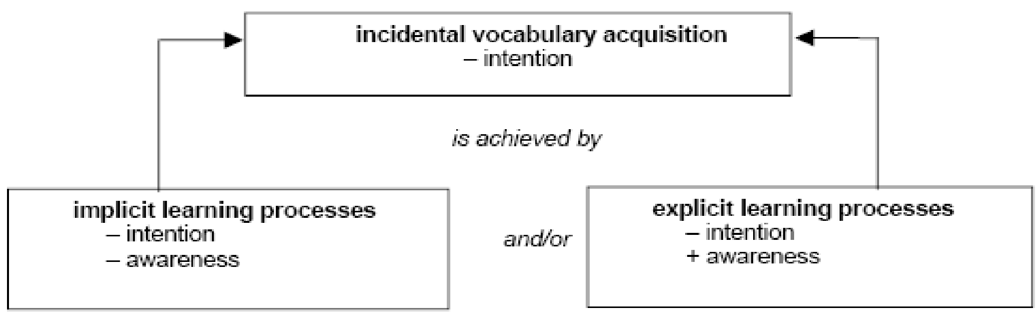


Figure 2. Incidental vocabulary acquisition as a process involving implicit and/or explicit learning (adopted from Reider 2003, p. 28).

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Processed-Centered Teaching and Its Implications in English Teaching in China

Boli Li
School of Foreign Languages and Literature
Chongqing Technology and Business University
Xuefu Ave., Nan'an District, Chongqing 400067, China
Tel: 86-23-6541-2419 E-mail: berlinlee998@126.com

Note: Presently I am a visiting scholar at Loughborough University in UK.

Abstract

Process-centered teaching, as a contrary to product-centered teaching, is a paradigm which emphasizes the way in which a language, syllabus, or curriculum is taught and learnt from the point of view of the learner, and how the language becomes directly relevant to the lives of the learners. This paper, based on an analysis of process-centeredness, proposes some implications in English teaching in China. It desires to enable English teachers more awaken to the process of teaching instead of just simply paying heeds to learners' performances in examinations.

Keywords: Process-centered teaching, Implications, English teaching in China

1. Introduction

From the efforts put on language teaching, there exist two types of teaching: product-centered and process-centered. Product-centered teaching focuses on what students produce in terms of their learning, i.e. product. Process-centered teaching, however, focuses on what the teacher accomplishes in terms of the instructional practices and procedures, i.e. process (Spada, 1987:137-161). Since product-centeredness has the learning outcomes as its primary focus, such teaching is intended to make the students obtain higher marks in examinations; Process-centered approach, on the other hand, is intended to make both teachers and students well aware of the process so as to help the students get a balanced outcome (ibid).

China has boosted the largest English learning population in the world. The teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) in China has made tremendous achievements in the past decade, and now has developed into "a unique part of China's education system" (Shu, 1998). But the present English education is still far from satisfactory. Generally speaking, TEFL in China is still dominated by a product-centeredness, which sees English learning as a process of quantitative increase of knowledge. Witness the fact that in English teaching programs in China, no matter what level they are or what approach they profess to follow, a definite number of words and a definite list of grammar items are invariably laid down as final objectives (ibid). Every year millions of teachers and students in China, for preparing for various examinations, have exhausted themselves. It seems the higher the students' marks are, the higher reputation a school enjoys, the more merits a teacher has, and therefore the more opportunity the students will have. The product of teaching is highlighted to such a degree that the teaching process is thus belittled with learners' creativity, the problem-solving ability, learning strategies, and learners' differences neglected.

Although many teachers are trying to incorporate some other methods as suggestaopedia, the communicative approaches, ect., in the English classroom, product-centeredness still prevails. It is not an exaggeration to say that the product-centeredness has, in some way, "crippled" some of our students. Even if they have got high marks in Band 4 and Band 6 examinations, they are still "mute and deaf" in communication in spite of their ability to memorize thousands of words, to analyze sentence structures and to read moderately difficult articles. Therefore some scholars criticize the present English teaching in China as "a kettle of water that never boils" (Jin, March10th, 1999, Education Herald).

2. Process-centered teaching: a literature review

Chinese ancient Classical Humanism advocated a heuristic method, which is an ethic-centered reflective education, with learning, inquiring, reflecting, discriminating and acting as its procedure, which actually highlights the process of teaching. It is the essence of ancient Chinese teaching.

Various scholars have done serious researches on process-centered teaching. Xia & Kong (1998: 34-40) in their paper Theoretical Basis of 'Difficulty-based Teaching Method' and 'Task-based Teaching Method', quoting Gray's (1990: 261-269) distinction of subject-focused teaching and process-focused teaching, point out that process syllabus requires a shift of emphasis from what is to be learnt by learners to how is it to be learnt. Here what is to be learnt actually refers to the product–centered teaching and how it is to be learnt is the process-centered teaching.

As the teacher's belief determines his/her way of teaching, process-centeredness can be traced back to the teachers' theoretical foundations. Process-centered teaching can find its base in the process syllabus while product-centered teaching has its source in the content syllabus. The process syllabus proposed by Breen in 1970 (in White, 1991: 99) is influenced by the view that some learners are more efficient than others, and that different learners have different ways to learn. Ronald White (1991: 44-47), in his book The ELT Curriculum: Design, Innovation and Management, discusses two teaching syllabi, which he terms as Type A and Type B. Type A, consisting of structural and notional-functional syllabi, is based on the content to be learned, and therefore is called content syllabus. Type B, based on the view of "being either a learner-centered or a learning-centered one" (ibid: 47), is named as process syllabus. White (1991: 44-47) summarizes some salient characteristics of process-centeredness and product-centeredness as shown in the following table (See table 1).

It can be shown from the table that process-centeredness is different from product-centeredness. Firstly, the product-centeredness, as the title indicates, focuses on the end results of the learning process. That is, what the learner is expected to be able to do as a fluent and competent user of the language. Process-centeredness, on the other hand, focuses on the various classroom activities believed to promote the development of skilled language use (Nunan, 1991: 86-87). Secondly, the product-centeredness gives way to the gaining of knowledge, the attainment of goals and the system of learning. It is a knowledge-oriented method guided by the content of knowledge. Process-centeredness stresses the gradual steps and skills of acquisition. It emphasizes not the end, i.e., what learners have learned, but the means, i.e., how language is to be learnt. With the joint decision of teachers and students as its content, with learners themselves finding out their needs, accomplishing them, and making achievement evaluations, process-centeredness is internally triggered learning. It attempts to deal with the question: 'who does what with whom, on what subject-matter, with what resources, when, how and for what learning purposes? (White, 1991: 44-47). In Gray's opinion (1990: 263), the process-centered teaching includes the following three perspectives:

a) Linguistic perspective: what linguistic elements should be taught?

b) Learners perspective: what does the learner want to do with the language?

c) Learning perspective: what activities will stimulate and promote language acquisition?

3. Process-centeredness or product-centeredness: a theoretical foundation

As far as the purposes of education are concerned, there are three orientations or ideologies: classical humanism, reconstructionism, and progressivism, with each having different proposals for aims, contents and methodologies (Huang, 2000: 8). Classical humanism, represented by the grammar-translation method, emphasizes grammar teaching with translation from and into the target language as its principal practice technique. Reconstructionism, with audio-lingualism as its representative, stresses that language teaching be the promotion of practical skills, i.e., the incremental and mastery learning, in which each step is based on the proceeding. It assumes that "given appropriate learning activities, all students can achieve mastery [of knowledge] if they have enough time"(Crawford-Lange, in White, 1991: 25). So the learning process is viewed as one of habituation and conditioning which involves the memorization of dialogues and imitative repetition (Stern, 1999: 464), which is concerned with 'doing things to' the learner. Progressivism, with process-centered teaching as its representative, by contrast, coincides with what Crawford-Lange characterizes as "problem-posing education", which "extracts a concern for the real-life situation of the learners as well as a perception of the student as decision-maker" (White, 1991: 25). It insists that education is a means of providing students with learning experiences, which enables them to learn from their own efforts. It holds that the learner is a "whole person" whose individual development should be promoted, and learning is a learner-centered one with a focus on the process of learning rather than mastery of discrete learning items, therefore the purpose of education is "to stimulate new ideas, opinions and perceptions rather than simply to exchange them" (ibid).

Process can be referred as the activities or actions used to produce the product. Process is important precisely because it affects the quality of the outcome of a task (Underhill, 1989: 252). As far as product is concerned, Gregg (1990: 35) holds two interpretations. In a broad sense, product is the communicative competence learners have acquired in language learning, or the utilization of linguistic knowledge in communication (Ellis, 1994: 302). In a narrow sense, it is the completed acts, or output data, say, learners' mastery of knowledge, learners' performance in examinations. But to some English teachers in China, when by product, they just exclusively mean the latter. That is, they just confine product within the specific area of mastery of language embodied by learners' performance in tests, i.e., the marks learners get in exams. The product-centered teaching in China, quite frequently, is nothing more than the exam-driven, spoon-fed teaching. The product-centered teacher, hereby, is one who, ignorant of learning initiative and creativity, regards the grasp of knowledge as the objective of teaching, and who assumes students' high marks as the mere attainment of English teaching.

Language teaching and learning are indispensable of product and process. No education can be done just by the simple way of instructing or producing. It can only be achieved by learners' cognitive and practicing process. From this point of view, process is by far more important than the product itself. However, emphasizing process-centeredness doesn't deny the compatibility of the product-centeredness and process-centeredness. "The teaching product itself is inescapable from the teaching process. There is unlikely to be any product without process; the product is likely to depend strongly on the process engaged in its production"(Harris et. al., 1986: 92). Satisfactory 'fruits' can only derive from down-to-earth process, i.e., the way you teach, the time you spend and the energy you have put into it. Hirst (1975, in White, 1991: 35) argues that process-centered teaching should be the combination of process and product, yet with greater efforts on the former.

4. Process-centeredness: its implication in English teaching in China

Teaching process is "the basic building blocks for successful language teaching and learning", in which "learners need to be motivated, be exposed to language, and given chances to use it" (Harmer, 2000: 25). So it is advised to teach learners "the art to catch fishes" instead of "fishes" only (Shu, 1999). The traditional product-centeredness is characterized by teachers' absolute authority over the class, inactivity both in teaching and learning and "high cost yet low efficiency", which is disadvantageous to quality education, and to some degree, has resulted in the "mute and dumb" learners.

Neither can we discard the brilliances we have owed in our traditions, nor can we apply everything imported without discrimination. Considering the specific situations in China, this paper, thereby proposes that the process-centered teaching in China be the mixture of both process and product. That is, while paying heed to the product of teaching and learning, we shall never give up the process, yet with emphasis on the latter. But the product here contains more than the scores learners have attained in exams. Other elements, say, learners' communicative competence, problem-solving abilities, their developments in minds and affection, and etc., should also be included.

4.1 Knowledge and skills

Typical product-centered teaching is teacher-centered and knowledge-oriented, which tends to develop students' linguistic competence (Yang, 1990). The learning process is reduced to a mere command of grammatical terms and rules. One of the major disadvantages is that it inhibits in-depth understanding and synthesis of knowledge. It allows little room for independent and individualistic modes of learning.

The ultimate purpose of English teaching is to provide the students with the ability to communicate. Reading, listening, speaking, and writing, are the commonly used skills in communication. Although the linguistic form of language is important, language skills are indispensable. Without knowledge, skills would be irrational; whereas without skills, knowledge would be kept dead. Skills are the trigger of knowledge while knowledge is the prompter of skills. Language learning is not just to know about language, but the skills to do with it. From 'knowing' to 'doing', from 'knowing about language' to 'doing with language', it is the process that changes knowledge to practice. Knowledge about language itself cannot be automatized into skills. Knowledge can be imparted; practical skills, however, can only be cultivated, which can be done neither by preaching and explaining, nor knowing and understanding.

There are many ways to integrate knowledge about language into the skills of using language, of which the task-based teaching is popular. Task-based teaching makes the language learning process meaningful and purposeful because the 'tasks' provide 'actual meaning' to the leaning (Shu, 1998: 212). It is 'learning by doing' (Wilson, 1986b: 28). By tasks, students can learn to do things with language in practice, or to deal with problems. In order to perform the task, students are supposed to not only use and develop all the four major skills, but also constantly combine and integrate them in use, and therefore to develop not four separate skills, but rather composite skills involving sometimes one, sometimes two or more of the conventional skills. When they are trying to do something successfully, they are learning in practice. Thus, the acquisition of new skills takes place during the performance of learning tasks.

4.2 Input and output

Product-centeredness is input-oriented with little emphasis given to output. Product-centered teachers usually spend too much time on grammatical and lexical analysis, which leads to teachers' dominance of the classroom, an imbalance between language input and output, and underdevelopment of learners' communicative competence.

It is agreed that input plays a critical role in language acquisition. Input is the language a learner is exposed to (either written or spoken) in the environment. Input is essential in language learning. Without input the learner can learn nothing. But what is the optimal input. Krashen (1985) has argued that the input given to learners has to be comprehensible and be at one stage above the learner's current level (i +1) in order to be acquired. But Krashen's comprehensible input has been met with some criticism from Swain (1995), Ellis (1997) etc. Ellis (1997: 279) points out that though comprehensible input can facilitate acquisition, it is not a necessary condition of acquisition, and does not guarantee that acquisition will take place. This is especially true when the target language is learnt as a foreign language in a non-supportive environment, i.e., in EFL situation as in China, where, though the source of language input has been expanded greatly with the development of telecommunication, instruction is likely to be the major or even the only source of target language input (Stern, 1997: 340).

Input is essential in language learning, but output, the language a learner produces, is also indispensable. Swain (1995: 245) contended that comprehensible output is a necessary mechanism in language acquisition, because it can provide opportunities for contextualized and meaningful language use, which allows students to "move from semantic analysis of the language to a syntactic analysis of it"(ibid). In the output hypothesis, Swain (1995: 125-126) claims that output can enhance 'fluency' and promote 'noticing', which can trigger learners' cognitive process, generate linguistic knowledge new for them, and consolidate their existing knowledge.

Output is the necessary process of transmitting knowledge into skills. If there is only input without adequate output, it is equal to waste time and energy, even provided with the condition to change the knowledge into skills. Vice versa, while creating conditions for learners' output, it is necessary to input knowledge the learners lack so as to form the combination of input and output. Otherwise however large vocabulary a learner has, however solid grammatical rules he has, and however systematic knowledge he has grasped, he is still handicapped in communication, or an idiot with high marks. Therefore the teacher's role is not only to provide students with appropriate input, but also with sufficient stimulation for their output. Only in this way can the correlation between input and output, thus, be kept.

4.3 Language learning and language communication

The methodology the product-centered teachers generally used is structure-based with the instruction of linguistic form as its focus by way of questioning, explanation and grammar exercise (Shu, 1998: 202). In such courses, the teacher's purpose is to see that students learn the vocabulary and grammatical rules of the target language. The goal of learners is, therefore, often to pass an examination rather than to use the language for daily communication (Ligntbown, 1998: 70). Some students may be good at using linguistic rules skillfully, productively and sometimes communicatively, but a large number of them fall puzzled by the authentic language in natural settings and can't express their ideas correctly and appropriately. In other words, they are communicatively inferior to their linguistic competence. This seems to bear out W. Johnson's paradox that "the teachers of English teach English so poorly, largely because they teach grammar so well" (Bao, 1998: 218).

The teaching of linguistic competence can't guarantee communication competence (Widdowson, 1996: 19). To make the class more effective in terms of developing students' communicative competence, we should incorporate some communicative moves into the present framework. As some scholars (e.g., Han, 1999: 8-10; Li, 1999: 11-15) suggest, in initial stage as in primary school, more weight should be attached to linguistic forms. But for high intermediate or advanced students, they are "already familiar with much of the language grammar …it is a case of re-presentation, rather than initial introduction of grammatical structure" (Johnson & Morrow, 1982: 94). To them it is better to focus on communication.

The key to the success of language teaching lies not in the teaching, but more importantly, in the learning. As the saying goes, you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. "The teacher can help, advise and teach; but only the learner can learn."(Ibid: 63) Without the process of students' internalization, and without the opportunity to use language to communicate, the students' learning can only be half-baked.

4.4 Learners' affect and learning strategies

Product-centered teachers pay special attention to learners' knowledge domain with their affective domain in blank. This kind of teaching seems to have taken place in a much simpler world. Teachers, just following the textbook, provide students with what they need to know. The students' task is to learn the materials. If, at the end of a course instruction, the students can demonstrate that they knew the materials, then they will receive good grades. One of the consequences of this kind of teaching is what Arnold called "emotional illiteracy"(Arnold & Brown, 1999: 3).

The Humanistic Language Teaching Approach sees language learners as "a whole person", whose affect, or emotional needs, and the development of intelligence should be catered to (Rogers, 1983). Krashen (1986:30-32), in his affective filter hypothesis, suggests some affective variables such as motives (or motivation), attitudes, and emotional states (as interest, anxiety, etc.) are crucial to the success of language learning. Depending on the learner's state of mind or disposition, the affective filter limits what is noticed and what is acquired. The filter will be 'up' when the learner is stressed, self-conscious, or unmotivated. It will be 'down' when the learner is relaxed and motivated. To create a low anxiety situation, teachers should allow full scope for their students' spontaneous learning process by emphasizing learners' contributions through independent learning. Teachers should provide more opportunities for learners to judge and analyze things by themselves. With teachers' behaviors subordinating to the learners' needs for learning, the tension and barriers between teachers and students can be lessened so as to foster learners' positive attitudes towards learning. Therefore teachers, while attending to students' cognition, should also attend to their emotional response and ego-involvement.

Besides learners' affect, teachers should also make learning strategies more implicit to learners. Learning strategies are the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information. Learning strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed movement, which is essential for developing communicative competence (Oxford, 1990: 1). English teachers should provide a wide range of learning strategies in order to meet the needs and expectations of his students possessing different learning styles, motivations, and strategy preferences. Therefore, it can be stated that one of the other most important teacher roles in foreign language teaching is the provision of a range of tasks to match varied learning styles.

4.5 Formative and summative evaluations

One of the most important reasons for product-centeredness lies in that the summative evaluation, which highlights learners' scores in exams, is widely used in examinations with formative evaluation in a lesser position. Summative evaluation highlights the outcomes, or the products the insiders have achieved while performative evaluation emphasizes the assessment in the process of development.

In a move from teaching to learning, from learners' recipient position to active participation, from teachers' performer position to conductors and facilitators of learning, there is a need for a change from summative evaluation to formative evaluation. To be really formative, learners' position as the main entity in evaluation should be stressed. Acquisition of language cannot take place without the main entity---language learners, whose comprehensive competence should be the main consideration in assessment. Learners should be the positive participants and collaborators of evaluation, whose language needs, affect requirements, and learning strategies can't be neglected.

5. Conclusion

Of course, the shift from product-centeredness to process -centeredness is a systematic project, for it involves not only the teaching and learning processes, but also the policy-making, curriculum design, material development, language evaluation and testing. The implementation of process-centered teaching, like many other innovations, may be encountered with some setbacks. For example, in China the marks are still the yardstick to evaluating teaching. Various exams are still great pressures on both teachers and students. Although these exams have a positive backwash effect, the negative effect cannot be ignored.

Although problems do exist, process-centered teaching will prevail in the long run. More and more people, from the central government down to the local authorities, are aware of the limitations of product-centeredness, and are taking great efforts to reform it with concentration on quality education to foster students' creativity and adaptability. The brand-new College English Curriculum Requirements published in 2004 turns on a new leaf to the innovation of College English teaching. The new Requirements, alien to its predecessors in 1985 and 1986, holds that learners' abilities, especially in listening and speaking, to use English should be highly catered, and meanwhile learners' autonomous abilities and cultural qualities are also included so as to meet the needs of China's social development and international exchanges.

Language teaching is an exciting, dynamic field of endeavor; and the dynamism by its nature portends change. No one method can be said to be better than another in any absolute sense. Effective teachers, no matter what their 'method' may be, are those who think of students as the most important ingredient in the teaching-learning process and adapt their approach to students and to circumstances. As Robinett (1983: 171) puts:

The success of second language teachers is ultimately measured by how well their students have learned to communicate in the second language. ......Teachers who possess a sound knowledge of their subject matter and express warmth, sensitivity, and tolerance in imparting their knowledge can best attain success.

References

Arnold, J. & D. Brown. (1999). A map of the terrain. In J. Arnold (ed). *Affect in Language Learning*. CUP, p3.

Bao, Jiaren. (1998). Teaching use in use. In Xu Gouzhang (ed.), *ELT in China 1992--- Papers from Tianjin Conference*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, p218.

Ellis, R. (1994). *Understanding second language acquisition*. OUP, p302.

Ellis, R. (1997). *The study of second language acquisition*. OUP.

Gray, K. (1990). Syllabus design for the general class: what happens to theory when you apply It? *ELT Journal*, Vol. 44,(4), pp261-269.

Gregg, Kevin R. (1990). Second language acquisition theory: the case for a generative perspective. In Susan M. Gass. &

Jacquelyn Schachter (Eds.). *Linguistic perspectives on second language acquisition*. CUP, p35.

Han, Caiying, (1999). The Analysis of the Applicability of Communicative Language Teaching. *Foreign Language World*, (2), pp 8-10.

Harmer, J. (2000). *How to teach English*. OUP, p25.

Harris, D. and K. Bell. (1986). *Evaluating and assessing for learning*. Kogan Page, London/ Nichols Publishing Company, 92.

Huang, Guowen, (2000). From product-centeredness to process-centeredness. *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*, (10).

Johnson, K. & Morrow. (1982). *Communicative syllabus design and methodology*. Pergamon, p94.

Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: issues and implications*. Longman.

Krashen, S. (1986). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon, pp30-32.

Li, Yujun, (1999). Communicative Language Teaching in China: questions and thoughts. *Foreign Language World*, (2), pp 11-15.

Lightbown, M. P. & N. Spada. (1998). *How languages are learned* . OUP, p70.

Nunan, 1991: Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology: a textbook for teachers*. Prentice Hall, pp86-87.

Oxford, R. L. et al. (1990). *Language learning strategies*. Newburry House, p1.

Robinett, Betty W. (1983). *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages: Substance and Technique*. University of Minnesota Press,p171.

Rogers, C. (1983). *Freedom to learn*. Merrill.

Shu, Baimei. (1998). Teaching intensive reading within a communicative framework. In Xu Guozhang(ed.) *ELT in China 1992---papers from Tainjin Conference*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Shu, Dingfang & Z. Zhuang. (1999).*Modern language teaching---theories, practice and methods*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Spada, N. M. (1987). Relationships between instructional differences and learning outcomes: a process-product study of communicative language teaching. *Applied Linguistics.* pp137-161.

Stern .H. H. (1997). *Perspectives on second language teaching*. OISE Press, p340.

Stern, H. H. (1999). *Fundamental concepts of language teaching*. OUP, p464.

Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output in second language learning. In G. Cook & B. Seidlhofer (Eds.), *Principle and practice in applied linguistics: studies in honor of H. G. Widdowson.* OUP.

White, R. (1991). *The ELT curriculum: design, innovation and management*. Basil Blackwell,p99; pp44-47.

Widdowson, H.G. (1996). *Teaching language as communication.* OUP, p19.

Wilson, J. (1986). Task-based language learning. In Harper, D. (ed.) *ESP for the University*. London:Pergamon, p28.

Xia, Jiemei & X. Kong (1998) Theoretical basis of 'difficulty-based teaching method' and 'task-based teaching method'. *Foreign Language World*,(4), pp34-40.

Yang, Huizhong. (1990). The design of a new syllabus---A case report. In Xu Guozhang (ed.). *ELT in China 1992---Papers from Tainjin Conference.* Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Table 1. The summary of the characteristics of product-centeredness and process-centeredness

Type A: What is to be learnt?	Type B: How is it to be learnt?
Subject emphasis	Process emphasis
External to the learner	Internal to the learner
Other directed	Inner directed or self fulfilling
Determined by authority	Negotiated between learners and teachers
Teacher as decision-maker	Learner and teacher as joint decision-makers
Content= what the subject is to the expert	Content = what the subject is to the learner
Content = a gift to the learner from the teacher or knower	Content = what the learner brings and wants
Objectives defined in advance	Objectives described afterwards
Assessment by achievement or by mastery	Assessment in relationship to learners' criteria of success
Doing things to the learner	Doing things for or with the learner

---From White (1991: pp, 44-47)

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Interlanguage Theory and Emergentism: Reconciliation in Second Language Developmental Index Studies

Wenting Wang
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
National University of Defense Technology
Changsha 410073, China
E-mail: ylnbbb@126.com

Abstract

The present paper generally reviews the history of second language (L2) researchers' efforts in an attempt to find such an index and the possible reasons for the difficulties in establishing the developmental index from both the theoretical and the empirical viewpoints. Two contradictory views—interlanguage theory and emergentism—can finally reconciled so as to have a comprehensive view of second language acquisition (SLA) process.

Keywords: Interlanguage theory, Emergentism, L2 developmental index, Reconciliation

1. Introduction

The quest for a L2 developmental index was inspired by the work done in search of the index of children's first language (L1) development. To date, mean length of utterance (MLU) has been shown as "a useful measure of a child's gross language development" (Parker & Brorson, 2005). L2 researchers have acknowledged the need for an index of L2 development (Hakuta, 1975), by which they can "expediently and reliably gauge proficiency in a L2" (Larsen-Freeman, 1978) as "objective, quantitative and verifiable" (Nihalani, 1981) as possible. Such a yardstick will give a numerical value to different points along a L2 developmental continuum—numerical values which "would be correlates of the developmental process and would increase uniformly and linearly as learners proceed towards full acquisition of a target language" (Larsen-Freeman, 1978).

It was Larsen-Freeman (1976) who advocated the construction of an index of L2 development. However, due to the complexity and variation of SLA, it is more difficult to find such a yardstick for the L2 than for the L1. The present paper generally reviews the history of L2 researchers' efforts in an attempt to find such an index and the possible reasons for the difficulties in establishing the developmental index from both the theoretical and the empirical viewpoints.

2. Interlanguage Theory

The past fifty years witnessed a fierce debate on the role of L1 in the process of SLA, resulting in the predominance of error analysis over contrastive analysis. Intensive empirical studies indicated that the majority of the errors made by the L2 learners do not come from their L1 (Dulay & Burt, 1973; Dulay & Burt, 1974b; Bailey, Madden & Krashen, 1974; Larsen-Freeman, 1976; Krashen, Butler, Birnbaum & Robertson, 1978).

Where these errors come from received much attention further. If they are not target-like, they must be learner-internal. Inspired by the L1 acquisition theory, Corder (1967), the forerunner of error analysis, suggested that L2 learners make errors in order to test out certain hypotheses about the nature of language they are learning, thus proposing that the making of errors is a strategy, as an evidence of learner-internal processing (Ellis, 1985:47).

Now that SLA has little to do with the L1 and is learner-centered, then, similar to children's L1 acquisition which is regarded as an independent field rather than an approximation of adult language, L2 learners' language development and its overall characteristics are shed light on. This is the origin of *interlanguage*, coined by Selinker (1972) to refer to the language produced by the L2 learners, "both as a system which can be described at any one point in time as resulting from systematic rules, and as series of interlocking systems that characterize learner progression" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998: 31).

Interlanguage theory is based upon a series of assumptions listed as follows (Larsen-Freeman, 2006: 590-591):

a. SLA is a process of increasing conformity to a uniform target language;

b. There are discrete stages through which learners traverse along the way;

c. Progress can best be defined in terms of one dimension of one subsystem, i.e., accuracy in morphosyntax as opposed to the dimensions of fluency or complexity;

d. Learners move through the process in a fairly consistent manner;

e. It is possible to adopt a two-phase research agenda, concentrating first on understanding learning and later on accounting for learners' differential success.

It is from the starting point of the interlanguage theory that studies of grammatical development have been carried out. Studies that seek to gauge overall progress by a developmental index as one of the two types of L2 developmental studies mentioned by Bardovi-Harlig and Bofman (1989) are also originated from the theory. Work done in this field is marked by Larsen-Freeman (1978, 1983), Larsen-Freeman and Strom (1977) and Nihalani (1981) as well as Gaies (1976) and Monroe (1975).

The best indices for the L1 development were undoubtedly listed in the potential candidates for L2 development. Mean length of utterance was excluded first due to the fact that L2 learners are "more cognitively mature" and therefore "capable of producing utterances which are more than a few morphemes in length shortly after they have had initial contact with the target language" (Larsen-Freeman & Strom, 1977) Therefore, L2 researchers resorted to T-unit-related measures which is more frequently used by the L1 researchers to gauge schoolchildren's language development.

As far as mean length of T-unit (MLTU) is concerned, Thornhill (1969) studied the development over a 9-week period of syntactic fluency of four adult Spanish-speakers learning ESL and found MLTU "a usable measure of development toward maturity in L2 production" (1969:37, cited from Larsen-Freeman, 1978). Similarly, Monroe (1975) for French, Gaies (1976) for ESL and Cooper (1976) for German did find that MLTU discriminated among learners of L2 at different levels of proficiency. However, Pike (1973) did not find very high correlations between MLTU written by subjects who were administered the Hunt (1970) "aluminum re-write passage" and two of his own subjective indicators of their writing ability in essays.

T-unit was first adapted in the form of error-free T-unit by Scott and Tucker (1974) in their error analysis of 22 Arabic-speaking ESL students, when they pursued an index of measurement which reflected error frequency as well as syntactic complexity. They counted the number of error-free T-units in both written and oral production and found a significant growth during the 12 weeks of intensive English training.

Based on the above-mentioned studies, Larsen-Freeman and her colleagues reported a series of progress on their construction of a L2 developmental index. This includes Larsen-Freeman and Strom (1977)'s pilot study of 48 compositions, which discovered that "the measures of length and error-free T-units seem to be much more viable contenders on which to base an index of development since they are easily quantified, linear progression does seem possible and they would seem to be impervious to differences in language backgrounds" (ibid.), Larsen-Freeman (1978)'s project on 212 compositions, in which two error-related measures (the percentage of error-free T-units and the average length of error-free T-units) were proved to be the best discriminators among the five levels of ESL proficiency represented in the population, followed by MLTU, and Larsen-Freeman (1983)'s comprehensive experiments on both cross-sectional and longitudinal data. In the last study, Larsen-Freeman (1983) discovered that "sometimes a performance variable, like the percentage of error-free T-units, worked well in one study but not in another; sometimes a performance variable discriminated significantly between adjacent proficiency levels and sometimes it did not; sometimes a performance variable did not distinguish between levels with small n's and sometimes it did".

With increasing number of studies examining the validity of these T-unit measures, more controversies among the results are given rise to. Some researchers supported (O'Donnell, 1976; Farhady, 1978; Gaies, 1980) while others criticized and proposed to utilize sentence, clause and other indices (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Ney, 1966; Moffett, 1968).

Now that T-unit measures can not be assured as the index of L2 development, other objective measures were proposed. Some investigators preferred generalized measures such as clause-based and sentence-based measures while others relied upon more specific ones (Skehan, 1998: 275). For example, Bardovi-Harlig (1992) suggested reconsidering sentence as the basic unit to analyze. She proposed a coordination index in order to examine the coordination ability of the L2 learners. Ishikawa (1995) compared the T-unit-based and clause-related objective measures and concluded that clause is a better unit than T-unit when learners with relatively low proficiency are the subjects. In the data of these subjects, grammatical and lexical errors are so frequent and of such a nature that they tend to interfere not only with the reader's understanding, but also with the researcher's ability to tabulate T-units (Larsen-Freeman & Strom, 1977; Vann, 1978). Other researchers reclassified errors into three degrees (Homburg, 1984), recategorized clause into adjectival, adverbial or nominal ones (Kameen, 1979), or reexamined the errors in term of pronouns, articles and connectors (Evola et al., 1980), and etc. These objective measures, not as prevalent as the sentence-based, T-unit-based and clause-based ones, are more idiosyncratic to specific subjects, users and contexts, but may be more helpful to detecting the L2 developmental sequence or the natural route of L2 development.

Though abundant the objective measures are, no one has been approved to be the index. Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki and

Kim (1998) did a thorough review of all the developmental measures used in thirty-nine related L2 research studies in terms of written communication and discussed the variance of the results. They attributed gaps in these studies to "the different sets of developmental measures and the variety of proficiency measures that were used as the basis for comparison" (1998: 122). As a matter of fact, all the studies utilized different sets of objective measures with their own preferences and subjects. They defined proficiency in different ways, i.e., they employed varied criteria to determine proficiency levels. The variety of ways that proficiency has been conceptualized including "rating scales, standardized tests, program levels, school levels, classroom grades, short-term change in intact classes, and comparisons with native speakers" (1998: 117). These are only two elements, and there is more that can factor into the indetermination of the L2 developmental index, e.g., no agreement on the definitions of the measures and error-free, differences in genre, time allowed and statistical treatments used, etc. in Ishikawa (1995). Consequently, L2 researchers seem to be perplexed about a global index of L2 development which can be tailored into any situation and turn to the other polarity against it.

3. Emergentism

Failure in finding a global index of L2 development provides an evidence for emergenism, which attaches more importance to individual variability. Smith and Thelen (1993: 155) discussed the controversies between theories underlying global development and individual differences as follows:

Within the framework of structural theory, developmental studies have the following typical form: older and younger children are tested in a task and the mean performances at the two age levels are calculated. The typical finding is that younger children perform less well than older children. These mean differences in performance are considered to be the developmental facts to be explained. There are other kinds of data that could be the principal data of developmental psychology—the trajectories of change of individual children…or the magnitude of between-subject variability and changes in that variability with task and age…However, these sorts of data are not the relevant data for structural theorists to find the global order—the common structure—that transcends individual uses of presumed knowledge structure.

Therefore, the emergentists view language learning as a complex and dynamic process in which various components emerge at various levels, to various degrees, and at various times. "Individual differences are a natural consequence of learning within such a framework because of dynamic and multi-faceted nature of the emergent system. Slight differences in the relative rate, strength, or timing of the component achievements can result in relatively significant differences between individuals in behavioral outcomes" (Marchman & Thal, 2005: 150).

Corresponding to the assumptions the interlanguage theory is based upon, there are also assumptions underlying the emergentist viewpoint (Larsen-Freeman, 2006: 592-594):

a. Although progress in SLA may be viewed as the degree to which a language learner's interlanguage aligns with the target language, there will never be complete convergence between the two systems;

b. There are no discrete stages in which learners' performance is invariant, although there are periods where certain forms are dominant, periods that have been referred to as stages in the acquisition of certain grammatical structures;

c. There are many dimensions to language proficiency—fluency, complexity and accuracy being three that are theorized to have independent status in L2 performance in that learners can have different goals at different times when performing in an L2;

d. Learners do not progress through stages of development in a consistent manner. There is a great deal of variation at one time in learners' performances and clear instability over time;

e. Individual developmental path, each with all its variation, may be quite different one from another, even though in a "grand sweep" view, these developmental paths appear quite similar.

As emergentism emphasizes on learners variation, related experimental studies mainly focus on two aspects: firstly, some describe the different developmental paths of individual L2 learners with those objective measures and others just apply these objective measures to the examination of the elements that may factor into SLA and L2 writing assessment in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy.

The first kind of study is best exemplified in Casanave (1994) and Larsen-Freeman (2006). Casanave (1994) examined changes in the writing of a small group of intermediate English students over three semesters of their intensive language program in Japan with MLTU, C/TU, percentage of complex T-units, EFT/T and EFT. Analysis demonstrated that the writing of all the students changes over time, but in a variety of ways not necessarily predicted by the T-unit research. Finally, he concluded that improvement can not be measured only quantitatively through group averages, but that it must be identified in a variety of ways that differ for individual writers. Similarly, Larsen-Freeman (2006) both quantitatively and qualitatively examined the oral and written production of five Chinese learners of English over a six-month period with C/TU, EFT/T and MLTU. The result clearly showed the emergence of fluency, complexity and accuracy, "not as the unfolding of some prearranged plan, but rather as the system adapting to a changing context, in which the language resources of each individual are uniquely transformed through use" (2006: 590).

As far as the second type of research is concerned, as there are three stages engaged in the information processing procedure of SLA—input, central processing and output (Skehan, 1998: 6), these studies also mainly focus on the three aspects.

Input-related studies usually investigate into the effect of a particular type of instruction on L2 development, e.g., grammar instruction (Frantzen, 1995), bilingualism (Carlisle, 1989) and corrective feedback (Kepner, 1991; Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986). They picked out some objective measures to gauge the differences between the control group without particular instruction and the experimental group with the targeted instruction, or the pretest-posttest change due to the instruction. For example, Robb, Ross and Shortreed (1986) reduced an initial set of 19 measures of writing skill to a subset of 7, total words written and total clauses measuring fluency, the ratio of additional clauses to total words written and the total number of additional clauses measuring complexity, and EFT/T, EFT/C and W/EFT measuring accuracy. With these measures they evaluated the effects of four different types of feedback on error (correcting all categories of errors, coded feedback, uncoded feedback and marginal feedback, from the most comprehensive and salient feedback to the least) in the written work of L2 writers and found no significant difference.

Processing-related studies mainly focus on the cognitive aspects of learners and explored what factors may influence their cognitive ability, and thus in turn affect their processing of TL. Planning, viewed as one of the several processes involved in the production of both written texts and utterances, is most often discussed topic here in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Ortega, 1995; Ellis & Yuan, 2004). Among the studies, Ellis and Yuan (2004) were the first to carry out a study of the effects of planning on L2 learners' written narratives. Using syllables per minute and number of dysfluencies as the measures of fluency, C/T, number of different grammatical verb forms and mean segmental type-token ration as those of complexity, and error-free clauses and correct verb forms as those of accuracy, they found different planning tasks may lead to different results. While the effect sizes reflected by syllables per minute, number of dysfluencies and number of different grammatical verb forms were significantly different among the three planning tasks—pretask planning, unpressured on-line planning and no planning, other measures showed no significant differences. Therefore, they concluded that whereas pretask planning resulted in greater fluency and greater syntactic variety, the opportunity to engage in unpressured on-line planning assisted greater accuracy.

Output-related studies are more closely related to assessment conditions, e.g., time restraints (Kroll, 1990), audience (Hirano, 1991), task type (Larsen-Freeman, 1983; Lim, 1982) and topic chosen (Tedick, 1990; Reid, 1992; Tapia, 1993). These factors can directly affect test-takers' performance in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy. For instance, Lim (1982) analyzed syntactic features of texts produced in two tasks by 120 L2 writers at varying levels of proficiency. The objective measures used were MLC, C/T, MLTU, T/S, MLS, W/EFT and EFT/S. A comparison of compositions and rewritings indicated that the rewriting task restricted writers' choice of sentence structure somewhat. Therefore, free compositions were proved more useful than rewritings in discriminating between proficiency levels.

4. Conclusion: A Compromise

Either-or solutions are seldom seen in the field of SLA and the above-mentioned two views of L2 development are just two extremes of a continuum. Therefore, a reconcile solution is proposed here: both general rules and individual differences exist in SLA. It may be difficult to find a global index of L2 development, but we can consider about it in a less ambitious way, i.e., some objective measures that can reflect learners' development in fluency, complexity and accuracy as well as discriminate a specific population will be regarded as valid to depict the status quo of this group. When such a set of objective measures has been found, individual performances can be gauged in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy so as to see in which dimension he or she is weak or strong. Only in this way can L2 learners' development be caught both holistically and analytically, and more studies need to be done by combining these two perspectives.

References

Arnaud, P. (1992). Objective lexical and grammatical characteristics of L2 written compositions and the validity of separate-component tests. In Arnaud, P. & Bejoint, H. (eds.), *Vocabulary and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 133-45). London: Macmillan.

Arthur, B. (1979). Short-term changes in EFL composition skills. In Yorio, C., Perkins, K. & Schachter, J. (eds.), *On TESOL '79: The Learner in Focus* (pp. 330-342). Washington, D.C.: TESOL.

Bachman, L. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1992). A second look at T-unit analysis: Reconsidering the sentence. *TESOL Quarterly,* 26, 390-395.

Casanave, C. (1994). Language development in students' journals. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 3, 179-201.

Cooper, T. (1976). Measuring written syntactic patterns of second language learners of German. *The Journal of Educational Research,* 69, 176-183.

Cumming, A. (1989). Writing expertise and second language proficiency. *Language Learning,* 39, 81-141.

Cumming, A., & Mellow, D. (1996). An investigation into the validity of written indicators of second language proficiency. In Cumming, A. & Berwick, R. (eds.) *Validation in Language Testing* (pp. 72-93). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fillmore, C. (1979). On fluency. In Riggenbach, H. (ed.) *Perspectives on Fluency* (pp. 43-60). University of Michigan.

Gaies, S. (1980). T-unit analysis in second language research: Applications, problems and limitations. *TESOL Quarterly,* 14, 53-60.

Henry, K. (1996). Early L2 writing development: A study of autobiographical essays by university-level students of Russian. *Modern Language Journal,* 80, 309-326.

Homburg, T. (1984). Holistic evaluation of EFL compositions: Can it be validated objectively? *TESOL Quarterly*, 18, 87-107.

Ho-Peng, L. (1983). Using T-unit measures to assess writing proficiency of university ESL students. *RELC Journal,* 14, 35-43.

Hunt, K. (1970). Syntactic maturity in school children and adults. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development,* 35, No. 134.

Ishikawa, S. (1995). Objective measurement of low-proficiency EFL narrative writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 4, 51-70.

Kameen, P. (1979). Syntactic skill and ESL writing quality. In Yorio, C., Perkins, K. & Schachter, J. (eds.), *On TESOL '79: The Learner in Focus* (pp. 343-346). Washington, D.C.: TESOL.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (1978). An ESL index of development. *TESOL Quarterly,* 12, 439-448.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (1983). Assessing global second language proficiency. In Seliger, H. & Long, M. (eds.) *Classroom Oriented Research in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 287-304).Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2006).The emergence of complexity, fluency, and accuracy in the oral and written production of five Chinese learners. *Applied Linguistics, 27*(4), 590-619.

Larsen-Freeman, D., & Strom, V. (1977). The construction of a second language acquisition index of development. *Language Learning,* 27, 123-34.

Lennon, P. (1990). Investigating fluency in EFL: A quantitative approach. *Language Learning,* 40, 387-417.

Loban, W. (1976). *Language development: kindergarten through grade level.* NCTE Research Report No. 18. Urbana, 111: National Council of Teachers of English.

McKay, D. (1982). The problems of flexibility, fluency, and speed-accuracy tradeoff in skilled behavior. *Psychological Review,* 89, 483-506.

McLaughlin, B. (1990). Restructuring. *Applied Linguistics,* 11, 113-128.

Mitchell, R., & Myles, F. (1998). *Second language learning theories.* London: Edward Arnold.

Monroe, J. (1975). Measuring and enhancing syntactic fluency in French. *The French Review,* 48, 1023-1031.

Ortega, L. (1995). *Planning and second language oral performance*. Unpublished MA thesis, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Parker, M. & Brorson, K. (2005). A comparative study between mean length of utterance in morphemes (MLUm) and mean length of utterance in words (MLUw). *First Language Acquisition, 25* (3), 1-12.

Perkins, K. (1980). Using objective methods of attained writing proficiency to discriminate among holistic evaluations. *TESOL Quarterly,* 14, 61-69.

Perkins, K. (1983). On the use of composition scoring techniques, objective measures, and objective tests to evaluate ESL writing ability. *TESOL Quarterly,* 17, 651-671.

Polio, C. (1997). Measures of linguistic accuracy in second language writing research. *Language Learning,* 47, 101-143.

Scott, M. & Tucker, G. (1974). Error analysis and English-language strategies of Arab students. *Language Learning,* 24, 69-97.

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Skehan, P. (1998). Task-based instruction. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistic,* 18, 268-286.

Wolfe-Quintero, K., Inagaki, S. & Kim, H. (1998). *Second language development in writing: Measures of fluency, accuracy and complexity.* Hawaii University Press.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Age Effects in Foreign Language Learning for Children in China

Zhiliang Liu
Department of Foreign Languages
Beihai College of Beijing Aeronautics and Astronautics University
No 88 Silver Beach Boulevard, Beihai 536000, China
Tel: 86-779-8627-868 E-mail: zlliuman@yahoo.com.cn

Guanying Chen
Foreign Languages Institute
Northwest Normal University
Lanzhou 730070, China

The research is financed by the National Basic Foreign Language Teaching Research Center of China. No. JJWYYB2006114

Abstract

To know the age effects in foreign language learning for children in China, we made both qualitative survey on the English teachers, the students and their parents by means of questionnaire; and quantitative survey on the students' scores from junior 1 to senior 2 (5 years) in the secondary school by analyses between those (over 30 students) who had learned English for 3 years in the elementary school and those (over 400 students) who hadn't. Finally conclusions that "'the younger, the better' in FLL is doubted, FLES shouldn't be done in lower grades of elementary school in China, qualified English teacher is the decisive factor on FLES" were drawn from the surveys on FLES in China.

Keywords: FLES, Age & FLL, English teacher

1. Introduction

English has been taught in more and more elementary schools since the early 1990s, but offering English course in China is no easy task. The Chinese Ministry of Education made the decision of offering English course from grade 3 above county-level elementary schools in the fall of 2001, while that from grade 1 above township-level ones in the fall of 2002. This decision aroused debates among scholars in foreign language teaching and research nationwide. Some agreed to it, some disagreed, and some had an attitude of eclecticism by solving problems in the process of teaching.

In response, I made a survey on FLES (Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools) of over 30 pupils, starting English learning from grade 4 for 3 years in the Second Elementary School of Qinghai Oil Field in China. The survey was on their English scores from junior 1 to senior 2 in the secondary school, together with the attitudes on FLES from the students, their parents and their English teachers, both in elementary and secondary schools, by questionnaire. The aim is to draw some conclusions by analyzing the facts and figures collected and to test the previous studies in this field.

2. Three viewpoints on FLES in China

First: Many scholars say it's unnecessary to offer foreign language courses to children nationwide in a rigid and uniform manner without enough qualified teachers, suitable textbooks and other teaching equipment. They disagree to the idea "the younger, the better" in FLL (foreign language learning). The well-known professor Xu Guozhang, Gui Shichun, Zhang Zhengdong are among them.

Second: Among scholars in favor of the decision, professor Chen Lin is the chief representative. The ideas are based mainly on the conditions that there are qualified English teachers, suitable textbooks and good teaching equipment.

Third: Some scholars keep an attitude of eclecticism, whose viewpoint is solving the problems in the process of teaching and, professor Hu Zhuanglin is the main advocator. He suggested, no matter what kind of difficulties lying in front of us, we should offer the courses firstly in the places well-equipped, while the backward areas should do their best to catch up with the former gradually because we can't wait for better conditions.

Concerning the problem of starting age in FLL, there's been no agreement in the past 50 years in the world. Therefore, we should make people know that FLES has a very difficult situation worldwide. From the brief history of FLES in China, we are now repeating the same lesson taught in 1980s, especially in the backward areas, because of the same reason that lacks in qualified English teachers and the like. There are three kinds of viewpoints on FLES in China, but they agree on one point that qualified English teachers, suitable textbooks and adequate teaching equipment are the prerequisites in carrying out the decision, which are in great need in China now. 0

3. FLES in China and its language environment

Many people think child's age in FLL is: "the younger, the better". In my understanding, there must be some special language environment. As is known, it's quite different for Chinese children and American minorities' to learn English. For example, if a Chinese couple moves to the USA, their children will have to learn English in school as the Americans do. These Chinese children have to face the natural language environment and culture of English and have enough chances to communicate with the people around them. Although English isn't their mother tongue, the Chinese children have to face everything encoded by it. Thus, they can think, speak and develop naturally in English. The natural language environment of English would assure them to master English naturally. But in China, children can't have such an environment, and there's no natural communication in English for them. Therefore, their only way is to listen more, speak more, and practise more, to recite new words, language structures and grammar rules in learning English. This means the children's English in China is not natural or real English, but the transition of understanding Chinese and knowing English. It's a mixture of comparison from the two languages.

Obviously, it's natural for Chinese children to learn English well as an L2 (second language) in the USA, and "the younger, the better". But in China English is a foreign language, so it's a different matter, and "the younger in age, the more difficult in learning". Therefore, it is evident that there's no "critical period" in TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) for children in China. "Critical period hypothesis" only exists in natural language (mother tongue and L2) acquisition as E.Lenneberg raised it in 1967. But it doesn't mean children can't learn foreign languages. What we should do is to create a suitable bilingual environment, compile good textbooks, use proper teaching methods according to children's psychology and physiology, but above all, it's to train qualified foreign language teachers.

4. Analyses on the Results

The comments and views of the students, the parents and the teachers are originals from the answers to the questionnaires.

4.1 Analyses on the results of the questionnaires

4.1.1 Students' personal experience and views on FLES (from open questions No.18 and 19)

4.1.1.1 Personal experience

Reasons for "like"

* To speak English freely in class made the class atmosphere lively and active.

* It's very interesting to have English names and we feel fresh and different from other schoolmates. It made us feel a sense of achievement, curiosity and superiority to have an English dialogue in front of the classmates, to learn to sing English songs everyday and to learn a new language and its culture compared with our schoolmates who didn't do it.

* Fewer texts and lively teaching in English class made us remember the things learned easily.

Reasons for "dislike"

* We couldn't have English classes regularly as the other subjects for the absence of the English teacher sometimes, so we forgot what we've learned easily.

* Compared with maths and Chinese, it's a bit interesting and easy, but it's rather confusing. Sometimes we were confused with the English letters and Chinese pinyin.

* We paid less attention to English just because our school paid less to it and it's not one of the major subjects. I just don't like it at all without any obvious reasons, nor to learn new words by heart. Not knowing much of English, I've no special feelings of it.

4.1.1.2 Views

Positive:

* We got the sense of superiority and it's helpful to learn English in junior secondary school. It enriched us with new contents and we gained some western culture.

* Having developed interest in English earlier, it made me understand our English teacher better in junior secondary school. It made me one of the most successful students during my first two years of junior secondary school studies.

* The lively atmosphere in English class was the typical style of combining education with recreation, adding many colors and joys to the dull study life in elementary school. In the process of learning, English words were almost permeated in the games, benefiting a lot in developing interest in FLL.

Negative:

* Two English classes per week were fewer than expected. English teacher should be energetic to join in class activities to arouse pupils' interest and attentive to the demands of pupils and check their English timely. It's not helpful for English learning in junior secondary school because it's a bit confusing and unsystematic when putting English letters and Chinese pinyin together, so it's better to start English courses from junior secondary school.

* It's easier for those who had learned English when starting it again at the beginning of junior secondary school, but it made them stay behind for their pride and sense of superiority as time went on, therefore disadvantages outweighed advantages on FLES.

From Table 1 we know the students' sense of superiority in FLL over those who hadn't learned English in elementary school lasts one year on average in junior secondary school. In question No.7, the 'positive effect' is chosen by 26 students, while the 'negative effect' by 0 and other choices by 6. On this point, whether the students or their parents (from the next questionnaire table), both of them agree to it, which is identical with the idea of most people in China for earlier start in FLL. From the personal experience, we know 23 students (71.88%) like FLES, while 9 (28.13%) dislike it. So we see most students like English, emphasizing much on the positive effect of fresh, interesting and active class atmosphere.

As to the open questions on FLES, we've got both positive (14 pieces) and negative (9 pieces) comments. In the pupils' opinion, it's helpful in FLL whether for laying a solid foundation for their junior secondary school English or for broadening their horizons. However, some say teaching method should still be improved, more classes be added, while some think it better to start it from junior secondary school because it brings pride and sense of superiority to the students, which makes them stay behind in FLL in secondary school.

From the above, we see most pupils like FLES, and they want to get some improvement from teachers in FLL, though FLES will bring them negative effect to later FLL because of their pride and sense of superiority.

4.1.2 Parents' comments and views on FLES (from open questions No.8, 13, 15 and 19)

4.1.2.1 Comments

Most parents consider FLES positively. Children have mastered some knowledge by learning English and their interest has been developed in playing games, learning English expressions and songs. Having made a solid foundation for their English learning, the children are doing it in a relaxed environment from the beginning to the end, so it's better for them to learn it from an earlier age. While a few think it a kind of load, therefore they are not sure whether to say it positive or negative. As to optimal age in FLL, the ages are from 5 to 11, but most regard the ages from 9 to 10, which are in accordance with their choice of grade 3 on FLES, occupying 53.13%.

4.1.2.2 Views

Positive:

* We feel happy about it. However, language environment is very important in FLL.

* Learning new words and expressions is not the only task for pupils, interest should be put to the first place, and try to avoid too much emphasis on oral English

* Textbooks should be connected with those in junior secondary school, but teacher is the most important among all, especially his pronunciation. A responsible teacher is of vital importance and the assessment of the pupils' examination is also the important direction in learning English.

* English should be taught but not at a lower grade. It is suitable to begin it from grade 5.

* It is good to do so but attention should be paid to teaching method. It should be supported and taken as a formal course like maths and Chinese. The sense of language is very important and the earlier learning will lay a solid foundation for children' English and it's very helpful.

* Class periods are fewer than expected. There should be one period each day. Oral English is of first importance. Activities should be added out of class and some homework also should be assigned. It is good but we worry that it might bring a heavy load to the pupils as a result.

Negative:

* It's not formal and our child's interest of English is ruined.

* Generally speaking, it is good, but the problem is: what are the purpose and function of it?

From Table 2, 30 parents are in favor of FLES, occupying 93.75%. Positive outweighing negative effect is the opinion of most parents from the answers to questions No.3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. In question No.9, 12 parents choose “pronunciation” while 14 choose “grammar” as the most difficult problem. When asked which grade is suitable for starting FLES, 11 parents choose grade 1, 17 select grade 3, 3 think it from kindergarten. 23 parents consider English teacher as the vital factor, covering 71.88%. 25 parents (78.13%) think “pronunciation” is the most important for children. And they think starting age of FLL is between 9 and 10, which is identical with the idea of many scholars. 20 parents (62.50%) agree it’s easier and more relaxed for kids to begin FLL in junior secondary school compared with those who hadn’t learned it, so it’s of positive effect, but saying this effect doesn’t last for long, 5 students last for over 2 years, 8 for 1 or 2 years, 8 for 1 year and 11 for a few months.

From the views, most parents are in favor of FLES. Interest is mentioned most followed by pronunciation and oral English. They expect a solid foundation will be laid for children’s English but worry their kids might be loaded with too much at the same time.

4.1.3 Teachers’ comments and views on FLES (from open questions No.1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 31, 33, 35, 37, 38, 39 and 40)

4.1.3.1 Comments

Most teachers consider grade 3 (from 8 to 9 year-old) as the best choice and the most suitable ages to start FLL. The reasons are the pupils of grade 1 and 2 have already had the experience of learning Chinese pinyin at least for one year, so the possibility of confusion between English letters and Chinese pinyin gradually becomes less. Besides, the pupils of grade 3 have higher ability in expressing themselves and in absorbing knowledge than those of grade 1 and 2. They agree on one point that adequate English teachers, suitable textbooks, necessary teaching equipment are the most important factors on FLES. This is identical with the suggestions by many scholars in China.

4.1.3.2 Views

Positive:

* Interest is the key in elementary school teaching, while lecturing and explanation is the main style in secondary school; spoken English is emphasized in elementary school teaching, while written work in secondary school.

* Those having learned English in advance have a larger vocabulary and better spoken English, which gives them advantages in FLL when starting to learn it again in junior secondary school, while those not having learned have some difficulty in English studies at the beginning.

* Those do better in English written work can have better in oral English naturally. Obviously oral and written English are complementary to each other.

* As to the questions No. 34 and 35, most consider “the ability of spoken English” more important than “the scores of English examination”.

* The way of combining the English education with recreation should be penetrated through the whole teaching process, thus the pupils could learn English easily and quickly in relaxed ways.

* It’s possible to offer English courses in elementary school due to the younger ages in absorbing languages easily. It’s best to start FLES from grade 3 for having learned Chinese for two years.

* Much attention should be paid to FLES, but the most important is to have adequate teachers, suitable books and reasonable teaching arrangements besides the necessary English materials such as reference books, teaching cards and pictures.

Negative:

* I just don’t agree to the policy of offering English courses in elementary school, which is due to the lack of English teachers, inadequate facilities at present, besides the confusion between English letters, English phonetic symbols and Chinese pinyin (altogether 130) for pupils in elementary school.

In sum, we see most of the English teachers support the policy of offering English courses in elementary school from grade 3 with the prerequisites that teachers, textbooks and teaching facilities should be adequate and suitable. When teaching in class, interest should be put in the first place besides the emphasis on oral English, the assessment of academic achievement, small class teaching and the like.

4.2 Analyses of the students’ scores

4.2.1 Average scores of the students in junior 1-3 and senior 1-2

Analyses on the average scores of the students in junior 1-3:

It's obvious the final average score of the 46 students is 3.21 (117.43-114.22= 3.21) points higher than that of the 390 students. The most obvious pair of scores is 139.7 to 130.49 in Junior1A, whose difference is over 9 points. This sum of scores indicates that the students who had learned English for 3 years in elementary school have more advantages than those who hadn't in learning English from junior one to three.

Analyses on the average scores of the students in senior 1-2:

It's evident the final average score of the 33 students is 1.97 (78.93-76.96= 1.97) points lower than that of the 448 students. The result is just upside-down compared with that of the junior students except for the scores of Senior2B. The most obvious pair of scores is 70.87 to 66.44 in Senior1A, whose difference is over 4 points. This sum of scores indicates that advantages are disappearing gradually as time goes on for those who had learned English for 3 years, finally disadvantages appear. It's clear the idea "the younger, the better" for children in FLL is doubted.

In sum, from Table 4, Table 5 and Figure 1, we see the students who had learned English in elementary school are superior to those who hadn't from their English exam results in junior secondary school, but gradually they are inferior to those who hadn't after getting into senior secondary school. This indicates the earlier beginner in FLL has less and less advantage as time goes on. In other words, the higher grade, the lower score is for those who had learned English for 3 years in elementary school when beginning to learn English from secondary school. This is in accordance with the theory of 'non-critical period' hypothesis raised by Snow in 1978. Therefore, the notion "the younger, the better" in FLL is doubted.

4.2.2 Descriptive statistics of the scores

Table 6 describes the general distributive tendency of the scores of junior 1-3 & senior 1-2. The four categories are of the two groups of students: those who had learned English in elementary school for 3 years (Jr. Av. 46Ss. & Sr. Av.33Ss.) and those who hadn't (Jr. Av. 390Ss. & Sr. Av. 448Ss.). Among them there are 11 kinds of statistical data described. It's clear that the mean of the 46 students in junior and 33 in senior secondary school falls from the highest (mean=117.4286) to the lowest (mean=76.9550) in the four groups, while the mean of those 390 students in junior and 448 in senior secondary school rises from a lower one (114.2200) compared with 117.4286 to a higher one (mean=78.9275) compared with 76.9550. It's a sharp contrast compared with each other, between those who had learned English earlier and those who hadn't. This brings us the findings that the idea "the younger, the better" is doubted in FLL, which is in accordance with the findings in the previous analyses. The values of Standard Deviation show that the smallest differences (Std. V. =6.71750) can be found in the group of SR.Av.448Ss. While the biggest differences (Std.V. =16.96582) can be identified in the group of Jr.Av. 46Ss, it is more convincing to show the correctness and validity of the rational analyses in the previous findings. The rest of the descriptive statistics support the previous findings, too.

4.2.3 Paired samples test on the scores of junior 1-3 and senior 1-2

In this section the previous descriptive statistics of the scores will be tested by the paired samples T test with the help of SPSS 11.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to see whether the findings are right or wrong.

In Table 7, it is obvious that all the figures are identical with those in Table 6. Hence, we know the statistics are proved to be true.

From Table 8, we see the correlation coefficients ($r=0.977$; $r=0.935$) and the figures of significant degree ($p=0$; $p=0.065$) tally with those in Table 6 and Table 7 totally. So they are of high validity and correctness proved by the figures in the chart of the paired samples correlations.

From Pair 1 in Table 9, we see the figures: $t = -1.816$, $df = 6$, so we check t value in the distribution table and find $t = 3.707$ at the level of $a = 0.01$ (in 2-tailed). It's clear that -1.816 is smaller than 3.707 ($-1.816 < 3.707$), so we should accept the hypothesis of the correlation coefficient as 0 and consider that there is no correlation between the two variables. In other words, there are no significant differences between the scores of the 46 students and those of the 380. Moreover, $p = 0.119$, and $0.119 > 0.01$ (in 2-tailed), so it can be regarded that there are no significant differences between the two variables, too.

While in Pair 2, it is clear that $t = 1.395$, $df = 3$, so we check t value in the distribution table and find $t = 5.841$ at the level of $a = 0.01$ (in 2-tailed). It's clear that $1.395 < 5.841$, so we should accept the hypothesis of the correlation coefficient as 0 and consider that there is no correlation between the two variables. In other words, there are no significant differences between the scores of the 33 students and those of the 448. Moreover, $p = 0.257$, and $0.257> 0.01$ (in 2-tailed), therefore, it also can be considered that there are no significant differences between the two variables. As to the rest of the statistical data, there is no need to analyze them for their supporting evidence and validity.

From the findings in Table 9 and the explanations, we know there are no significant differences between the students' English scores of those who had learned English for 3 years in elementary school and those who hadn't both in junior and senior secondary schools. Therefore, there is no significant correlation between age and the English scores. From this T Test we can say the notion “the younger, the better” in FLL for children is doubted.

5. Conclusion

5.1 FLES shouldn’t be done in lower grades of elementary school in China.

There is confusion among 26 English letters, 48 English phonetic symbols and 56 Chinese pinyin (altogether 130) for pupils in the beginning years in elementary school. The lower grades are the stage for pupils to lay a good foundation of their mother tongue. From the results of the questionnaires, most of the English teachers, the students, and the parents agree that children should begin FLL around the ages from 9 to 10, that is, from grade 3 in elementary school, which is identical with the idea of many scholars’.

5.2 Qualified English teacher is the decisive factor on FLES.

The important factors in FLL are qualified teachers, painstakingly designed courses, favorable language environment and the like. Moreover, interest and good learning habits are also among them. But qualified teacher is the decisive factor and this is what we need most at present. 40% to 50% of English teachers in elementary schools are not English majors in China in 2007 according to the figures by the Chinese Ministry of Education. If we let unqualified teachers go to the posts, the result will be from bad to worse. Under the present unfavorable situation of the teaching system in China, the more strictly we abide by the decision of FLES, the more traps will be appearing in front of foreign language learners. This will lead to even greater losses in terms of inaccurate teaching and wasted resources. These losses will be irreparable. Facing such unfavorable realities, we should be circumspect in implementing FLES, especially in the backward areas in China at present. And this is in accordance with the research done previously in some other countries in 1970s.

5.3 The notion “the younger, the better” in FLL is doubted.

The scores of those who had learned English for 3 years in elementary school were higher than those who hadn’t when starting to learn English in junior secondary school, but from senior elementary school their scores were decreasing semester by semester compared with those who hadn’t, finally their advantages disappeared completely. From the findings in Table 9, we know there are no significant differences between the students’ English scores of those who had learned English for 3 years in elementary school and those who hadn’t both in junior and senior secondary schools. Therefore, there is no significant correlation between the starting age and the English learning result. From the result of the T Test we can say the notion “the younger, the better” in FLL for children is doubted. Therefore there is no “critical period” hypothesis in FLL, it may only exist in natural language learning as E. Lenneberg put it forward in 1967.

In sum, all the above results showed that the starting age in FLL isn’t “the younger, the better”. H. Stern’s (1999, p.367) view that “a language can be taught from any age upwards” was proved to be true again in China.

References

Ellis, R. (1999). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. p.692-712.

Krashen, S. et al. (Eds.). (1982). *Child-adult Difference in Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley Mass: Newbury House. p.11-16.

Lenneberg, E. (1982). *Biological Foundation of Language*. New York: Wiley. p.66-68.

Nikolov, M. (2000). Issues in Research into Early Foreign Language Programs. In Moon, J. & Nikolov, M. (Eds.). *Research into Teaching English to Young Learners: International Perspectives*. University of Pécs, p.21-48.

Shichun Gui. (1992). Doubt on Foreign Language Learning Must Be Started from an Earlier Age. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*. Issue 4. p.52-54.

Stern, H. (1999). *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. p.9-11, p.360-370.

Table 1. Statistics of the views on FLES by the 32 students (17 closed questions)

Number	A	Percent	B	Percent	C	Percent	D	Percent
1	32	100%	2	6.25%	7	21.88%	0	0%
2	30	93.75%	0	0%	2	6.25%	0	0%
3	3	9.38%	20	62.50%	9	28.13%	0	0%
s4	9	28.13%	18	56.25%	4	12.505	1	3.13%
5	6	18.75%	1	3.13%	25	78.13%	0	0%
6	4	12.50%	11	34.38%	17	53.13%	0	0%
7	26	81.25%	0	0%	6	18.755	0	0%
8	15	46.88%	6	18.75%	3	9.38%	12	37.50%
9	20	62.50%	9	28.13%	0	0%	3	9.38%
10	9	28.13%	17	53.13%	2	6.25%	4	12.50%
11	28	87.50%	4	12.50%	0	0%	0	0%
12	15	46.88%	8	25.00%	9	28.13%	0	0%
13	22	68.75%	6	18.75%	5	15.63%	0	0%
14	9	28.13%	15	46.88%	8	25.00%	0	0%
15	9	28.13%	20	62.50%	3	9.38%	0	0%
16	14	43.75%	18	56.25%	2	6.25%	3	9.38%
17	23	71.88%	4	12.50%	5	15.63%	0	0%

No.1, 8, 16 are questions for more choices, so the answer number is over 32.

Table 2. Statistics of the views on FLES by the 32 parents (15 closed questions)

Number	A	Percent	B	Percent	C	Percent	D	Percent
1	3	9.38%	19	59.38%	10	31.25%	0	0%
2	30	93.75%	1	3.13%	1	3.13%	0	0%
3	16	50%	12	37.50%	12	37.50%	2	6.25%
4	1	3.13%	6	18.75%	5	15.63%	20	62.50%
5	22	68.75%	1	3.13%	4	12.50%	5	15.63%
6	9	28.13%	2	6.25%	13	40.63%	8	25%
7	23	71.88%	1	3.13%	8	25%	0	0%
9	12	37.50%	6	18.75%	14	43.75%	3	9.38%
10	4	12.50%	6	18.75%	9	28.13%	13	40.63%
11	3	9.38%	6	18.75%	5	15.63%	18	56.25%
12	11	34.38%	17	53.13%	1	3.13%	3	9.38%
14	20	62.50%	9	28.13%	3	9.38%	0	0%
16	5	15.63%	8	25%	8	25%	11	34.38%
17	23	71.88%	5	15.63%	5	15.63%	2	6.25%
18	25	78.13%	8	25%	2	6.25%	3	9.38%

No.3, 9, 17, 18 are questions for more choices, so the answer number is over 32.

Table 3. Statistics of the views on FLES by the 31 teachers (24 closed questions)

Number	A	Percent	B	Percent	C	Percent	D	Percent
2	8	25.81%	20	64.52%	2	6.45%	1	3.23%
4	18	58.06%	13	41.94%	0	0%	0	0%
6	21	67.74%	6	19.35%	1	3.23%	5	16.13%
7	18	58.06%	0	0%	15	48.39%	7	22.58%
8	17	54.84%	10	32.26%	5	16.13%	0	0%
11	0	0%	23	74.19%	4	12.90%	4	12.90%
13	10	32.26%	21	67.74%	0	0%	0	0%
15	11	35.48%	20	64.52%	0	0%	0	0%
17	29	93.55%	2	6.45%	0	0%	0	0%
19	11	35.48%	15	48.39%	7	22.58%	4	12.90%
20	19	61.29%	1	3.23%	4	12.90%	8	25.81%
21	11	35.48%	1	3.23%	16	51.61%	8	25.81%
22	24	77.42%	1	3.23%	1	3.23%	20	64.52%
23	23	74.19%	4	12.90%	0	0%	4	12.90%
24	4	12.90%	8	25.81%	5	16.13%	14	45.16%
25	21	67.74%	17	54.84%	5	16.13%	1	3.23%
26	26	83.87%	0	0%	4	12.90%	1	3.23%
27	20	87.10%	8	25.81%	1	3.23%	2	6.45%
28	24	77.42%	2	6.45%	3	9.68%	2	6.45%
29	5	16.13%	13	41.94%	13	41.94%	0	0%
30	31	100%	3	9.68%	3	9.68%	0	0%
32	2	6.45%	29	93.55%	0	0%	0	0%
34	3	9.68%	27	87.10%	1	3.23%	0	0%
36	16	51.61%	14	45.16%	0	0%	1	3.23%

No.6, 7, 19, 22, 25 and 30 are questions for more choices, so the answer number is over 31.

Table 4. Average scores of the students in junior 1-3 (Total Score: 150)

No. of Ss	*Av.Sco.*	Tot.Sum	● No. of Ss	*Av.Sco.*	Tot.Sum
Jr.1A. (374Ss.)	*130.49*	48803	Jr.1A. (47Ss.)	*139.7*	6567
Jr.1B. (383Ss.)	*129.80*	49712	Jr.1B. (46Ss.)	*136.1*	6260
Jr.2A. (384Ss.)	*119.11*	45738	Jr.2A. (47Ss.)	*123.3*	5795
Jr.2B. (446Ss.)	*114.87*	42845	Jr.2B. (46Ss.)	*117.2*	5392
Jr.3A. (372Ss.)	*110.44*	41082	Jr.3A. (46Ss.)	*109.3*	5027
Jr.3B. (386Ss.)	*97.97*	37817	Jr.3B. (47Ss.)	*93.6*	4401
Jr.3C. (387Ss.)	*96.86*	37485	Jr.3C. (46Ss.)	*102.8*	4727
Av. (390Ss.)	*114.22*	43355	Av. (46Ss.)	*117.43*	5453

Jr.1A. (374Ss.) stands for 374 students in the first semester of Junior One, while Jr.1B. (46Ss.) refers to 46 students in the second semester of Junior One, and the rest can be inferred.

Av. (390Ss.): 390 students on average (who only began to learn English from Junior One);

Av. (46Ss.): 46 students on average (who had learned English for 3 years in elementary school);

Av.Sco.: Average Score; Tot.Sum: Total Sum; No.of Ss: Number of Students;

Table 5. Average scores of the students in senior 1-2 (Total Score: 150)

No. of Ss	*Av.Sco*	Tot.Sum	● No. of Ss	*Av.Sco*	Tot.Sum
Sr.1A. (447Ss.)	*70.87*	*31681*	Sr.1A. (34Ss.)	*66.44*	2259
Sr.1B. (454Ss.)	*77.20*	35048	Sr.1B. (33Ss.)	*75.67*	2497
Sr.2A. (445Ss.)	*86.95*	38692	Sr.2A. (33Ss.)	*83.18*	2745
Sr.2B. (446Ss.)	*80.69*	35989	Sr.2B. (32Ss.)	*82.53*	2641
Av. (448Ss.)	*78.93*	35353	Av. (33Ss.)	*76.96*	2546

Sr. stands for senior students, and the rest can be inferred as in Table 4.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of the scores of junior 1-3 and senior 1-2 (Total Score: 150)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Jr. Av. 390Ss.	7	96.86	130.49	114.2200	13.61068	185.251
Jr. Av. 46Ss.	7	93.60	139.70	117.4286	16.96582	287.839
Sr. Av. 448Ss	4	70.87	86.95	78.9275	6.71750	45.125
Sr. Av. 33Ss.	4	66.44	83.18	76.9550	7.78990	60.683
Valid N (listwise)	4					

Table 7. Paired samples statistics on the scores of junior 1-3& senior 1-2 (Total Score: 150)

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Jr. Av. 390Ss.	114.2200	7	13.61068	5.14436
	Jr. Av. 46Ss.	117.4286	7	16.96582	6.41248
Pair 2	Sr. Av. 448Ss.	78.9275	4	6.71750	3.35875
	Sr. Av. 33Ss.	76.9550	4	7.78990	3.89495

Table 8. Paired samples correlations on the scores of junior 1-3& senior 1-2 (Total Score: 150)

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Jr. Av. 390Ss.& Jr. Av. 46Ss.	7	.977**	.000
Pair 2	Sr. Av. 448Ss.& Sr. Av. 33Ss.	4	.935	.065

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9. Paired samples test on the scores of junior 1-3& senior 1-2 (Total Score: 150)

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Jr.Av.390Ss. & Jr. Av. 46Ss	-3.2086	4.67466	1.76686	-7.5319	1.1148	-1.816	6	.119
Pair 2	Sr. Av. 448Ss.& Sr. Av. 33Ss.	1.9725	2.82850	1.41425	-2.5283	6.4733	1.395	3	.257

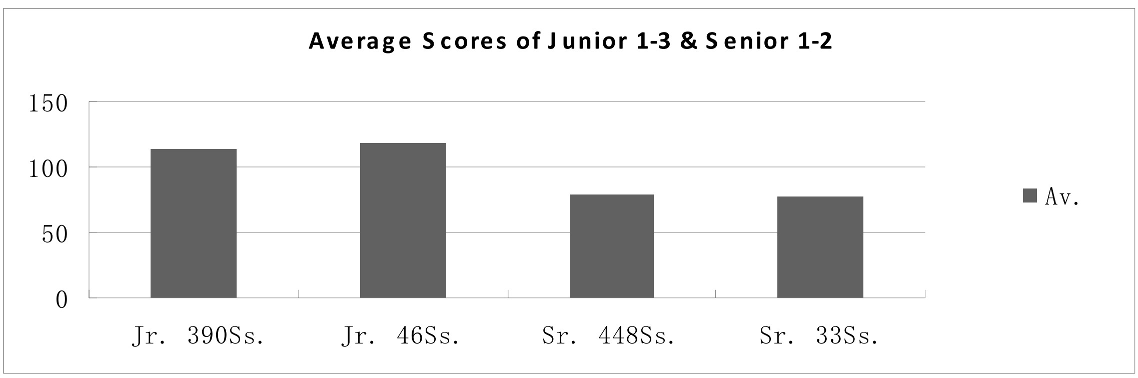


Figure 1. Average Scores of Junior 1-3 & Senior 1-2

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Request Strategies: Cross-Sectional Study of Iranian EFL Learners and Australian Native Speakers

Alireza Jalilifar
Department of English Language and Literature
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz
Molavi Square, Ahvaz, Iran
Tel: 98-611-333-5005 Ext. 287 E-mail: jalilifar20@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study was a cross-sectional investigation into the request strategies used by Iranian learners of English as a Foreign Language and Australian native speakers of English. The sample involved 96 BA and MA Persian students and 10 native speakers of English. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was used to generate data related to the request strategies used by each group. Selection of request situations in DCT was based on two social factors of relative power and social distance. Although results revealed pragmatic development, particularly in the movement from direct to conventionally indirect strategies on the part of EFL learners, learners with higher proficiency displayed overuse of indirect type of requesting; whereas the native group was characterized by the more balanced use of this strategy. The lower proficiency learners, on the other hand, overused the most direct strategy type. In terms of the influence of the social variables, the findings of this research revealed that as far as social power is concerned EFL learners display closer performance to native speakers. But considering social distance, it seems that Iranian EFL learners have not acquired sufficient sociopragmatic knowledge to display proper social behavior.

Keywords: Request, Social distance, Directness level, Politeness

1. Introduction

Successful communication entails knowledge of grammar and text organization as well as pragmatic aspects of the target language. Pragmatic competence is specifically defined by Koike (1989) as "the speaker's knowledge and use of rules of appropriateness and politeness which dictate the way the speaker will understand and formulate speech acts" (p.279).

Austin (1962) defines speech acts as acts performed by utterances such as giving order, making promises, complaining, requesting, among others. When we utter a sentence or a phrase, we are performing an act to which we expect our listeners to react with verbal or nonverbal behavior (p.65). According to Kasper (1984), what second language (L2) learners must know for successful speech act performance has been presented in a "top down processing" manner: Learners first have to recognize the extra-linguistic, cultural constraints that operate in a native speaker's choice of a particular speech act appropriate to the context. They also have to know how to realize this speech act at the linguistic level and in accordance with the L2 sociocultural norms (p.3).

The study of requests has attracted more attention in the study of speech acts. Considering Searle's (1969) classification of illocutionary acts (i.e., representatives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declarations), researchers let requests fall under the second category, that of directives, which have been regarded as "an attempt to get hearer to do an act which speaker wants hearer to do, and which it is not obvious that hearer will do in the normal course of events or of hearer's own accord" (p. 66).

Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, requests are Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), since a speaker is imposing her/his will on the hearer (p. 65). Brown and Levinson (1987) propose that when confronted with the need to perform a FTA, the individual must choose between performing the FTA in the most direct and efficient manner or attempting to mitigate the effect of the FTA on the hearer's face. The strategy an individual chooses to employ depends upon the *weightiness* or seriousness of FTA. Weightiness is an assessment of the social situation calculated by the speaker (p. 76).

The speaker considers three variables when assessing weightiness. First, the speaker appraises the *degree of imposition* associated with the FTA. Brown and Levinson (1987) define the degree of imposition as "a culturally and situationally defined ranking of impositions by the degree to which they are considered to interfere with an agent's wants of self-determination or of approval" (p. 77). Second, the speaker considers the relative *power* of the hearer, defined as "the degree to which the hearer can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of the speaker's plans and self-evaluation" (p. 77).Third, the speaker evaluates the *social distance* between the speaker and the hearer which Brown and Levinson (1987) call the "symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference within which" the speaker and hearer "stand for the purpose" of an act and the kinds of goods exchanged between them (p. 76).

Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989 cited in Francis, 1997) distinguished three degrees of directness in requests, depending on the extent to which the illocution is transparent from locution: direct requests, conventionally indirect requests, and non- conventionally indirect requests. In direct requests, the illocutionary force of the utterance is indicated by grammatical, lexical, or semantic means (for example, "Leave me alone."). Conventionally indirect statements express the illocution via fixed linguistic convention established in the speech community (for example, "How about cleaning up?"). Non-conventionally indirect requests require the addressee to compute the illocution from the interaction of the locution with its context (for example, "The game is boring.").

The request strategies in the following classification are ordered according to decreasing degree of directness. Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989 cited in Francis, 1997, p.28) summarize a combination of level of directness and strategy types in CCSARP project as follows:

a. Direct level

1. Mood derivable: Utterances in which the grammatical mood of the verb signals illocutionary force (for example, "Leave me alone.").

2. Performatives: Utterances in which the illocutionary force is explicitly named (for example, "I tell you to leave me alone.")

3. Hedged performatives: Utterances in which naming of the illocutionary force is modified by hedging expressions (for example, "I would like to ask you to leave me alone.").

4. Obligation statements: Utterances which state the obligation of the hearer to carry out the act (for example, "Sir, you'll have to move your car.")

5. Want statements: Utterances which state the speaker's desire that the hearer carries out the act (for example, "I want you to move your car.").

b. Conventionally indirect level

6. Suggestory formulae: Utterances which contain a suggestion to do something (for example "How about cleaning up?")

7. Query-preparatory: Utterances containing reference to preparatory conditions (e.g. ability, willingness) as conventionalized in any specific language (for example, "Would you mind moving your car?").

c. Non-conventionally indirect level

8. Strong hints: Utterances containing partial reference to object or element needed for the implementation of the act (for example, "The game is boring.").

9. Mild hints: Utterances that make no reference to the request proper (or any of its elements) but are interpretable as requests by context (for example, "We've been playing this game for over an hour now.").

During the last decade, requests are one of the most commonly researched speech acts in both cross-cultural and interlanguage studies. Cross-cultural pragmatic researchers analyze speech acts across a range of languages to investigate whether there are universal pragmatic principles in speech act realization, and if so, what the characteristics of these universals are (Chen, 2007; Eslamirasekh, 1993; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 1999).

On the other hand, focusing on second language acquisition, many interlanguage researchers study differences and similarities that exist in carrying out communication actions among language learners and native speakers of target languages. Some of them explored the speech act of request in English (Francis 1997; Kaneko, 2004; Kim, 1995; Parent, 2002). Other studies focused on request realization in Spanish (Ruzickova, 2007), and in Japanese (Kubota, 1996; Kahraman & Akkus, 2007).

Most of the studies mentioned above deal with interlanguage pragmatic performance (also see Garcia, 2004) while, as Rose (2000) notes, "unlike performance research, studying pragmatic development requires either longitudinal research with a given group of participants over an extended period of time, or cross-sectional studies with participants at various stages of development" (p.29).

Among the above studies, only Francis (1997) and Parent (2002) attempted to examine developmental pragmatics by comparing data from learners at various levels of proficiency while other studies were in fact "single-moment" research-they did not compare learners at different levels of proficiency but, instead , just compared non-native and native speakers (Rose, 2000, p.29). These studies are capable of providing information regarding interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) performance, but they say nothing about development. They provide no information concerning the extent to which non-native speakers will approximate native norms of speech act.

In addition, there is little information available about how lower proficiency learners understand different kinds of requests, and in fact they have been ignored in such studies. It is highly likely that lower proficiency learners have problems selecting appropriate request strategies in different situations (Ellis, 1994). Therefore, concerning the importance of this area in second language learning and teaching, this study sets out a cross-sectional research that surveys development of request strategies by Iranian EFL learners at various levels of language proficiency. So the current study attempts to (1) uncover the relationship between students' level of language proficiency and complexity of request strategies and (2) find the possible difference in the type and frequency of the request strategies made by Iranian EFL students and native speakers of English based on social constraints of power and distance.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The non-native participants in this study were ninety six BA senior and MA students majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and English Language Translation. BA students had studied English for at least three years at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz and had passed several courses in grammar, reading, conversation, and writing up to advanced level. So it was assumed that they had enough proficiency in oral and written production.

MA students were studying at Center for Science and Research in Ahvaz at the time of study. They had already passed National MA Entrance Examination that focuses partly on subject specific courses and partly on English language proficiency. On the other hand, their MA courses required writing classroom papers, so they were supposed to enjoy a good command of language.

All these participants also sat for Nelson Language Proficiency Test (Fowler & Coe, 1976). They were then divided into three groups representing low, mid, and high language learners. Ten native Australian speakers of English also participated in the study via email. They were the employees of a company and none of them had received any university degree up to the time of data collection.

2.2 Instrument

The instruments used in this study were Nelson English language proficiency test (Fowler & Coe, 1976) and Discourse Completion Test (DCT). Nelson test included 50 multiple choice items covering grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. According to Fowler and Coe (1976), all the items in these tests have been carefully pre-tested and cover the most accurate means of measuring the general standard of English which forms the basis for specific skills such as composition writing and comprehension (p.7). Each item was assigned one point, and so the overall score was 50. The motivation for this test was that standard tests are actually very rare, and moreover, the existing TOEFL or IELTS tests in the market are commercial or non-standard, so Fowler and Coe's (1976) test was regarded as appropriate for the purpose of the study.

In DCT the speakers are given a scene or background information, such as what the previous speaker had said and the speakers' relationship with one another. Upon conducting the DCT in this study, twenty four situations were given to participants in written form based on relative power and social distance.

The power variable is treated as a ternary value, that is the hearer is either of lower status (+power), interlocutors are of equal status (=power), or the hearer is of higher status (-power). The distance variable is treated as a binary value, that is interlocutors either know each other (-distance) or they do not know each other (+distance). The combination of these two social variables results in six possible combinations, each realized in four situations which thus resulted in twenty four situations (See Appendix for a sample questionnaire that was devised). The following table demonstrates the six variable combinations and the 24 situations.

Insert Table 1 here

2.3 Procedure

First, the advanced test of Nelson (Fowler & Coe, 1976) was administrated to our 96 participants, and mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of their scores were calculated. The mean score was 30.38 and the standard deviation was 5.31. The subjects whose scores fell between 0.5 SD (2.65) above or below M were considered as mid level; those whose score fell above or below this area were regarded as high and low learners respectively. So the subjects were divided into three groups: 25 students representing lower group, 43 mid level, and 28 high level students.

Next their pragmatic competence was challenged on the effective use of request strategies by means of DCT in which they had to write down what they would say in the given contexts. Data from the native speakers of English was also gathered via E-mail. DCT was sent to 25 Australian native speakers with whom the researcher was in contact, but only ten were completed and returned.

To analyze the data gathered from the students and the native speakers of English, the particular coding scheme, Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) was used. This coding scheme is a universally valid scale of directness previously empirically tested and successfully used by researchers (Lwanga-Lumu, 2002; Wouk, 2006).

The CCSARP schematized requesting strategies in three categories: directness level, internal modification, and external modification. The focus of this study was on directness level of requesting strategies which was classified as a nine-point scale: *Mood derivable, Performatives, Hedged performatives, Obligation statement, Want statement*, *Suggestory formulae, Query preparatory*, *Strong hints, and Mild hints*.

The analysis of the data took into consideration only the head acts which were isolated and classified based on the nine levels of directness. The data were then submitted to the SPSS (version 14.0) for frequency analysis and *chi square* test. The frequency analysis was conducted to identify the proportion and percentage of request strategies used by non-native and native speakers in six combinations. Then the data were classified into three main categories of direct, conventionally indirect, and hints, and again frequency of use of these three main categories of request strategies was calculated. *Chi square* test was performed in order to establish whether the differences in the frequency of strategies made by subjects were statistically significant.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Question One

In order to identify the type and frequency of request strategies made by learners, the data were analyzed and the frequency of occurrence and percentage of each category of strategies were calculated and tabulated in table 2. In order to find the relationship between language proficiency levels of Iranian learners and type and frequency of request strategies, the *Chi-square* test was applied. The result of this test is presented in table 3.

The findings of this study provide some evidence of correlation between learners' level of language proficiency and type of requesting. As illustrated in table 2, conventional indirectness was the most frequent strategy by the three groups of learners which was conveyed by only one indirect sub-strategy: *Query preparatory*. Almost exclusively this strategy constituted more than half of all requests produced by the learners.

Following Brown and Levinson (1987), higher levels of indirectness may result in higher levels of politeness. So direct requests appear to be inherently impolite and face-threatening because they intrude in the addressee's territory (p. 17). More specifically, Blum-Kulka (1985, cited in Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 19) suggests that in request at any rate, politeness and indirectness are linked for conventional indirectness requests but not necessarily in cases of non-conventional indirectness.

Hassall (2003) mentions formal simplicity as another factor that probably contributes to learners' use of conventionally indirect strategy type. This type of *Modal* question is structurally simple, consisting minimally of *Modal verb*+ *Agent*+ *Verb* (e.g. *May I borrow*). So learners are unlikely to be discouraged by considerations of formal complexity in selecting this strategy (p. 1918).

Consequently, Trosborg (1995) remarks on the ability of learner subjects from all proficiency groupings in her study to use the conventionally indirect strategies of politeness. Interestingly, the present finding confirms and extends that of Trosborg (1995). It shows that even the low learners are able consistently to select a polite, conventionally indirect strategy in the L2, when the L2 pragmalinguistic strategy form is formally simple and the same strategy exists in their first language.

In general, the results of this study indicate that with increasing proficiency level, learners use of direct requesting-mainly *Imperative*- decreases and at the same time conventionally and non-conventionally indirect types of requesting increase, while the lower level learners overuse direct requests and the high and mid groups overuse conventional indirectness.

The fact that Iranian lower proficiency learners use direct type of requesting more than other learners can be explained by the notion of t*ransferability*. Interlanguage and cross cultural pragmatic studies have provided ample evidence that L2 learners' pragmatic knowledge significantly influences their comprehension and production of pragmatic performance in the L2 (Kasper, 1992; Takahashi, 1996). A pragmalinguistic transfer is the influence of the learner's knowledge about the illocutionary force or politeness value assigned to particular linguistic form-functions in native language which, when mapped by learners into the perception and production of a similar situation in target language, sounds different to native speakers.

Since Persian speaking students use significantly more direct strategies compared to English speakers (Eslamirasekh, 1993), the low proficient learners negatively transfer their pragmalinguistic forms of directness levels in request realization. That is, where more indirectness is demanded in English, they prefer direct strategies. In other words, to achieve requestive goals, the low proficient learners in the present study may resort to a familiar and easy form of requesting which has been experienced in their native language. The higher proficient learners, on the other hand, are found not to transfer the Persian request strategies and thus pose more indirect strategy types in their interlanguage request. So target language proficiency is positively related to pragmatic transfer.

Concerning the correlation between complexity of request strategies and level of language proficiency in EFL learners, the findings of present study, following other studies in this field (Harlow, 1990; Francis, 1997; Parent, 2002), support request development of learners from being direct to indirect and from being simple to complex. On the one hand, there is a positive correlation between the use of indirect strategy types and the English proficiency level. In other words, the higher proficiency group use more indirect strategy types (both conventionally and non-conventionally indirect strategy) than learners with lower language proficiency.

On the other hand, complexity of request strategies is explained in terms of direct strategies with forms that convey requestive force by purely syntactic means, such as grammatical mood or an explicit performative verb. Due to a strong concern with clarity, direct strategies may be considered as the most efficiently and easily expressed utterances. But in conventionally indirect strategies the relationship between the surface form of an utterance and its underlying purpose is not straightforward. Again, requestive hints, as mentioned by Weizman (1993), tend to lack clarity and the speaker exploits their opacity while getting the hearer to carry out the implicitly requested act (p. 71).

Other substantial differences include lower learners' reliance on *Imperative* strategy and other groups' tendencies for varieties of direct sub-strategies other than *Imperative* strategy. It is likely that higher proficiency learners may have attempted to use as many strategies as possible in order to compensate for their lack of L2 proficiency, resulting in the use of different types of requesting. In contrast, the lower proficiency learners are probably not sufficiently competent to use as wide a variety of strategies as the proficient learners and thus they mainly rely on *Imperative* strategy. In other words, linguistic ability correlates with strategy use. The greater use of *Imperative* as the most direct type of requesting by the low learners, as Harlow (1990) suggests, is also probably due to the linguistic deficiency or perhaps lack of attention to the rules of politeness (p. 335). They do not possess enough linguistic ability to employ other types of direct request such as *Want statement* as frequent as the higher groups. So, it may be claimed that learners with lower language proficiency show a particularly strong preference for *Imperative* because this sub-strategy, especially in elided form, does not demand high linguistic proficiency; it is formally very simple (e.g. *Give me the pen*).

Insert tables 2 & 3 here

3.2 Question Two

Addressing the first part of the second research question, concerning request strategies made by Iranian EFL learners and Australian native speakers of English, the study presents the results of comparison between native and non-native speakers. As indicated in table 4, all groups displayed a markedly high frequency of conventionally indirect strategy conveyed by *Preparatory* sub-strategy. However, while the mid and high groups displayed an inclination toward the use of this particular strategy, the native group was characterized by a more balanced use of conventional indirectness. The low group, on the hand, extraordinarily used the most direct type of requesting, that is, *Imperative*.

The considerable use of conventionally indirect strategy by both native and non-native speakers may be due to the influence of Western language usage with regard to speech act theory. Previous studies (Searle, 1969; Leech, 1983) have mentioned that indirect speech acts correlate with politeness in Western cultures because Western language usage is fundamentally associated with negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of previous studies such as Byon (2004). First, they support the view that advanced learners appear to develop greater sensitivity to the use of politeness strategies in requesting than is seen in native speakers. Second, the study supports Ellis's (1994) idea that even advanced learners do not acquire fully native-like ways of requesting.

On the one hand, the higher proficient learners in the present study employ more conventionally indirect strategies than native speakers. On the other hand, Brown and Levinson (1987) and Leech (1983) make a strong connection between the indirectness and politeness, arguing that a higher degree of indirectness shows more politeness. More specifically, Blum-kulka (1987, cited in Marti, 2006, p.1839) reports the most polite strategies in English are perceived to be conventionally indirect ones. Therefore, by greater use of conventionally indirect strategies, the higher proficient learners show greater sensitivity to the use of politeness strategies in requesting. Overusing conventionally indirect types of requesting by high level learners may have to do with the fact that high levels of grammatical competence do not ensure high levels of pragmatic competence. However, the majority of studies which have looked at the relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence show that proficient learners seem to be better at using speech act strategies (Trosborg, 1995), and comprehending illocutionary force (Koike, 1989). In short, the literature presents two generally accepted claims about the relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence: (1) grammar is not a sufficient condition for pragmatic competence; however, (2) grammar is a necessary condition for pragmatic competence (Levinson, 1983; Koike, 1989).

The first claim is based on the observation that a learner already knows linguistic structures but has not yet learnt to use them as some pragmatic strategies (Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998). The second claim is based on the observation that a learner knows the appropriate pragmatic strategy for a given context, but does not know how to realize it due to limited linguistic knowledge (Takahashi & Beebe, 1993). This fact might be a possible reason behind the overusing of direct strategies by the low learners in the present study.

As a matter of fact, the higher frequency of direct strategies among lower proficiency learners is probably a developmental stage where simpler and also more direct expressions are being used. The low proficiency learners use direct type of requesting because of lack of lexical and syntactic knowledge to produce an indirect request strategy which requires more complex structures.

This tendency among the low group results from L1 transfer since direct request is the common form of request speech act in Persian language (Eslamirasekh, 1993). So it is reasonable to claim that this strategy is used by the low learners automatically in English; since the two other request types used by native speakers of English are more grammatically complex, they may not be automatized in the learners' interlanguage. The low learners, then, seek to mitigate or avoid face-threatening behavior in ways they know best. In this regard Olshtain and Cohen (1991) mention that "second language learners' attempts to translate conventional routines specific to first language verbatim into the second language often result in miscommunication even if the results of their attempts are grammatically correct" (p. 155). A negative correlation is found between the likelihood of transfer and the level of proficiency. Advanced learners excel lower learners at identifying contexts where L1 speech act strategies could or could not be used.

It is important to note that in the present study non-conventionally indirect strategies are the least made request types in all groups. The underuse of this strategy by native speakers might be due to the fact that native speakers of English conceive of this type of requesting as being less polite than conventionally indirect strategy (Blum-Kulka, 1987 cited in Brown & Levinson, 1987). In line with this view, Weizman (1993) affirms that non-conventionally indirect request requires the hearer to deduce the speaker's intention, which can be a burden to the hearer. The highly inferential nature of this strategy may be the major cause for their being regarded as less polite than conventionally indirect strategies (p. 125).

Learners, specially the low proficiency group, are probably not sufficiently competent to use this type of requesting that is considered the most complex and indirect strategy. It is also important to mention that non-conventionally indirect requests require the addressee to compute the illocution from the interaction of the locution with its context (Ruzickova, 2007, p. 1177). Accordingly, it is believed by many researchers, learners acquire the use of utterances with opaque illocutionary meanings later in their pragmatic acquisition. High indirect pragmatic strategies such as hinting require high processing cost and, therefore, such strategies may be more difficult to acquire (Bouton, 1994; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996).

The findings of this study, on the other hand, contradict that of Weizman (1993) and Trosborg (1995) in which learners used non-conventionally indirect strategies more than native speakers. Weizman (1993) suggests that *Hints* have a highly "deniability potential". Accordingly, the overuse of *Hints* by the learners may result from their exploitation of the inferential nature of *Hints* in order to save their own face (p. 95).

Trosborg (1995) suggests that learners get no further than making a preliminary to a request because they are doubtful about how to phrase the actual request. The addressee, however, interprets the preliminary move as *Hints*, eliminating the need for the learner to make real request at all.

Insert tables 4 & 5 here

As for the second part of the second question- difference in the type and frequency of the request strategies made by Iranian EFL students and the native speakers of English based on social constrains of power and distance - the analysis of the distribution of the request strategy types in six combinations of situations is discussed here in the following parts:

3.2.1 Combination A

The analysis of the request strategies used by native and non-native speakers reveals that in combination A (=P +D), the use of conventionally indirect strategies plays a significant role as the most favored for both native speakers and EFL learners (See table 6 for the frequency of strategy types and table 7 showing the difference). According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989 cited in Chen, 2007, p. 46), the level of directness of a request has strong correlation with the expectation of right and obligations between hearers and speakers. The greater the right of the speaker to ask and the greater the obligation of the hearer to comply with the request, the less motivation for the use of indirectness. Relative dominance also affects the level of indirectness. That is, the greater the speaker's dominance (power) to the addressee, the lower the use of indirectness is expected. Additionally, as argued by Rue, Zhang, and Shin (2007), when the interlocutors do not know each other, there is a strong trend of employing conventionally indirect strategy type of requesting.

EFL learners display developmental patterns in using indirectness in these situations. In other words, a decline in direct request is observed with increasing proficiency. The main reason might be their sufficient pragmatic competence in relation to the effect of social power on choosing the contextually proper type of requesting. However, the higher proficiency learners in this study are more indirect than native speakers. Similarly, in the previous ILP studies (Byon, 2004) the advanced learners appear to develop a greater sensitivity to the use of politeness strategies in requesting than native speakers. That is, EFL learners sometimes experience communication breakdown due to over generalizing stereotypes of the target language culture. In this case, they tend to overuse conventionally indirect strategy which is considered as the most polite type of requesting.

Insert tables 6 & 7 here

3.2.2 Combination B

Considering the correlation between the level of indirectness of requesting and expectations of rights and obligations between the interlocutors, native speakers show less motivation for the use of indirectness. Since there is equal social status between the speaker and the hearer (e.g. friends), the requester is not endowed with a contracted right to make his/her request, just as the requestee who is by no means obligated to comply with it. Therefore, the request may be performed without abundance of politeness and as compared with addressing the familiar equal person; the native subjects seem to be more direct by employing direct sub-strategies as the second preferred type of requesting (See table 8 for frequency of strategy types and table 9 showing the difference).

On the contrary, EFL learners mainly rely on the conventional indirectness which implies the fact that they do not acquire the sociopragmatic knowledge necessary to perform appropriate request type which is contextually proper under the varying social distance. In other words, by keeping the same trend of in two combinations, EFL learners are not sensitive enough to the effect of social distance to utilize more variation in the types of request strategy.

It is likely that Iranian EFL learners are not taught how to perform appropriate speech act under varying situational features. So they may produce grammatically correct utterances, but inauthentic performance in terms of real language use.

Insert tables 8 & 9 here

3.2.3 Combination C

In addressing unfamiliar people in the lower position, non-native speakers are more direct than native speakers. While the native speakers use both direct and indirect strategies as the preferred type of requesting, EFL learners choose direct request as the preferred strategy. Among them, the low level learners show strong tendency towards the use of the most direct type of requesting, *Imperative*.

In general, both native subjects and EFL learners are more direct in comparison with the previous situations in which they are requesting someone with equal power. In situations of this type, the requester (e.g. customer, teacher) has authority over the requestee (e.g. waiter, student). The greater the right of the speaker to ask and the greater the obligation of the hearer to comply with the request, the greater the likelihood of licensing direct request. Regarding the social distance between the interlocutors, the speaker and the hearer do not know each other, and so there is a strong trend of employing conventionally indirect strategy type.

Obviously native speakers show sensitivity to both social power and social distance by utilizing more variation in the types of requesting. Thus, they use both direct and indirect strategies. Overuse of direct request might display learners' sensitivity to social power but their unawareness of the effect of social distance.

The overuse of *Imperative* by the low learners might suggest their insufficient pragmatic competence which makes them unable to use the necessary pragmalinguistic means to express an appropriate request. Moreover, the fact that the higher learners display closer performance to native speakers in terms of indirectness demonstrates a developmental pattern in their interlanguage request. This finding supports grammatical competence as a necessary condition for pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999).

Insert tables 10 & 11 here

3.2.4 Combination D

In the realization of requests with familiar juniors in combination D, native speakers employ various direct strategies. They apply indirect strategy as the second preferred type of requesting. Unlike the previous combinations, the native speakers chose various types of direct sub-strategies such as *Imperative*, *Want statement*, and *Hedged performative* attesting to the fact that the speaker's (e.g., professor's) social status is higher than the addressee's (e.g., student's), and therefore, he has the right to make a request and the hearer has the obligation to obey. Accordingly, face-saving strategies are not required and the choice of strategy tends to move toward directness. Like native speakers, the higher proficient learners showed productive and varied forms of direct sub-strategies whereas the low proficient group still focused on the most direct sub-strategy*, Imperative*. This implies that the higher learners show sensitivity to the change of social distance, and in this regard they have developed sufficient pragmatic competence to display target-like behavior. Accordingly, they realize different forms of direct request such as *Want statement*, *Hedged performative*, and *Imperative* (See table 12 for frequency of strategy types and table 13 showing the difference).

Insert tables 12& 13 here

3.2.5 Combination E

In this particular combination native speakers are prone to use *Preparatory* as the most appropriate way to realize requests in the situations in which the addressee has a higher power rank and there is little familiarity between the interlocutors. The next preferred formula of head acts for native speakers is *Strong hints*. In other words, they almost exclusively rely on indirectness.

According to the notion of dominance and obligation mentioned earlier, the speaker (e.g., student) has little right to ask the hearer (e.g., professor)**,** and also the hearer has no obligation to comply with the request. On the other hand, since the interlocutors' social distance is greater, the greater use of indirectness is expected.

EFL learners do not display the native-like performance. They tend to choose various direct sub-strategies as the second preferred type of requesting. Thus, they are much more direct than their native

counterparts. This might be the reflection of lack of well-developed pragmatic competence in addressing someone in higher status. In other words, in spite of having a good command of grammatical competence, EFL learners show little evidence of situational variation (See table 14 for frequency of strategy types and table 15 showing the difference).

As most Iranian learners overgeneralize the use of direct requests, it appears that Iranian learners rely on their L1 sociopragmatic knowledge while speaking to unfamiliar superiors. In Eslamirasekh's (1993) study Persian speakers used significantly more direct strategies in all situations compared to English speakers. That is, the two cultures disagree on the specific directness level appropriate for a given situation (p.96).

However, the use of indirectness by the speakers of one language does not imply that they are more polite than the speakers of another language. According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion of positive politeness, "although the FTAs are performed with redressive action when adopting positive politeness, indirectness is not included among these strategies" (p.130). So Eslamirasekh (1993) concludes that the overuse of direct strategies does not imply that Persian speakers are less polite than English speakers because they use direct strategies by the use of mitigating elements (e.g., excuse me, dear friend, …) (p. 97).

Insert tables 14& 15 here

3.2.6 Combination F

Native speakers place more variance in the choice of request strategies when requests are made toward the addressees who are familiar superiors. They use both direct and conventionally indirect strategies as preferred types of requesting. That is, by change of social distance between interlocutors native speakers change their level of directness.

Although the speaker (e.g. customer) has lower social dominance than the hearer (e.g. manager) and therefore there is motivation toward indirectness, the interlocutors know each other and there is strong trend of using direct type of requesting. EFL learners, however, do not utilize their requests in native-like way. They show a decline in the proportion of *Imperative* and a shift to conventional indirectness. Since learners are not sensitive enough to the effect of social distance, they do not display significant change in their choice of request strategies in addressing unfamiliar or familiar superiors. In other words, an anticipated trend toward greater directness does not take place with an increase in familiarity by the learners, especially with higher proficiency.

EFL learners do not notice social distance, so they are producing more indirect strategies in English which is traditionally described to them as being more polite in its request form. That is, it seems that EFL learners overgeneralize stereotypes of the target culture by focusing on conventionally indirect strategies. The fact that the low proficient learners in these situations have used more direct requests may not be considered as emanating from their well-developed pragmatic knowledge but the influence of their first language competence since the pragmatic trend of overusing directness by the low group has been observed in almost all situations (See table 16 for frequency of strategy types and table17 showing the difference).

Insert tables 16 & 17 here

An ILP research to investigate the sociopragmatic features of Iranian EFL learners, this experiment contributes to the field of interlanguage pragmatics. By enhancing our understandings of the interlanguage features of the EFL learners in

English speech act of request, it is hoped that this study will illustrate the significance of interlanguage pragmatic studies among EFL educators and researchers, and stimulate their research interest in this fast growing discipline.

This type of study not only is useful in supplying teachers and material developers with native speakers' baseline data, but also indicates how and in what situations certain groups deviate from native speaker norms. It should therefore be a major goal to teach relevant general cultural schemata and to make non-native learners aware of differences between their own cultural schemata and those of native speakers.

In line with results of other studies (Alcon, 2005; Bardovi-Harlig & Taylor, 2003; Kasper & Rose, 1999), one of the major findings of the present research is that if teachers in foreign language classrooms provide L2 learners with relevant input, learners can develop appropriate request behaviors similar to those of native speakers. However, the present study merely investigated the directness level of speech act of request and did not look at the length of the requests produced, the use of politeness markers, or external and internal modifications of the request. Therefore, further studies are needed to unveil and explore these issues.

4. Conclusion

This study was designed to address the important issue of pragmatic development of request strategies in Iranian EFL learners in order to determine whether and to what extent interlanguage realization of the speech act of requesting by Iranian learners differs from request realization by native speakers in English.

The conventionally indirect strategy might be a universal method of making request toward the addressees (Ellis, 1994; Trosborg, 1995). The present study suggested a positive correlation between the use of indirect type of requesting and the learners' proficiency level, that is, Iranian EFL learners display developmental patterns of request strategies.

It was observed that the high proficient learners overused the conventional indirect strategy type. So in line with the findings of other interlanguage studies (Byon, 2004; Rue et al., 2007), in the present experiment the higher EFL learners appear to develop a greater sensitivity to the use of more polite strategies in requesting than what is seen in native speakers. This study also supports Ellis's (1994) view that even advanced learners do not acquire fully native-like ways of requesting.

In terms of the influence of the social variables, the findings of this research reveal that as far as social dominance is concerned, EFL learners display closer performance to native speakers. But in terms of social distance many differences are observed between the types of request strategy made by native speakers and Iranian learners. It seems that EFL learners have not acquired sufficient sociopragmatic knowledge to be able to display the proper social behavior. That is, they are not sensitive to both social power and social distance.

L2 learners may have access to the same range of speech acts and realizations as do native speakers, but they differ from native speakers in the strategies they choose. More importantly, L2 learners must be aware of second language socio-cultural constraints on speech acts in order to be pragmatically competent. Following Rose and Kasper (2001), we claim that although highly context-sensitive in selecting pragmatic strategies in their own language, learners may underdifferentiate such context variables as social distance and social power in L2.

It is important to note that, as predicted by politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), power relationship, social and psychological distance, and degree of imposition constrain communicative action universally, but learners' assessment of the weight and values of these universal context factors varies substantively from context to context as well as across speech communities. There is thus a strong indication that instructional intervention may be facilitative to, or even necessary for, the development of L2 pragmatic awareness.

Finally, it is hoped that research in second language pragmatics will not only improve our understanding of pragmatic development in speech act realization and of the nature of strategies but will also enable us to incorporate effective methods of teaching pragmatics in the EFL classrooms.

References

Alcon, S. E. (2005). Does instruction work for learning pragmatics in the EFL context? *System, 33* (3), 417-435.

Austin, J. (1962). How to do things with words. In A.Jaworski & N. Coupland (Eds.), *The discourse reader* (pp. 63-75). New York: Routledge.

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Dornyei, Z. (1998). Do learners recognize pragmatic violations? Pragmatic versus grammatical awareness in instructed L2 learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, *32*(2), 42-71.

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Taylor, M. R. (2003). Teaching pragmatics. Retrieved on November 22, 2007 from http://exchanges.state.gov/education/engteaching/

Brown, P., & Levinson, S.C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bouton, L. F. (1994). Conversational implicature in a second language: Learned slowly when not deliberately taught. *Journal of Pragmatics, 22*, 157-167

Byon, A. S. (2004). Sociopragmatic analysis of Korean requests: Pedagogical setting. *Journal of Pragmatics, 36*, 1973-1704.

Chen, S. (2007). Interlanguage requests: A cross-cultural study of English and Chinese. *The Linguistics Journal*, *2*(2), 32-52.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The studies of second language acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eslamirasekh, Z. (1993). A cross-cultural comparison of requestive speech act realization patterns in Persian and American English. *Pragmatic and Language Learning*, *4*, 85-103.

Fowler, W. S. & Coe, N. (1976). *Nelson English language texts.* London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.

Francis, C. (1997). Talk to me! The development of request strategies in nonnative speakers of English. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics, 13*(2), 23-40.

Garcia, P. (2004). Developmental differences in speech act recognition: A pragmatic awareness study. *Language Awareness*. *13*(2), 96-115.

Harlow, L. L. (1990). Do they mean what they say? Sociopragmatic competence and second language learners. *The Modern Language Journal*, *74*, 328-349.

Hassall, T. (2003). Requests by Australian learners of Indonesian. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *35*, 1903-1928.

Iimuro, A. (2006). Conversation analysis of e-mail requests by second language speakers. *Second Language Studies*, *24* (2), 65-113.

Kahraman, B., & Akkus, D. (2007). The use of request expressions by Turkish learners of Japanese. *Journal of Theory and Practice in Education, 3*(1), 122-138.

Kaneko, T. (2004). Request production by Japanese EFL learners: An SST corpus-based study. Retrieved November *20*, 2007 from

http://nels.nii.ac.jp/els/110004688559.pdf;jsessionid=DD1E8C2984AA71

Kasper, G. (1992). Pragmatic transfer. *Second Language Research*, *8*, 203-231.

Kasper, G. (1984). Pragmatic comprehension in learner-native speaker discourse.

Language Learning, *34*, 1-20.

Kasper, G., & Schmidt, R. (1996). Developmental issues in interlanguage pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *18*, 149-169.

Kasper, G., & Rose, K. R. (1999). Pragmatics and SLA. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *19*, 81-104.

Kim, J. (1995). "Could you calm down more?" Requests and Korean ESL learners. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, *11*(2), 67-82.

Koike, D. A. (1989). Pragmatic competence and adult L2 acquisition: Speech acts in interlaguage. *The Modern Language Journal*, *73*, 279-289.

Kubota, M. (1996). Acquaintance or Fiancee: Pragmatic differences in requests between Japanese and American. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistic, 12*(1), 23-38.

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.

Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lwanga-Lumu, J. C. (2002). Internal request modification by first and second language speakers. *Journal of Language Teaching*, *36*, 3&4, 289-304.

Marti, L. (2006). Indirectness and politeness in Turkish-German bilingual and Turkish monolingual requests. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *38*, 1836-1869.

Olshtain, E., & Cohen, A .D. (1991). Teaching speech behavior to nonnative *speakers*. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 154-169). Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.

Parent, M. P. (2002). The production of requests by Catalan learners of English: situational and proficiency level effects. *ATLANTIS*, *2*, 147-168.

Rinnert, C., & Kobayashi, H. (1999). Requestive hints in Japanese and English .*Journal of Pragmatics, 31*, 1173-1201.

Rose, K. R. (2000). An exploratory cross-sectional study of interlanguage pragmatic development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 22*, 27-67.

Rose, K.R. & Kasper, G. (2001). *Pragmatic in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rue, Y. J, Zhang, G., & Shin, K. (2007). Request strategies in Korean. Retrieved November 10, 2007 from http://espace.lis.curtin.edu.au/archive/00002319/01/pdf.

Ruzickova, E. (2007). Strong and mild requestive hints and positive-face redress in Cuban Spanish. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *39*, 1170-1202.

Searle, J. (1969). *Speech acts: An assay in the philosophy of language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Takahashi, S. (1996). Pragmatic transferability. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *18*, 169-223.

Takahashi, T., & Beebe, L. M. (1993). Cross-linguistic influence in the speech act of correction. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage Pragmatic*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage pragmatics: Requests, complaints, and apologies*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Weizman, E. (1993). Interlanguage requestive hints. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage Pragmatics* (pp. 123-137). New York: Oxford University Press.

Wouk, F. (2006). The language of apologizing in Lombok, Indonesia. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *38*, 1456-1486.

Appendix: Discourse Competition Test (DCT)

NAME: MAJOR:
NATIONALITY:

Please read the following descriptions of situations and write what you would say in each situation.

1-You are trying to study in your room and hear loud music coming from another student's room down the hall. You don't know the student, but you decide to ask him/her to turn the music down. What would you say?

2-You are at a record store with your best friend. There's a CD you really want to buy, but you don't have any money. How do you ask your friend to lend you money?

3-You are studying at home. Your younger brother opens the window and the cold wind blows right into your face and bothers you. You want to ask him to close it. What would you say?

4-You have bought a shirt from a big store for your father, but he doesn't like its color. You decide to go to the clothes store and ask the manager of the store to allow you to exchange the shirt. What would you say?

5-Your friend and you go to a restaurant to eat. You want to order and need to ask the waiter for the menu. What would you say?

6-You are writing your thesis and need to interview the president of a university whom you don't know. You know the president is very busy, but still want to ask her/him to spare one or two hours for your interview. What would you say?

7-For registration you need to fill out a couple of forms. You search all of your pockets and can not find a pen. You want to ask another student who is sitting next to you in the department hall. What would you say?

8-You were absent last Friday history class that you are enrolled in. So you decide to borrow your friend's notes to catch up with the rest of the class. What would you say to get this friend to lend you the notes?

9- You are a professor teaching a course in psychology. You want one of the students who is very competent and always contributes class discussion, to present a paper in a class a week earlier than scheduled. However, midterm exams are next week and she has a heavy course load. What would you say?

10- You really have to take this course in order to graduate, but you found that the course is already closed. So, you decide to ask the professor, whom you don't know, to allow you to take this course. What would you say to get this professor to permit you to participate in this course?

11-You have a paper due in one of your classes next week. However, you will be very busy this week and don't have any time to write it. You go to your professor's office to ask for more time to write the paper. How do you request an extension?

12-You are a librarian. Today a student is making a noise and disturbing other students. You don't know that student. However, you decide to ask the student to quiet down. What would you say?

13-A friend of yours from out of the town is paying you a visit. Both of you would like to take a photo together to remember this happy moment. You decide to ask a nearby person who is stranger to you, to do this favor. What would you say?

14-You and your friend are members of the college skiing club. You have just arrived at the mountain and see that your friend is applying sunscreen lotion. You want to use that lotion because you have forgotten to bring your own. How would you ask your friend?

15-Your English midterm exam is approaching, and you find that the date of the test is the same as that of your brother's wedding. You decide to ask the professor whom you don't know personally to rearrange another day especially for you to take this test. What would you say?

16-Your mother will be visiting from out of town and you want to pick her up at the airport. However, her flight arrives at 3:00 PM, but you have to work until 5:00 p.m. How do you ask your boss to let you out of work early?

17-You are a teacher. It's the beginning of the semester and you don't know the students yet. In class, the mobile phone of one of your students rings. You want to ask her/him to turn off the mobile phone. What would you say?

18- You are going to visit your friend, who lives in the college dormitory. You are on the campus, but you don't know where the room is? You are going to ask a student for the location of the dorm. How would you ask the student?

19-It's 7:00 a.m. and you want to go to work. You have to leave your daughter alone because her baby sitter is late. You decide to ask your friend, who lives in your neighborhood to take care of your little daughter in the meanwhile. What would you say?

20-You are the manager of a company. You are in a meeting with the other members of your company. You need to write some notes, but you realize that you don't have any paper. You turn to the person sitting next to you and you know her/him very well. What would you say?

21-Your class has just finished and you need a ride home. Your fellow classmate who was supposed to give you a ride is absent. As you come out of the class, you see an assistant professor. You decide to ask him/her to give a lift to you. What would you say?

22-You are the president of a university. Something is wrong with your computer. You have to finish some work which is due tomorrow. One of the students is very skillful in fixing computers. You don't know him/her. However, you want to ask him/her to fix your computer. What would you say?

23-You are applying for a scholarship, and you decide to ask a professor, who knows you very well as your academic advisor, to write a recommendation letter for you. What would you say to ask her/him to do this favor for you?

24-You are the owner of a big bookstore. It is the beginning of the semester, and you are very busy. Today you want to extend business hours by an hour. So, you decide to ask your clerk whom you know quite well, to stay after store hours. What would you say?

Table 1. Power and Social Distance Combinations

Combination	P	D	Situations
A	=	+	turning down the music; asking for a pen; taking a photo; asking for an address
B	=	-	lending some money; asking for notes; asking for lotion; taking care of a child
C	+	+	asking for a menu; asking to be quiet ; turning off the mobile phone; fixing the computer
D	+	-	losing the window; presenting the paper asking for some papers; staying more after store hours
E	-	+	asking for an interview; participating in the course; rearranging the exam's day; giving a lift
F	-	-	exchanging the shirt; asking for an extension; being out of work early; writing a letter

P: Power *D: Distance*

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Request Strategies by Learners

Strategy	Low F (%)	Mid F (%)	High F (%)
Mood Derivable	181 (34.60)	238 (24.48)	119 (18.91)
Performative	0 (0)	7 (0.72)	7 (1.11)
Hedge	18 (3.44)	44 (4.52)	34 (5.40)
Obligation	2 (0.38)	12 (1.23)	1 (0.15)
Want Statement	16 (3.05)	47 (4.83)	41 (6.51)
Suggestory	1 (0.19)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Preparatory	290 (55.44)	570 (58.64)	396 (62.95)
Strong hints	15 (2.86)	52 (5.34)	28 (4.45)
Mild hints	0 (0)	2 (0.20)	3 (0.47)
Total	523	972	*629*

Table 3. Chi- Square Value of Learners' Request Strategies

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi Square	90.98	18	*0.000*

P <0.05 Critical Value=28.86

Table 4. Frequency and Percentage of Request Strategies by All Groups

Strategy	Low F (%)	Mid F (%)	High F (%)	Native F (%)
Mood Derivable	181 (34.60)	238 (24.48)	119 (18.91)	48 (21.23)
Performative	0 (0)	7 (0.72)	7 (1.11)	0 (0)
Hedge	18 (3.44)	44 (4.52)	34 (5.40)	5 (2.21)
Obligation	2 (0.38)	12 (1.23)	1 (0.15)	7 (3.09)
Want Statement	16 (3.05)	47 (4.83)	41 (6.51)	19 (8.40)
Suggestory	1 (0.19)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Preparatory	290 (55.44)	570 (58.64)	396 (62.95)	126 (55.75)
Strong hints	15 (2.86)	52 (5.34)	28 (4.45)	21 (9.29)
Mild hints	0 (0)	2 (0.20)	3 (0.47)	0 (0)
Total	523	972	629	*226*

Table 5. Chi-Square Value of Requests by All Groups

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi Square	125.40	27	*0.000*

P <0.05 Critical Value=40.11

Table 6. Frequency and Percentage of Strategies by All Groups in Combination A

Strategy	Low F (%)	Mid F (%)	High F (%)	Native F (%)
Mood	23 (24.21)	26 (15.66)	6 (5.45)	7 (17.50)
Performative	0 (0)	2 (1.20)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hedge	6 (6.31)	8 (4.81)	3 (2.72)	0 (0)
Obligation	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Want	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1.81)	0 (0)
Suggestory	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Preparatory	63 (66.31)	119 (71.68)	92 (83.63)	31 (77.50)
Strong hints	3 (3.15)	11 (6.62)	7 (6.36)	2 (5.00)
Mild hints	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total	95	166	110	*40*

Table 7. Chi-Square Value of Combination A

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi Square	31.16	18	*0.02*

P < o.o5 Critical Value=28.86

Table 8. Frequency and Percentage of Strategies by All Groups in Combination B

Strategy	Low F (%)	Mid F (%)	High F (%)	Native F (%)
Mood	18 (19.56)	28 (16.76)	11 (10.28)	9 (23.07)
Performative	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hedge	2 (2.17)	6 (3.59)	6 (5.60)	0 (0)
Obligation	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Want	2 (2.17)	4 (2.39)	4 (3.73)	4 (10.25)
Suggestory	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Query	67 (72.82)	118 (70.65)	79 (73.83)	19 (48.71)
Strong hint	3 (3.26)	11 (6.58)	7 (6.54)	7 (17.94)
Mild hint	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total	92	167	107	*39*

Table 9. Chi-Square Value of Combination B

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi Square	29.60	15	*0.01*

P < o.o5 Critical Value=24.99

Table 10. Frequency and Percentage of Strategies by All Groups in Combination C

Strategy	low F (%)	Mid F (%)	High F (%)	Native F (%)
Mood	68 (74.72)	82 (49.69)	56 (51.85)	14 (36.84)
Performative	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hedge	0 (0)	3 (1.81)	3 (2.77)	0 (0)
Obligation	1 (1.09)	5 (3.03)	1 (0.92)	3 (7.89)
Want	3 (3.29)	3 (1.81)	5 (4.62)	1 (2.63)
Suggestory	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Query	15 (16.48)	63 (38.18)	38 (35.18)	17 (44.73)
Strong hint	4 (4.39)	8 (4.84)	4 (3.70)	3 (7.89)
Mild hint	0 (0)	1 (0.60)	1 (0.92)	0 (0)
Total	91	165	108	*38*

Table 11. Chi-Square Value of Combination C

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi Square	37.41	21	*0.01*

P < o.o5 Critical Value=32.67

Table 12. Frequency and Percentage of Strategies by All Groups in Combination D

Strategy	low F (%)	Mid F (%)	High F (%)	Native F (%)
Mood	44 (53.01)	62 (37.80)	39 (36.44)	11 (29.72)
Performative	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hedge	3 (3.61)	4 (2.43)	5 (4.67)	3 (8.10)
Obligation	1 (1.20)	4 (2.43)	0 (0)	2 (5.40)
Want	1 (1.20)	17 (10.36)	12 (11.21)	5 (13.51)
Suggestory	1 (1.20)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Query	31 (37.37)	62 (37.80)	41 (38.31)	15 (40.54)
Strong hint	2 (2.40)	14 (8.53)	9 (8.41)	1 (2.70)
Mild hint	0 (0)	1 (0.60)	1 (0.93)	0 (0)
Total	83	164	107	*37*

Table 13. Chi-Square Value of Combination D

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi Square	44.39	24	*0.007*

P < o.o5 Critical Value=36.41

Table 14. Frequency and Percentage of Strategies by All Groups in Combination E

Strategy	low F (%)	Mid F (%)	High F (%)	Natives F (%)
Mood	10 (12.82)	25 (17.12)	3 (3.26)	3 (9.00)
Performative	0 (0)	2 (1.36)	4 (4.34)	0 (0)
Hedge	4 (5.12)	10 (6.84)	13 (14.13)	0 (0)
Obligation	0 (0)	2 (1.36)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Want	5 (6.41)	4 (2.73)	8 (8.69)	1 (3.03)
Suggestory	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Query	57 (73.07)	97 (66.43)	62 (67.39)	24 (72.72)
Strong hint	2 (2.56)	6 (4.10)	1 (1.08)	5 (15.15)
Mild hint	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.08)	0 (0)
Total	78	146	92	*33*

Table 15. Chi-Square Value of Combination E

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi Square	48.56	24	*0.002*

P < o.o5 Critical Value=36.41

Table 16. Frequency and Percentage of Strategies by All Groups in Combination

Strategy	low F (%)	Mid F (%)	High F (%)	Natives F (%)
Mood	18 (21.42)	16 (9.75)	4 (3.80)	4 (10.64)
Performative	0 (0)	3 (1.82)	3 (2.85)	0 (0)
Hedge	3 (3.57)	13 (7.92)	4 (3.80)	2 (5.12)
Obligation	0 (0)	1 (0.60)	0 (0)	2 (5.12)
Want	5 (5.95)	19 (11.58)	10 (9.52)	8 (20.51)
Suggestory	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Query	57 (67.85)	112 (68.29)	84 (80.00)	20 (51.28)
Strong hint	1 (1.19)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (7.69)
Mild hint	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total	84	164	105	*39*

Table 17. Chi-Square Value of Combination F

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi Square	74.77	21	*0.000*

P < o.o5 Critical Value=32.67

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Borrowed Words in English and Chinese Vocabulary

Yingying Shen
Center for Lexicographical Studies
Guangdong University of Foreign Studies
Guang Zhou 510420, China
E-mail: selena121212@yahoo.com.cn

Abstract

Borrowed words are the products of language development and cultural contact. This paper probes into the brief study of borrowed words in both English and Chinese vocabulary. At the very beginning it generally introduces issues being covered, and the following two parts center on the study of borrowed words on the basis of dictionary research. Later, this paper figures out the significance of borrowed words study for EFL (English as Foreign Language) learners, particularly those Chinese ones, and gives some advice for borrowed words learning.

Keywords: Borrowed words, Vocabulary, Significance

1. Introduction

Language, both an important tool in human communication and a significant reflection of social development, undergoes rapid changes during the histories. As Sapir puts, "Languages, like cultures, are rarely sufficient unto themselves. The necessities of intercourse bring the speakers of one language into direct or indirect contact with those of neighboring or culturally dominant languages."(Sapir, 2001:159) Therefore, the result of continuous contact between different speaking communities is that people use each other's words to refer to some particular things, process, or ways of thinking. This kind of using others' languages is called borrowing, which is a natural result of language contact and exerts a profound impact on both vocabulary enrichment and mutual understanding of cultures.

Borrowing can go in both directions between the two languages in contact, such as English and Chinese. More and more linguists attach importance to and research on the borrowed words (i.e. words produced in the process of borrowing) in both English and Chinese vocabularies, while few of them relate borrowed words to its significance for English as Foreign Language (EFL) Learners, especially those Chinese ones. This paper tries to do a better job on this point and give some advice for borrowed words learning.

2. Chinese Borrowed Words in English Vocabulary

2.1 Brief History of English Words Borrowed From others

English is an open language and "in its development has managed to widen her vocabulary by BORROWING words from other languages". (Hu, 2004) It adopted a vast number of words from various languages during different periods of time, which can be viewed as follows: I. Germanic period (AD200-400): in this period, words were mainly borrowed from Latin. II. Old English Period (AD600-1100): Latin and Celtic were major borrowed words in this period and thousands of place and river names were given at that time. III. Middle English Period (AD1100-1500): Scandinavian became one of major borrowed words in the early period and later French influenced significantly in many aspects of English society, including politics, economy, and religion. IV. Early Modern English Period (AD1500-1650): The effects of the renaissance began to be seriously felt in England. There is a huge influx of Latin and Greek words, but many are borrowings from other languages, such as Arabic. V. Modern English (AD1650-present): great changes occur in the world during this period: major colonial expansion, industrial and technological revolution, immigration, cultural contact and exchange, etc. Major borrowed words in English vocabulary come from French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Flemish German…and, Chinese.

2.2 Studies on Chinese Borrowed Words

The KryssTal Web Site is a United Kingdom based educational and information web site by Kryss Katsiavriades and Talaat Qureshi in London. On this web site, we can click on any of interested fields related to our research. In order to find out examples of Chinese borrowed words in English language, we can click on the label of "borrowed words in English" and a picture comes out as in figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 Here

When letter "C" (which stands for "Chinese") is clicked on, a portion of Chinese borrowed words in English vocabulary can be found as in table 1.

Insert Table 1 Here

In order to study Chinese borrowed words in English vocabulary based on dictionary research, Vice Professor Zeng Tai Yuan of Dong Wu University, Taiwan, gave a close look to *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Fifth Edition) and found out that there were at least about 300 words in English vocabulary borrowed from Chinese. (Zeng, 2005) He classified these borrowed words into 23 categories and gave a clear list of them in his paper. Later in 2007, he studied on *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* and found out about 543 Chinese borrowed words were included in this dictionary. He also divided them into 23 types and figure out the majority of them are those words used in the field of places and minorities, plants, and food.

Similarly, this paper has done a research on *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (electronic edition) and finds out 24 borrowed words with Chinese origin, 2 with Cantonese origin, and 2 with Mandarin Chinese origin.

Insert Table 2 Here.

It is not difficult for us to understand that *LDOCE4*, as a dictionary mainly for learners, can only include some of the Chinese borrowed words (28) but not most of them like in *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (300) and *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (543). However, there are a few mistakes made by the compilers of *LDOCE4*. First, we can see in this form that "chow", a Chinese borrowed word, belongs to both Cantonese origin and Mandarin Chinese origin. As we know, Cantonese is a famous dialect spoken in Guangdong province and Hong Kong, and its pronunciation is not the same as Mandarin, although two of them are written in the same Chinese characters. Thus, it is impossible for one word belong to both Cantonese and Mandarin at the same time. Second, it is a little difficult to understand why the compilers of *LDOCE4* have to divide Chinese borrowed words into three categories: Chinese origin, Cantonese origin and Mandarin Chinese origin. As a matter of fact, all of these three categories belong to Chinese language, and it is unnecessary to separate them.

A more reasonable classification of Chinese borrowed words in English vocabulary is presented by Zou Yuanyan, whose paper provides brief history of the Chinese borrowed words in English and classifies them into four kinds: English words borrowed from Mandarin, from Cantonese, and from Amoy (another Chinese dialect spoken in southern Fujian province and Tai Wan). (Zou, 2006)

Nevertheless, all of our study and discussion mentioned in this part lead us to the conclusion that numbers of Chinese borrowed words do exist in English vocabulary and play an important role in cultural contact. They not only enrich the English vocabulary but also draw more and more western people's attention to know China in every aspect of life, such as Chinese food, clothes, plants, places, traditional medicine, and so on.

3. English Borrowed Words in Chinese Vocabulary

Similarly as English borrowed lots of words from Chinese, there are many English borrowed words in Chinese vocabulary concerning every aspect of social life. According to a stratified sampling researched by Zhang Peng in his MA degree thesis, examples of English borrowed words are divided into 14 groups: a. Politics; b. Arts and Literature; c. Philosophy; d. economics; e. Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry; f. Society, Culture, Education, Publication and Sports; g. Religion; h. Law; i. Military Science; j. Botany and Biology; k. Psychology, Physiology, Geology, and Geography; l. Building, Machinery, and Communication; m. Textile, Clothing, and Daily Necessities; n. Language, Foreign Affairs, and Others. (Zhang, 2005:10-15)

Based on his samples and other corpus collected from real life, this paper would like to classify Chinese borrowed words as in table 3:

Insert Table 3 Here

Examples above show that Chinese language have been greatly influenced by western languages, especially English, and meanwhile witnessed rapid changes in every aspect of social life including politics, economics, military, food, clothing, … and so on. According to Deng (Deng, 2005), the percentage of borrowed words in Chinese neologisms is much bigger than that in English neologisms, and it is pointed out by Tian that "with the increasing frequency of the language contact of Chinese with other languages, it is believed that more words will be borrowed into Chinese like English". (Tian, 2007:63)

To study English borrowed words in Chinese vocabulary based on dictionary research, this paper finds out that there are 142 "acronyms and words beginning with Greek or Latin letters" in the back matters of *The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (Chinese-English edition, 2002) and most of them are English borrowed words such as e-mail, CT, CPU, DOS, DVD, FAX, internet, and so on. What's more, this paper takes *Dictionary of Loanwords in Chinese* (a dictionary which contains more than 10,000 Chinese borrowed words from different languages such as Latin, French…etc.) as a sample and investigates all the Chinese words in the dictionary initiated with Pin Yin "a". Finally the result shows that in the total number (543) of loanwords beginning with "a", 230 are borrowed from English. It can be estimated generally that about 42.357% of borrowed words in Chinese vocabulary are English ones. That is to say, there are more than 4200 English borrowed words in Chinese vocabulary. – A huge number we cannot ignore. Examples can be seen as in figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 Here.

4. Significance of Borrowed Words for EFL Learners

Table 4 illustrates the proportion of total borrowed words in both English and Chinese vocabulary:

Insert Table 4 Here

This table shows that in the process of social contact and exchange, English and Chinese inevitably import a huge number of languages from other languages. Therefore, Chinese EFL learners have to encounter all the difficulties and challenges and learn borrowed words to meet the time's need. Chinese borrowed words in English and English ones in Chinese are of great significance for learners in the following aspects:

1) Vocabulary building: Undoubtedly, learning borrowed words can widen Chinese EFL learners' vocabulary and help them to improve their English proficiency. Borrowed words can be stored as culture-specific dictionary in their mental lexicon, and they can understand them when reading and use them when writing.

2) Interests in study: Borrowed words usually seem fashionable and interesting, which can attract Chinese young students deeply and stir up their enthusiasm and motivation in learning English.

3) Attitude towards Chinese culture: Borrowed words in English and Chinese vocabulary express that all the cultures and nations are equal in the process of development and contact, which reminds Chinese EFL learners not to ignore the importance of Chinese culture or language when learning foreign languages and to set up positive attitude towards both national and international cultural products.

4) Understanding of foreign culture: Meanwhile, borrowed words can help Chinese EFL learners gain a better and deeper understanding about foreign cultures, politics, economics, religion… etc., which will influence their values of life.

5) Communicating ability: Borrowed words learning has become a matter of practical necessity and enables Chinese EFL learners to communicate effectively with foreign language speakers, especially those English speakers. Without borrowed words learning, misunderstanding and mistake will occur and further conversation will be impossible.

6) Translating skill: It is not difficult to understand the importance of borrowed words learning when Chinese EFL learners translate Chinese into English or English into Chinese. Hu has stated four types of processes with regard to borrowing: loanwords, loan blend, loan shift, and loan translation. (Hu, 2004:102) Borrowed words are produced by means of loan translation and will in turn affect the translation of words such as culture-specific words or neologisms.

In addition, here are pieces of advice given to Chinese EFL learners for borrowed words learning:

1) Read more and collect more: Read more books, including textbooks, magazines, newspapers, books in the library, etc., and collect borrowed words in notebooks when reading.

2) Make use of information through all ways in life: Make full use of different information through all ways in life, such as watching television, listening to the radio, and surfing on line, to learn borrowed words and develop a good habit of learning.

3) Find out the root and rule: When face unknown words that may be borrowed ones, find out the root and origin of them in order to get a full understanding and after a period of accumulation, try to find out the rules of formation for the sake of easier further learning.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, borrowed words are a crucial part in the area of social contact, linguistic research, and vocabulary study. Findings and inadequacies of this paper can be seen as follows:

First, based on concerned website or dictionary research, numbers and categories of Chinese borrowed words in English vocabulary can be known and discussed. It is easier for linguists to do research concerned than ever before because of the development of computing technology and electronic English dictionaries.

Second, numbers and categories of English borrowed words in Chinese vocabulary can be estimated but it is much more difficult for researchers to calculate exactly and discuss fully on this field due to the lack of electronic Chinese dictionaries.

Third, English borrowed words in Chinese vocabulary greatly outnumber Chinese ones in English.

Last but not least, borrowed words learning are of great importance to Chinese EFL learners, but the significance covered in this paper is not adequate and profound enough, further discussion and exploration will be needed.

Dictionaries used:

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English UPDATED EDITION (CD-ROM 4th edition) *Longman Group UK Ltd* 2004.

The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary (Chinese-English edition) *Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press* 2002.

Liu Zhengtan et al. eds. *Hanyu Wailaici Cidian.* (Dictionary of Loanwords in Chinese). Hong Kong: Commercial Press; Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe. 1985.

References

Deng Zhongtian. (2005). On the Chinese and English Cultural Similarities and Differences from the Perspective of Neologism. *Teaching and research Chinese as a foreign language.* 6, 62.

Hu Zhuang lin. Linguistics. (2001). *A Course Book (Second Edition)*. Beijing: Beijing University Press, 101.

Sapir, E. (2001). *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech.* Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Tian lili. (2007). *A Comparative Study of Loanwords in English and Chinese in the Perspective of Language Contact.* MA Dissertation, Central South University.

Zeng Taiyuan. (2005). Cong niu jin ying yu ci dian jian bian di wu ban kan han yu wen hua te se ci ying yi fang xiang (Translating Chinese Culture-Specific Words into English – from a Perspective of *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* 5th edition). *Journal of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies.* B11, 74-77.

Zhang Peng. (2005). *Study on English Loan Words in Chinese.* MA Dissertation, Tianjin University of Finance & Economics, 10-15.

Zou Yuanyan. (2006). On Chinese Loanwords in English. *Journal of Chongqing Vocational & Technical Institute,* 5, 98-99.

Table 1. Words borrowed from Chinese

Word	Meaning	Notes
char	tea	Used in UK slang as in "a cup of char".
China	middle country	Asian country. Also used for porcelain in UK.
ginseng	image of man	Root of medicinal plant which is forked.
Japan	rising sun	Asian country.
kowtow	bump head	Showing respect.
kung fu	merit master	A martial art.
sampan	three sails	A three sailed boat.
shanghai	on the sea	In the old days men would be "shanghaied" - forced to serve in the navy.
tofu	spoilt bean	A soya bean extract. From "dou fu".
typhoon	big wind	Violent Asian storm. The Atlantic Ocean version is called a "hurricane".
yin and **yang**		Opposite characteristics.

Table 2. Chinese borrowed words in LDOCE4

Chinese origin (24):			
bok choy, *noun*;	feng shui[1], *noun*;	ginseng, *noun*;	gung-ho, *adjective*
kimchi, *noun*;	kowtow, *verb*;	kumquat, *noun*;	kung fu, *noun*
lychee, *noun*;	mahjong, *noun*;	pak choi, *noun*;	pidgin, *noun*
sampan, *noun*;	Shinto, *noun*;	soya, *noun*;	Tao, *noun*
tea, *noun*;	tycoon, *noun*;	typhoon, *noun*;	wok, *noun*
yang, *noun*;	yen, *noun*;	yin, *noun*;	yuan, *noun*
Cantonese origin (2):			
chop suey, *noun*;	chow[1], *noun*		
Mandarin Chinese origin (2):			
chow[1], *noun*;	chow mein, *noun*		

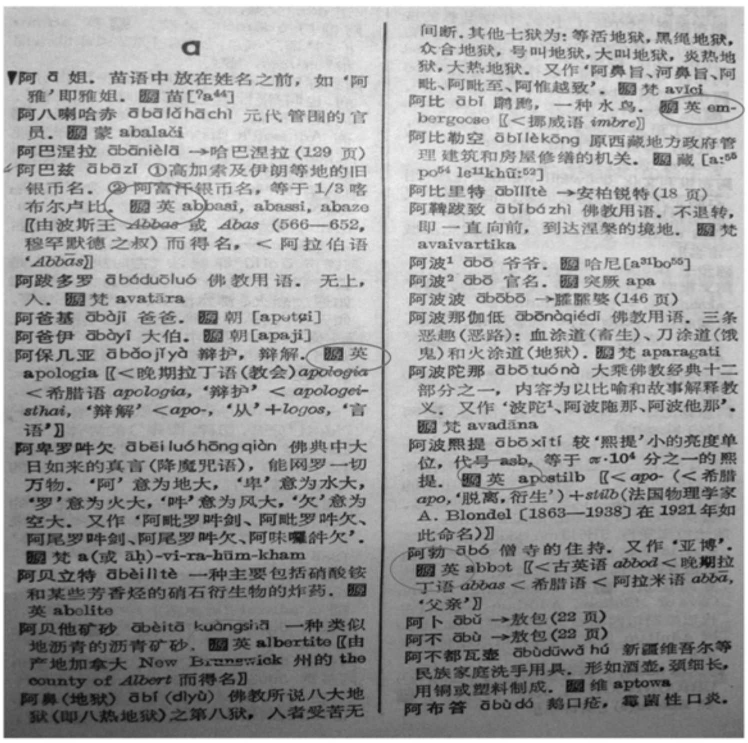
Table 3. Borrowed words in Chinese language

Politics	leng zhan (cold war), tang ning jie (downing street), fei bian she (Fabian Society), wu tuo bang (Utopia)
Economics	yin hang (bank), zhi pian (check), hua'er jie (Wall Street), ka te'er (cartel), xiong shi (Bear market), niu shi (Bull market)
Military	tan ke (tank), bo lang ning (browning), ge lin pao (Gatling gun), ka bing qiang (carbine)
Religion	a men (amen), an qi'er (angel), ye he hua (Jehovah), yi dian yuan (Eden garden), mi sa shu (missal), mu nai yi (Mummy), mu si lin (Moslem), gu lan jing (Koran), sa dan (Satan)
Food	lv se shi pin (green food), ken de ji (Kentucky), mai dang lao (McDonald's), zi zhu can (buffet), nai xi (milkshake), re gou (hot dog), sha ding yu (sardine), xi leng niu pai (sirloin steak), zha pi (a jar of beer), xue bi (Sprite), ke kou ke le (Coca-Cola), bai shi ke le (Pepsi-cola), ruan yin liao (soft drink), bai lan di (brandy), wei shi ji (whiskey), sha la (salad), bu ding (pudding), qiao ke li (chocolate), san ming zhi (sandwich)
Clothing	niu zi ku (jeans), mi ni qun (miniskirt), bi ji ni (bikini), ni long (nylon), T xu shan (T -shirt)
Daily life	sang na yu (sauna), tai yang yu (suntan), shi duo dian (store), xiang bo (shampoo), xi meng si (shermons), ma sai ke (mosaic), te fu long (teflon), xue jia (cigar), sha fa (sofa)
Art, Entertainment, Sport	jue shi yue (jazz music), fei zao ju (soap opera), mi huan yao gun yue (acid rock), jue shi yao gun (jazz rock), di si ke (disco), pi li wu (break dance), yao gun yue (rock and roll), ba lei wu (ballet), hua'er zi wu (waltz), sang ba (samba), tan ge (tango), pai dui (party), MTV (music television), di si ni le yuan (Disney land), liu liu qiu (yo-yo), hu la quan (hula-hoop), bao ling qiu (bowling), gao'er fu qiu (golf), la li sai (rally), ka ding che (karting), beng ji tiao (bunge jumping), ma la song (marathon), ao yun hui (Olympic Games)
Value of life	dai gou (generation gap), wen hua cha ju (culture gap), dan shen mu qin (bachelor mother), ying zhao nv lang (call girl), xi pi shi (Hippies), ya pi shi (Yuppies), yin pi shi (Yumpies), peng ke (punk)
Social position	bai ling (white collar), lan ling (blue collar), hui ling (gray collar), fen ling (pink collar), tie ling (iron collar)
Science and Technology	gao ke ji yuan (hi-tech park), gui gu (silicon valley), chuan zhen (fax), ji guang da yin ji (laser printer), dian shi dian hua (videophone), DNA, shi guan ying'er (test-tube baby), ke long (clone), PPS (pocket phone service), CD (compact disc), VCD (video-compact disc), DVD (digital video/ versatile disc), VTR (video tape recorder), VCR (video cassette recorder), jia ting lu xiang (family video)
Computer and Website	ying jian (hardware), ruan jian (soft ware), shu ju ku (data bank), dian zi you jian (E-mail), yin te wang (internet), Windows98, shu biao (mouse), dui hua kuang (dialog box), chao wen ben (hypertext), CAI (computer-assisted instruction), wang luo ren (cybernaut), wang luo chong lang zhe (cybersurfer), wang mi (cyber mania), wang ba (cyber bar)
Transportation	ba shi (bus), di shi (taxi), mo tuo che (motorcycle), ji pu che (jeep), qi lun ji lie che (turbo train), kong zhong ke che (airbus), ATV (air-terrain vehicle)
Health and Medicine	wei ta ming (vitamin), he'er meng (hormone), ma fei (morphine), ya pian (opium), a si pi lin (aspirin), pan ni xi lin (penicillin), ai zi bing (AIDS), liu xing bing (epidemic), SARS, fan shi lin (Vaseline), ka lu li (calorie), ni gu ding (nicotine), dian (iodine)

Table 4. Borrowed words in English and Chinese (Tian, 2007:52)

Language	Vocabulary	Loanwords	Percentage
English	1,000,000	500,000	50%
Chinese	70,000	10,000	14%

Figure 1. Borrowed words in English language



a

▼阿 ā 姐. 苗语中放在姓名之前，如‘阿雅’即雅姐. 源 苗[ʔa⁴⁴]

阿八喇哈赤 ābālǎhāchì 元代管围的官员. 源 蒙 abalači

阿巴涅拉 ābānièlā →哈巴涅拉(129 页)

阿巴兹 ābāzī ①高加索及伊朗等地的旧银币名. ②阿富汗银币名，等于 1/3 喀布尔卢比. 源 英 abbasi, abassi, abaze 〖由波斯王 Abbas 或 Abas (566—652, 穆罕默德之叔) 而得名，< 阿拉伯语 ‘Abbās〗

阿跋多罗 ābáduōluó 佛教用语. 无上，入. 源 梵 avatāra

阿爸基 ābàjī 爸爸. 源 朝 [apətɕi]

阿爸伊 ābàyī 大伯. 源 朝[apaji]

阿保几亚 ābǎojīyà 辩护，辩解. 源 英 apologia 〖<晚期拉丁语(教会)apologia <希腊语 apologia, ‘辩护’ < apologeisthai, ‘辩解’ <apo-, ‘从’+logos, ‘言语’〗

阿卑罗吽欠 ābēiluóhōngqiàn 佛典中大日如来的真言(降魔咒语)，能网罗一切万物. ‘阿’意为地大，‘卑’意为水大，‘罗’意为火大，‘吽’意为风大，‘欠’意为空大. 又作‘阿毗罗吽剑、阿毗罗吽欠、阿尾罗吽剑、阿尾罗吽欠、阿味㘕缽欠’. 源 梵 a(或 āḥ)-vi-ra-hūm-kham

阿贝立特 ābèilìtè 一种主要包括硝酸铵和某些芳香烃的硝石衍生物的炸药. 源 英 abelite

阿贝他矿砂 ābèitā kuàngshā 一种类似地沥青的沥青矿砂. 源 英 albertite 〖由产地加拿大 New Brunswick 州的 the county of Albert 而得名〗

阿鼻(地狱) ābí (dìyù) 佛教所说八大地狱(即八热地狱)之第八狱，入者受苦无间断. 其他七狱为: 等活地狱，黑绳地狱，众合地狱，号叫地狱，大叫地狱，炎热地狱，大热地狱. 又作‘阿鼻旨、河鼻旨、阿毗、阿毗至、阿惟越致’. 源 梵 avīci

阿比 ābǐ 鹇鹏，一种水鸟. 源 英 embergoose 〖<挪威语 imbre〗

阿比勒空 ābǐlèkōng 原西藏地方政府管理建筑和房屋修缮的机关. 源 藏 [a:⁵⁵ po⁵⁴ le¹¹khũ:⁵²]

阿比里特 ābǐlǐtè →安柏锐特(18 页)

阿鞞跋致 ābǐbózhì 佛教用语. 不退转，即一直向前，到达涅槃的境地. 源 梵 avaivartika

阿波¹ ābō 爷爷. 源 哈尼[a³¹bo⁵⁵]

阿波² ābō 官名. 源 突厥 apa

阿波波 ābōbō →膔膔婆(146 页)

阿波那伽低 ābōnàqiédī 佛教用语. 三条恶趣(恶路): 血涂道(畜生)、刀涂道(饿鬼)和火涂道(地狱). 源 梵 aparagati

阿波陀那 ābōtuónà 大乘佛教经典十二部分之一，内容为以比喻和故事解释教义. 又作‘波陀¹、阿波陁那、阿波他那’. 源 梵 avadāna

阿波熙提 ābōxītí 较‘熙提’小的亮度单位，代号 asb，等于 $\pi\cdot10^4$ 分之一的熙提. 源 英 apostilb 〖< apo- (< 希腊 apo, ‘脱离，衍生’) + stilb (法国物理学家 A. Blondel [1863—1938] 在 1921 年如此命名)〗

阿勃 ābó 僧寺的住持. 又作‘亚博’. 源 英 abbot 〖<古英语 abbod < 晚期拉丁语 abbas < 希腊语 < 阿拉米语 abbā, ‘父亲’〗

阿卜 ābǔ →敖包(22 页)

阿不 ābù →敖包(22 页)

阿不都瓦壶 ābùdūwǎ hú 新疆维吾尔等民族家庭洗手用具. 形如酒壶，颈细长，用铜或塑料制成. 源 维 aptowa

阿布答 ābùdá 鹅口疮，霉菌性口炎.

Figure 2. Sample collected from *Dictionary of Loanwords in Chinese*

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

An Investigation to Language Uses in Mongolian Learners' Third Language Acquisition

WU Baiyinna
Foreign Languages Institute, Inner Mongolia Normal University
Inner Mongolia, Huhhot, China, 010022
Tel: 86-471-2659-045 E-mail: byntnwu@gmail.com

Abstract

In Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, many Mongolian students are learning English as a third language. In the process of L3 teaching and learning, their mother tongue Mongolian, second language Chinese and target language English are involved. The present paper aims to find out teachers' and students' opinions of the use of the three languages in the third language teaching and learning by Mongolian students at university and the reasons to this phenomenon are discussed. Furthermore, their English learning experience and L2 proficiency are explored. The main findings revealed that Chinese teachers believe that English should be used to the fullest to maintain the maximum use of the target language with the help of Mongolian for the support; however, the majority of Mongolian teachers and Mongolian students believe that Chinese can be used as the main medium instructional language for various reasons, and it is effective to use all the three languages according to the different stages of teaching and the proficiency levels of the three languages.

Keywords: Language use, Target language, First language, L2 proficiency, L3 acquisition

1. The Languages Used in L3 Teaching and Learning of Mongolian Learners

As English has increasingly become popular in many Asian countries, recently English has been introduced and taught as one of the main foreign languages as one of the educational reforms in Autonomous Regions in China. Therefore, trilingual education has become a new phenomenon of language education in ethnic minority regions in China (Guo Tianxiang, Menggen qiqige and Tang Suge, 2003, pp.48-50). However, in most cases at university in Inner Mongolia, English is mainly taught by Chinese teachers through the learner's L2 Chinese, not by their native language Mongolian. Even some Mongolian teachers themselves are teaching English to Mongolian learners mainly in Chinese, but sometimes some of them do use Mongolian ignoring the fact that, to most Mongolian learners of English, their mother tongue ability is higher than that of their L2 Chinese and L3 English. One of the key reasons is that there are no suitable textbooks written particularly for Mongolian learners of English in Mongolian. Furthermore, the Mongolian teachers were taught English by Chinese teachers using the materials written in Chinese and English when they were students. Therefore, to some extent, they get used to thinking in Chinese, and it becomes easier for them to teach English in Chinese as a main medium language. Even some Mongolian teachers, who can not speak fluent Chinese, are teaching Mongolian learners English in Chinese and English. Mongolian teachers can teach English in Mongolian because there is no policy that they have to teach English to Mongolian learners of English in Chinese in Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. In brief, three languages are used in Mongolians learner's English teaching and learning process at university with the dominant of the learner's L2 Chinese in most cases.

2. Literature review

Recent theoretical and empirical literature has examined issues regarding teachers' uses of L1 and the TL in L2 and FL classrooms, student motivation, exposure to TL input, the appropriate teachers' use of the L1, aiming to promote TL learning at cognitive considerations. Many SL and FL educators insist that it is important for students to be exposed to input in the TL if their motivation is high (Krashen cited in Turnbull, M & Arnett, K, 2002, p.205), for L2 educators and researchers have long admitted the influence of student motivation on TL learning. However, it has been a hot discussion topic that how much exposure to TL input is optimal from theoretical and pedagogical perspectives. MacDonald (1993) contends that the teachers' maximized use of the TL in the classroom has an influence on student motivation, and relying too much on it may de-motivate students to learn (cited in Turnbull, M & Arnett, K, 2002, p.206).

However, the use of L1 in the teaching and learning is aimed to make second language learning more efficient. In the language classroom, L1 has been used effectively for various purposes, for instances, the mother tongue can be used as a resource for the learners to draw their background knowledge; Most learners prefer to use L1 as an effective learning strategy in the form of translation technique; L1 use can lower the affective barriers to enhance L2 acquisition.

Cook contends that students' L1 can be used as a resource instead of a hindrance to successful learning leading to create more authentic users of the TL. Van Lier (1995, p.38) claims that teachers' use of the learner's L1 helps to promote intake and the teachers can use L1 "judiciously" to facilitate the intake procedure, and the teachers' use of the L1 can provide an enhanced form of input that is more easily processed, and as a result, the learners can understand the TL better. Cognitively, according to Brooks and Donato (1994, p.262) that the learners can use their L1 to convey meaning to and to sustain communication in the TL.

From the preceding related studies on the teachers' uses of L1 and TL, it is commonly believed that it is effective to learn a foreign language through learners' most familiar language which is always their native language in most cases considering intake, while, in terms of providing plenty of TL input, TL can be used. There has been little research studying how learners' L2 can be used in TL learning. However, as far as L3 teaching and learning of Mongolian adults at university in Inner Mongolia are concerned, three languages are involved: Mongolian, Chinese and English. According to Tremblay Marie-Claude (2006, p.109), L2 proficiency and exposure play a significant role in third language acquisition. However, from the theory of recency in third language acquisition, which can have impact on cross-linguistic influence (Cenoz Jasone, 2001, p.8), Chinese is more actively used than Mongolian learners' mother tongue in the teaching and learning in most cases. Therefore, the author conducted a survey with Mongolian and Chinese teachers, and 3 groups of students with different instructional settings to find out the answers to the following: What are the teachers and students attitudes towards the languages used both in the teaching and learning? What is the effective way to teach Mongolian adults English, in their mother tongue Mongolian, or in their TL English, or in their L2, or a combination of any of the three languages? The answers will be discussed based on the results from the questionnaire.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants in the present study consist of 32 university teachers of English (22 Mongolian, 10 Chinese) and three different groups of 100 Mongolian learners of English who voluntarily answered the questionnaires: Group 1 [Teacher (M)-Lg. (C/M)], Group 2 [Teacher (C)-Lg. (C)], Group 3 [Teacher (M)-Lg. (M)]. Teacher (M) means that the teacher of group 1 is Mongolian, [Lg. (C/M)] means that the main classroom languages for group 1 are Chinese and Mongolian; Teacher (C) means that the teacher of group 2 is Chinese and Lg. (C) means that the classroom language for group 2 is mainly Chinese; Teacher (M) means that the teacher of group 3 is Mongolian and Lg. (M) means that the classroom language used for group 3 is Mongolian. Of all the respondents of the teachers, 10 Mongolian teachers and 10 Chinese teachers are from Inner Mongolia Normal University, 12 Mongolian teachers are from Inner Mongolia College. Mongolian teachers all graduated from Inner Mongolia Normal University, who were taught English by almost all Chinese teachers in Chinese, 73% have been teaching English less than 5 years, 27% for more than 5 years, but less than 10 years. The Mongolian teachers are teaching English in Chinese most of the time, and sometimes use Mongolian and English.

Among Chinese teachers, 67% have been teaching English less than 5 years, 11% for more than 5 years, but less than 10 years, 22% for more than 10 years. However, 89% have been teaching English to Mongolian learners less than 5 years, 11% for more than 5 years, but less than 10 years. Chinese teachers teach Mongolian learners English in Chinese most of the time and then sometimes use English. There are 100 Mongolian university students who participated in this study, 80% had learned English to some degree before entering university (See Note 1). Twenty percent didn't learn any English before they came to university.

3.2 Questionnaires

There are six questions for group 1 and 2 (See Note 3), nine questions for group 3: Group 1[Teacher (M)-Lg. (C/M)], Group 2 [Teacher (C)-Lg. (C)], and Group 3 [Teacher (M)-Lg. (M)]. There are seven questions for Mongolian teachers and six for Chinese teachers (See Note 2) to collect background information about Mongolian learner's L2 proficiency, the years of teaching/learning English, the languages the Mongolian students expect their teachers to use, and the languages the teachers use in English class, the percentages of the languages the teachers use for one class. (See Appendix 1 & 2)

4. Results

The questionnaire asks the participants' background information on the languages the teachers use in Mongolian learners' English teaching, the languages the Mongolian learners expect their teachers to use in teaching, the participants' English learning experience, Mongolian learners' L2 proficiency and University Entrance Chinese score. In the following section, the results will be summarized briefly.

4.1 The Teachers' Use of Languages

Of the 10 Chinese teachers, 85%-90% used Chinese, and 10%-15% used English when they taught English to Mongolian learners. Among 22 Mongolian teachers, the mean percentages of the languages they used in English teaching were: 66% Chinese, 22% English and 12% Mongolian, and four of them didn't provide the exact numbers, but the answers were that they used Chinese mostly, sometimes Mongolian and seldom English. Furthermore, three participants said that they didn't use Mongolian, and two said that they didn't use any English.

4.2 The Language(s) the Mongolian Learners Expect Their Teachers to Use

As shown in figure 1, 36% of the participants want to learn English in Chinese, and 13% of them prefer learning English in Mongolian and Chinese, 20% of them say that they like to learn English in Mongolian (most of them are from group 3). Group 3: [Teacher (M)-Lg. (M)]. Therefore, it is interesting to find out that the percentage of the Mongolian learner's preference to learn English in Chinese or Chinese and Mongolian is bigger than that in Mongolian. In other words, the participants in the present study prefer learning English through their L2 or the combination of their L1 and L2. This phenomenon needs to be discussed further.

4.3 The Mongolian Learner's English Learning Experience

Group 1: the teacher is Mongolian, but mainly uses Chinese for classroom language with some Mongolian; Group 2: the teacher is Chinese and mainly uses Chinese as a classroom language; Group 3: the teacher is Mongolian and uses Mongolian mainly as a classroom language.

A few years ago, there were few students who had learned English when they came to university, but recently English has been introduced in Mongolian middle schools, although they are not required to take English test in the university entrance exam. However, as revealed in Figure 2, 80% of the three groups of the participants had the learning experience of English, to some degree, before they came to university, which was not predicted.

4.4 Mongolian Learners' L2 Proficiency

As can be seen in Table 1, the highest mean score is 121 from group 2 with the teacher Chinese, who mainly uses Chinese as a classroom language. The lowest one is 109 from group 3 with the Mongolian teacher teaching mainly in Mongolian. Group 2 is in the middle.

Table 2 presents the SPSS output of one-way ANOVA of three group learners' L2 proficiency, showing that the F value was significant at a .001 level, and from the Post Hoc Tests, it is clear that between group 1 and 3, group 2 and 3, their University Entrance Chinese Score is significantly different at .032 and 0.001 respectively. To summarize this analysis, it is obvious that there are differences in the L2 proficiency among the three groups.

5. Discussion

According to the related studies, it is effective for L2 learners to learn the TL in their mother tongue. In most cases, SL learners' mother tongue ability is higher than any other languages they know, although there are obviously some exceptions. However there is little research studying how to use learner L2 and what extent the learners L2(s) should be used in the TL acquisition. Therefore, in the present study, the questionnaire was designed to investigate what language(s) the teachers use and what language(s) the learners expect their teachers to use in Mongolian learner's L3 teaching and learning, and gather the participants' background information of English learning experience and their Chinese language competence.

The results indicate that the Chinese teachers use Chinese more than 85% of the time, and of the Mongolian teachers, 66% use Chinese. However, for 10-20% of the time, they use English to teach Mongolian learners English. Only around 10% Mongolian is used, and three teachers said that they did not use Mongolian at all. It can be concluded that the Mongolian learners are learning English through their L2 Chinese most of the time and Mongolian is used very seldom at the universities in which the questionnaire was conducted.

The Mongolian students are learning English in Chinese are because there are not enough Mongolian English teachers, and the Mongolian teachers are also teaching English to Mongolian learners in Chinese most of the time. The reasons are first the Mongolian English teachers, they themselves learned English in Chinese and used the materials written in Chinese, so to some extent, they get used to thinking in Chinese and using Chinese, and it is easier for them to teach in Chinese. Second they have the ability to teach in Chinese. Third they lack the supplementary materials written in Mongolian to support their teaching. As revealed in figure 1, around half of the Mongolian learners responded that they expected their teachers to use Chinese (36%), or Chinese and Mongolian (13%), or either Chinese or Mongolian in their English class (13%). This finding is different from the research done at Nara Educational University (Goihan, 2005). Her findings indicate that most of the participants prefer learning English in Mongolian and using the materials written in Mongolian. One of the possible reasons caused the different result is that some of her subjects were from Huhhot Mongolian Middle school, therefore, some of the subjects' Chinese ability was not good enough to understand English lessons in Chinese, especially those who just came from remote and pastoral area, particularly from western part of Inner Mongolia.

Some of the possible reasons that most of the participants in the present study want to learn English in Chinese are most of the Mongolian learners at university do not seem to have much difficulty in understanding the English lesson in Chinese, since they have already learned Chinese for nine years starting from their third year at elementary school with a lot of input and exposure living. There are many chances for most of the Mongolian students to use and practice Chinese outside of the classroom, which is quite different from the learning environment in which English is learned. It seems that some students get used to the way of teaching in Chinese when they began to learn English at middle schools. Finally, another key reason is that they want to improve their Chinese language ability, and most of them agree that it is very important and necessary for Mongolian learners to improve Chinese for further study or getting a better job after their graduation. It is true that they sometimes have to challenge Han Chinese students for going to post graduate school or getting a better work position.

Mongolian students begin to learn Chinese from their third year at elementary school and they have already had nine years experience of learning Chinese when they come to university. However, their level of Chinese is varied, which is confirmed by the result of one-way ANOVA of the three group learners' University Entrance Chinese Language score. So the students with different L2 proficiency level have different perceptions on the languages used in their teaching and learning.

From the above discussion, there are obvious different beliefs between Mongolian teachers and students, and Chinese teachers. Most of the Chinese teachers think English should be taught in Mongolian and English, not including Chinese, for Mongolian is the learners' mother tongue, which is better than their Chinese because they do not quite understand Mongolian students' Chinese ability, and English should be used thinking of providing learners as much input as possible. While most of the Mongolian teachers and students propose that the three languages should be used for instruction and developing materials because Mongolian teachers share the same experience of learning English with the Mongolian students in this study.

6. Conclusion

The study reveals what beliefs teachers and students have about the key factor: language uses in the third language teaching and learning. It seems to be effective to use Mongolian or Chinese or a combination of Chinese and Mongolian at the beginning stages regarding better intake and step by step, the amount of the using English can be increased for the input perspective. It is very essential to consider carefully the amount of English use in Mongolian learner's English learning, for on the one hand, the teachers' maximized use of the TL in the classroom has an impact on student motivation, and is perceived as a chance to give students maximum exposure to the target language and on the other hand, relying too much on it may cause de-motivation to students. Furthermore, considering making good use of the learners previously learned knowledge: their L1, especially the L2 Chinese should be used for the support to L2 acquisition. To what extent the languages should be used, depend on the proficiency levels of the languages, the stages of the teaching, the nature of the course and the goal of the task. All those factors should be taken into account in using the three languages involved in the third language acquisition of Mongolian students in multilingual contexts in China. The implication of the present study provides some ideas regarding language uses in other four Autonomous Regions in China.

References

Brooks, F. & Donato, R. (1994). Vygotskian Approaches to Understanding Foreign Language Learner Discourse during Communicative Tasks. Hispania, 77, 262-274.

Cenoz Jasone. (2001). The Effects of Linguistic Distance, L2 Status and Age on Cross-linguistic Influence in Third Language Acquisition. *Cross-linguistic Influence in Third Language Acquisition*: Psycholinguistic Perspective , 8-10.

Goihan. (2006). An Effective English Language Teaching that Contributes to Ethnic Minority Education in Inner Mongolia, China. A Thesis Presented for Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of Master Degree of Education.

Guo Tian xiang, Meng gen qi qi ge, Tang Suge. (2003). Considerations on the Reform of Bilingual and Trilingual Teaching in Inner Mongolia. Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University. Vol.15, No.1, 48-50.

Poulisse Nanda and Bongaerts Theo (1994). First Language Use in Second Language Production. Applied Linguistics 15/1, 36-57. Oxford University Press.

Tremblay Marie-Claude. (2006). Cross-linguistic Influence in Third Language Acquisition: The Role of L2 Proficiency and L2 Exposure. CLO/OPL, Vol.34, 109-110.

Turnbull, M & Arnett, K. (2002). "Teachers' uses of the Target and First Language in Second and Foreign Language Classrooms." Annual Review of Applied Linguistics 22, 204-218.

Van Lier, L. (1995). The Use of the L1 in L2 Classes. Babylonia, 2, 37-43.

Notes

Note 1. Some learned one year at junior middle school, some learned for two years, but some learned one year at Senior high school, but some learned six years from junior middle to senior high school. Some only learned a few words, and some sentences.

Note 2. Question No.7 is not included in the questionnaire for Chinese teacher.

Note 3. The questions 4, 5, and 6 are not included in the questionnaire for Group 1 and Group 2 students.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for the teachers

Please answer the following questions.

1. How many English teachers are there at your school?
2. How many Mongolian English teachers are there at your school?
3. How many years have you taught English?
4. How many years have you taught English to Mongolian learners?
5. What languages do you use when you teach English to Mongolian learners?
6. What is the approximate percentage of the language(s) you use in one lesson when you teach English to Mongolian learners?
7. If you use Mongolian when you teach English to Mongolian learners, when do you use it? (note 2)

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for the students (Translated Version)

Please answer the following questions.

Grade: Age: Sex:

1. Where are you from?
2. Did you learn any English before you came to university? yes/no
3. When did you begin to learn English? How long have you learned?
4. Have you learned English in Chinese? Where and how long did you learn? (Note 3)
5. Are you learning English in Chinese somewhere else?
6. When does your English teacher use Chinese in your English class? What is the approximate percentage of the use of Chinese?
7. What language(s) do you want your English teacher to use to teach you?
8. What is the purpose of your English learning?
9. What is the score of your Chinese University Entrance Exam?

Table 1. Statistics for the participants' University Entrance Chinese Exam Score

		Group1	Group2	Group3
N	Valid	46	31	19
	Missing	53	68	80
Mean		114.6087	121.0645	109.6842
Std. Error of Mean		1.79626	1.40425	2.09992
Median		115.0000	121.0000	106.0000
Mode		115.00	120.00	103.00(a)
Std. Deviation		12.18283	7.81851	9.15334
Variance		148.421	61.129	83.784
Skewness		-1.059	-.652	.702
Std. Error of Skewness		.350	.421	.524
Kurtosis		1.762	1.056	-.457
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.688	.821	1.014
Range		62.00	38.00	32.00
Minimum		76.00	100.00	96.00
Maximum		138.00	138.00	128.00
Sum		5272.00	3753.00	2084.00

Table 2. One-way ANOVA of the three group learners' University Entrance Chinese Exam score

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1634.473	2	817.237	7.584	.001
Within Groups	10020.933	93	107.752		
Total	11655.406	95			

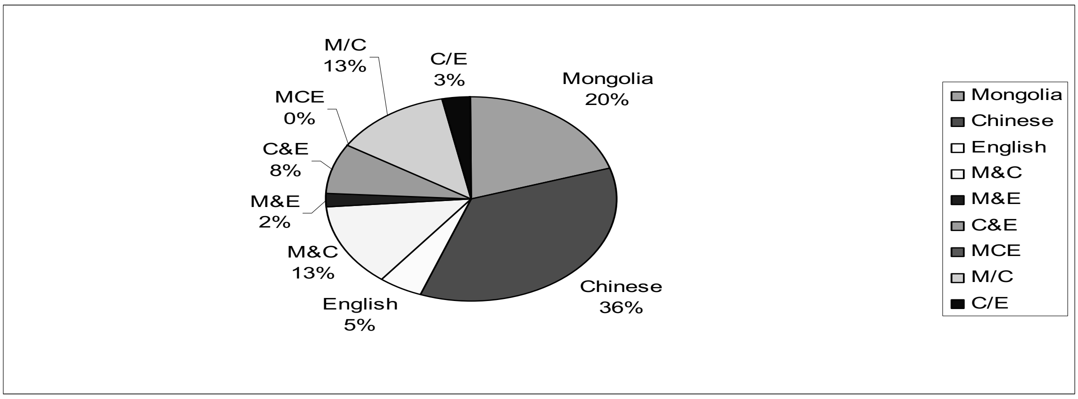


Figure 1. The percentages of the participants' preference of the languages they expect their English teachers to use

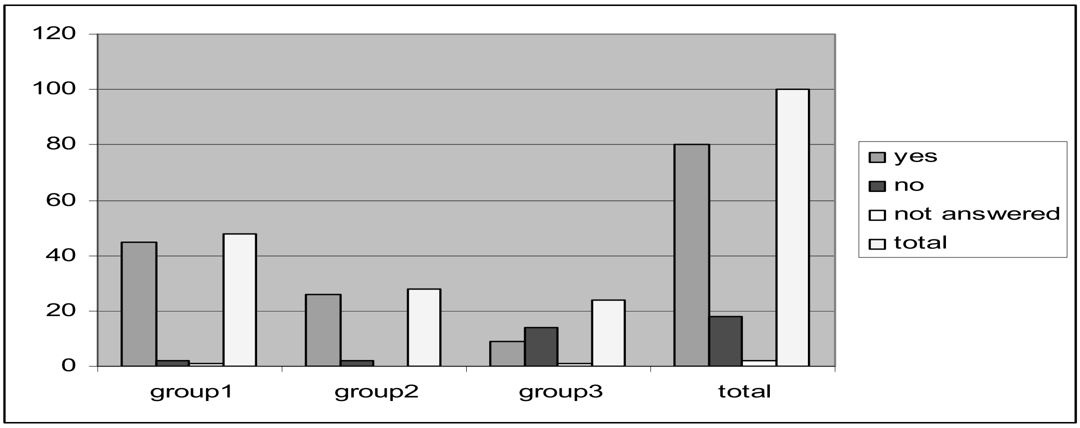


Figure 2. The three groups of learners' learning experience of English before entering university

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Communicative Teacher Talk in the English Classroom

Xuelian Lei
The School of Foreign Languages
Hangzhou Normal University
Hangzhou 310036, China
Tel: 86-571-2888-7744 E-mail: thundersnow@126.com

Abstract

Communicative approach has become popular in ELT in recent years. Good teacher talk lays focus on how effectively it could promote genuine communication in the classroom. In this essay, communicative teacher talk is studied, and its features are explored based on authentic classroom transcripts, and a summary of the existing problems is provided.

Keywords: Communicative, Teacher talk, Features, Problems

1. Introduction

"Creating a real life situation in English language teaching" has become a fashion in recent years. To be exact, that is the communicative approach. It provides a way to solve the problem that has existed in ELT for many years. The problem is that the students, after receiving several years of English teaching, are still unable to use the language, to communicate with the language. The communicative app roaches have suggested that one goal of English language teaching should be to promote genuine and natural classroom communication.

Until comparatively recently, teacher talk in the EFL classroom was considered to be a problematic area for language teachers. For one time, it was thought that "good" teacher talk meant "little" teacher talk, since

too much teacher talk deprived students of opportunities to speak. However, it should be the "quality" rather than the "quantity" that counts. "Good teacher talk" should be judged by how effectively it was able to facilitate learning and promote communicative interaction in the classroom. The teacher talk that promotes the facilitation of classroom interaction is therefore called communicative. The teacher talk includes, for example, the kind of questions they ask, the speech, modifications they make when talking to learners, and the way they react to students errors.

2. Features of Communicative Teacher Talk

If we pursue real communication in the classroom, there are a number of characteristics of teacher talk, which we identify as being communicative.

2.1 Referential Questions

Referential questions are genuine questions for which the teacher does not know the answers and therefore has a genuine communicative purpose. This is in contrast to displaying their understanding of knowledge. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that in the nowadays classrooms, the vast majority of questions teachers ask are display questions without communicative purposes. While in real life, most questions are referential. There is a marked difference between typical classroom talk and non classroom talk in this respect.

2.2 Content Feedback

Feedback on content involves responding to the content of what learners are saying, rather than commenting solely on the form. After all, if no attention is paid to the meanings the learner is expressing, there is no point in asking referential questions.

2.3 Avoidance of the IRF Sequence

IRF sequence goes like this: the teacher asks a question and the students give the answer; then the teacher provides his/her comments on the answer as feedback. This is the typical sequence of the classroom talk. The structure of spoken discourse outside the classroom is usually more complex and flexible than this. When we taught College English Book 3 for the first time, our teaching method experienced a painful change. In this reform process, we could say that the three features above found good expression in the teaching. Following are the transcripts to illustrate the change.

Transcript A:

T: Today, we are going to study Lesson Six "The Human Touch". First, I will give you several minutes to go through the text, and after that, I have several questions for you . . . ok now?

S: Yes.

T: Who is O' Henry?

S1: Of course, a writer.

T: Good. Who knows more about the writer?

S2: A famous writer.

T: Right. Who knows why he is known as a famous writer?

S3: Sorry.

T: Don't worry. Think it over.

S4: He is a famous short story author.

T: Fine. What else do you know about him?

S4: Sorry.

T: Ok. Now, let's study the new words in this text. The first one is "victim". "Victim" means person, animal, etc. suffering death, injury or loss. Can you make a sentence with "victim"?

S5: Sorry, I can't do it.

T: Ok.

We view the class as a failure for it is a typical uncommunicative fragment of classroom talk. The class was thought of as uncommunicative simply because it fails to exhibit features of communication which is in contexts outside the classroom. Our questions are all display questions, since the purpose is to know if the students understand the text and the words, and

to enable them to display their knowledge. Our feedback to the students' responses is simply acknowledgements to mean that the answer is acceptable. The talk obviously follows the IRF sequence. That is, the teacher asks a question, then the student responds, and the teacher asks another. Soon, we find that the students easily get bored, and gradually they become more and more uncooperative. They begin to talk to each other, flip through the book or even fall asleep in the class. We know that it is not the students that are to blame, but the teaching, the method. Then we experimented with a new approach to classroom questioning and initiation as is rep resented by Transcript B.

Transcript B:

T: Hi, Sunny, do you like reading novels?

S1: Yes, of course. I read a lot in my spare time.

T: Ha, the same with me. Then, which novel do you like best?

S1: Oh, "Gone with the Wind " is my favorite book, and I have ever read "A farewell to Arms". I could say it is perfect.

T: I have read it for several times, to tell you the truth. And I find the "Gone with the Wind" is very attractive indeed. Now, here comes the question, have you read the "The Gif t of the Magi"?

S1: Oh, of course. The story is very impressive.

T: But I wonder who wrote it?

S2: O' Henry.

T: Great. Who can tell me what novels he had written besides this one?

S3: The Cop and the Anthem.

T: Good, Lesson Six tells us a story written by the same author. Now let us look at what happened to the girl named Johnsy and why Sue called the painted leaf Behrman's masterpiece. Read the text and tell me the answers.

(Several minutes later)

S4: Sue's roommate Johnsy caught pneumonia, and she decided that she would die when the last ivy leaf fell.

T: Good. . . Now let us relax a little. Jason, do you like drawing?

S5: Yes, I began to draw when I was a little boy.

T: Oh. How do you tell the genuine from the fake ones?

S5: Ha. . . I. . . I. . . perhaps, I think it is not an easy job for me if the fake is too much like the real one.

T: Now, let's come to the second question.

S6: Because it was so perfect that the girls both mistook it for the real thing.

We chose Transcript B not because we think it is flawless but because we feel it is an example of genuine interaction between ourselves and the students, and in particular because WE consider it a breakthrough with the class. In the past, students were reluctant in initiating discussions, asking or answering questions during the class probably because the questions were not communicative and they were not sure about their language ability. During the class, insecurities were somewhat forgotten as the students forgot about the classroom context and enthusiastically attempted to answer the questions they are interested in. More real communication was seen when they began to differ in their opinions.

In the class talk, most of the questions were referential with the communicative purpose and the teacher's response was on the content rather than on the form.

2.4 Student initiated Talk

Acquisition is facilitated by the negotiation of meaning in interaction. Teachers should try to negotiate meaning with students, through asking for clarification and repetition, and giving students opportunities to interrupt the teachers. Although there is usually much less learner initiated than teacher initiated content in classroom, it is usually from the former that learners claim to have learned the most.

Some teachers give the students absolutely no space meaningful negotiations. They are complete authority ignoring the students' contribution, in fear that the teaching objectives will not be met. There is no interaction between students. They only allow time for this, if any, in the free practice towards the end of the lesson, and thus the lesson not at all flowing along the interactive path.

Usually the teacher does all the talking, and then the students are left on their own. Then, how should the teacher react if the students ask questions? Does the teacher simply provide the answer or guide the students to solve the problem by themselves? It is easy, in any problem solving situation, for the wrong person to become responsible for solving the learning problems. Obviously, providing the answers promptly deprives the learner of opportunities to learn how to solve problems and snuff the communication between the teacher and the learner. So, the key question is often not how to solve the problem itself, but how to make sure that the right person solves it. The teacher should always ensure that she herself and the learners play their proper roles in problem solving processes. The following two transcripts show the difference between teacher initiated (Transcript C) and learner initiated (Transcript D) talk.

Transcript C

S: Excuse me, I don't understand this word.

T: Ok. Let me see if I can help. Ah, yes, delegate'. Well, for example, if I ask you to do the things that I normally do, like cleaning the blackboard or giving out your exercise books, etc. I am delegating. ' Is that clear for you now?

S: Yes. I think so.

T: OK.

Transcript D

S: Excuse me, I don't understand this word.

T: Hm, delegate. So the meaning has to be found. Do you remember seeing it before anywhere?

S: Ah, yes, now I remember. I think it was in the last unit. (flipping through the pages) Here it is. It means to get someone else to do something that you normally do yourself.

T: Yes, can you think of an example?

S: Yes, like when you ask one of us to clean the blackboard, or give out the books. Then you delegate those jobs to us, right?

T: Good.

2.5 The Teaching of Value Rather Than Significance

It is necessary to draw a distinction between two different kinds of meaning, one of which refers to the explicit meanings that language items have as elements of the language system, and the other is that part of meaning that the language items have when they are actually put to use in acts of communication. The first kind of meaning is called significance, and the second kind is value. During the class, it is the value rather than significance that should be taught. What the students are concerned about is the value, because they can find the significance in text books and dictionaries easily.

Let us suppose that we wish to teach the present continuous tense. The typical way of significance teaching goes like this, which can still be seen in many of our current teaching practice. The teacher opens the door, saying "I am opening the door", and getting a number of students to do the same while he says "he is opening the door; they are opening the door", and so on. Then the teacher asks some students to write on the blackboard while commenting "I am writing on the blackboard; he is writing on the blackboard; they are writing on the blackboard". The teacher tries to show what the p resent continuous tense signifies and how students can use the rule to develop sentences. But these sentences have little communicative significance in real life situations?

3. Problems in the Communicative Teacher Talk

We have discussed above that the features of genuine communication are the use of referential questions rather than display ones. The use of referential questions over display questions is likely to stimulate a greater quantity of classroom interaction. Furthermore, the turn of the conversation should not be the fixed pattern: teacher asks student answers teacher responds. Yet, research has found that display questions and the IRF sequence always appears in the parent child conversation. The structure resembles that which takes place in the ELT classroom.

(Mother and Jack look at pictures)

M: What are those?

J: Shells.

M: Shells, yes. You've got some shells, haven't you? What's that?

J: Houses.

Parent-child interactions resemble those in the classroom in that the goal of both discourses is learning or education. The display questions and the IRF sequence are interaction features well suited to this goal. In the class, the teacher acts as the transmitter of knowledge and a valuable source of input for the learner. Sometimes it seems that the display questions are necessary for the teacher to use to test the learners' knowledge. The business of learning is accomplished through these features. As to the teaching of value rather than significance, the circumstances of classroom are restricted, how could all the values of the meanings are taught in the classroom, since there is no simple equation between linguistic forms and communicative functions. Also, the teachers live and work with grammatical and lexical syllabuses, and the textbooks have little relation to the world the learner lives in.

The contradiction is that: how can teaching be made more truly communicative by breaking the constraints within which most teachers work?

The free conversation outside the classroom has many features of its own. In order to carry on a free talk, the participants of the conversation must be unrestricted and all of them share the responsibility for managing and monitoring the progress of the discourse.

The ELT lesson could become identical to real2life conversations, provided that the learners regard the teacher as a fellow2conversationalist of equal status rather than as a teacher. The teacher should not direct the conversation. However, the stated purpose of ELT lesson is to teach English to foreigners. As soon as the teacher instructs the learner to have conversation in English, the interaction could not be genuine conversations as defined here. To replicate conversation, the lesson would cease to be a lesson and become a conversation, which does not have any underlying pedagogical purpose. It is therefore very hard for teachers to produce genuine and natural communication in the classroom.

So, the problem is whether it is possible for teachers to replicate genuine or natural communication in the classroom.

To answer this question, one thing must be made clear is whether the classroom can accommodate all kinds of communications in ELT. The criterion for assessing the communicativeness of classroom discourse is taken from what is thought to constitute communicative behavior in the world outside the classroom. The criteria might be generally true of informal gatherings of group s of friends but certainly not of more formal gatherings. Communication at such events tends to follow a very different pattern, determined by their own rules and conventions.

Similarly, the classroom, typically a large, formal gathering which comes together for pedagogical rather than social reasons, will also have its own rules and conventions of communication, understood by all those present. These patterns are likely to be very different from the norms of turning taking and communicative interaction, which operate in small, informal, social gatherings outside. That is not to deny the importance of analyses of the properties of spoken discourse found in contexts outside the classroom. They shed light on what the wider teaching goal should be, and suggest the ways that the communication in classroom should be moderated. But, that is very different from suggesting that the classroom only needs to replicate communicative behavior outside the classroom in order that the classroom context, genuine communication can be redefined, and better solutions can be found.

References

Brumfit, C. J. & Johnson, K. (1983).*The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cullen, R. (1998). *Teacher Talk and the Classroom Context*. ELT Journal, (52 /1): 1792186.

Johnson, K. (1983). *Communicative Syllabus Design and Methodology.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Lynch, T. Nudge. (1997). *Nudge: Teacher Interventions in Task Based Teacher Talk*. ELT journal, (51 /4): 3172325.

Malamah Thomas. (1987). *A Classroom Interaction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Richards, C. J. (1985). *The Context of Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seed house, P. (1997). *Classroom Interaction: Possibilities and Impossibilities.* ELT Journal, (50 /4): 16224.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

A Cross Mapping of Temporal at –ba "Forward and Backward Translation"

Amna A. Hasan
School of Language Studies & Linguistics
Faculty of Social Sciences and Linguistics
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia
E-mail: amna@ukm.my

Imran Ho Abdullah
School of Language Studies & Linguistics
Faculty of Social Sciences and Linguistics
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia
E-mail: imranho@pkrisc.cc.ukm.my

The research is financed byUniversiti Kebansaan Malaysia, UKM.

Abstract

This paper discusses on the mapping of the English preposition *at* in the context of forward and backward translation in temporal domain based on the temporal sense of *at* of the English preposition and its extension to different lexical positions in the Arabic language. This can be explained in the way the conceptual mapping sense is used to an underlying concept and finding its lexical meaning in the target language. The forward and backward translation tests are suggested in order to identify the concept of mapping of the three different groups, using the temporal sense, in three semantic mapping categories (SDM, ZDM and DDM).

Keywords: English Temporal *at*, Arabic temporal *ba*, Semantic categories and cross mapping

1. Introduction

In the field of semantics, the focus of the study was mainly on the mapping of words. It is important to highlight here that prepositions, which are loaded as highly polysemous, also pose a challenge in the conceptual mapping. In this paper, mapping included mainly the following semantic mapping categories:

a. Category 1: same domain mapping (SDM). In this category, EFL learners map a preposition to the same domain in both languages. In other words, the translation and original are in the same conceptual domain.

b. Category 2: zero prepositions (ZDM). In this category, EFL learners' mapping of a preposition is zero. This means, there is no usage of prepositions in a translated text; instead, learners use the adverbs in place of the relevant prepositions.

c. Category 3: different domain mapping (DDM). In this category, Iraqi EFL learners map the domain to different domain, indicating that both the translation and original are in the different domains.

The categorization of the domain usages into three categories would allow the identification of the semantic mapping of the English preposition *at* and its correspondent into the Arabic prepositions. Several meanings might be invoked to characterise the transfer of the English preposition *at* into the temporal domain from/ to English - Arabic language.

1.1 Temporal - at

Imran (1999) states that the idea of orientation point links the spatial and temporal usage, where a point in space is transferred to a point on some time continuum or temporal space. The temporal uses in Dirven's (1993) analysis always extend directly from the spatial uses. Hence, while the *at*-spatial denotes a spatial point, the *at*-temporal indicates a 'point' in time, such as *at 5am today*, or *at midnight*. However, what may be regarded as a zero dimensional chronological 'point' is a matter of construal and hence, it is not one of objective reality. Therefore, uses such as *at night, at the 13th to 16th week of pregnancy* are (strictly speaking) not the 'point' in the chronological time, but are rather comprehended as the 'point' of time; notwithstanding the fact that they actually designate rather than being the 'periods' of time. In addition, *at* in the temporal domain may also indicate age or a point in one's life time such as *at age 18*. Some fixed phrases, such as *at this moment, at this point in time, at present*, etc., are taken to be established conventional units which fall within the temporal domain (Rice, 1996).

1.2 Temporal- ba

Just like the English *at*, *ba*/ب is also used to indicate time or an event which is directly extended from the spatial usage. Thus, the temporal *ba* indicates a point in time such as *ba al-khmesah* (at 5 o'clock) or *ba muntasaf al-lail* (at midnight). Furthermore, *ba,* which can be regarded as a zero dimensional 'point' is a matter of supportive and not one of the objective reality, as in the English temporal *at*. For this, Omar (2005) explains that certain uses, such as *at night, at the 12th* place, are exactly speaking the 'point' of time in the temporal sense.

2. Methodology

2.1 Respondents

In this study, the respondents were categorised into three proficiency groups. The three groups of respondents made up one target population. These respondents were requested to sit for the Oxford Proficiency Placement Test before streaming them into three different groups. The target population comprised of Iraqi students who were attending an Iraqi higher secondary school in Kuala Lumpur, aged between 15 and 17 years old. This school adopts the Iraqi School Curriculum and is very much similar to the Iraqi schools in Iraq and other Iraqi schools established in other countries. Due to the fact that they possess the same education system in Iraq, Arabic is used as their language of instruction, while English is taught from the last three levels of the higher secondary schools, namely the 10th grade, 11th grade, and 12th gr. In total, the students attend four periods of English a week, with each period lasting 45 minutes; this means they have a total of 180 minutes of English lessons per week. At these grade levels, English is taught as a foreign language. Students in both the Art and Science streams must take Arabic and English as both subjects, as required for the entry into the universities in Iraq.

In this study, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was used as the instrument to gauge and measure the language proficiency of the respondents. The OPT was chosen primarily because it provides a reliable and efficient means of placing students according to their proficiency levels. The test was standardized and aligned according to the proficiency grading system provided by the Common European Framework of reference for language learning, teaching and assessment (commonly known as CEF), and also adopted by the Association of the Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), as well as by major governments and institutions, including the examination boards throughout Europe. The test consists of 100 multiple choice questions in two parts on grammar covering areas such as verbs, tenses, articles, infinitives, countable and uncountable nouns, tail questions, comparative and superlatives and prepositions. To answer these questions, students were given 30 minutes on each part of the test (for part 1 which contains 50 questions) and another 30 minutes for part 2 (which also contains 50 questions). The test was scored by giving each correct item with one point, making a possible 100 points (raw score) for a perfect score on the test. For the purpose of the placement test, the raw marks for the test were scaled based on the groups mean (scaled score).

3. Forward and Backward translation

In the present study, Iraqi EFL learners were asked to translate the stimulus English sentences into the Arabic language (forward). In other part, they were asked to translate the stimulus Arabic sentences to the English language (backward). In particular, the analysis utilises the semantic mapping for prepositional temporal meanings in the semantic mapping categories. The examples discussed below allow observation of the relationship and the mappings in the forward translation from the first language L1 to the second language L2 and the backward from the second language L2 to the first languageL1. Examples are provided in the sub- sections below.

3.1 Temporal- at

As shown in (1) and Figure (1), *at* preposition denotes the link between the trajector TR (the train) and the verb abstract future (will arrive) to the more abstract sense the time shown by the landmark LM (10.00 o'clock). According to Dirven (1993), temporal domains always extend directly from the spatial domain. Thus, the spatial usages indicate point in place, while *at* temporal usage indicates a point in time. In other words, there is a movement from the physical to temporal domain to a point in time which denotes the temporal usage.

(1) The train will arrive **at** 10:00 o'clock.

In the mapping below, it would seem that the configuration of the forward translation from the English to Arabic language of the temporal domain *at* indicates two possible domains, the same domain mapping SDM and the ZDM zero domain mapping of different forms.

a. سوف يصل القطار **بلعاشرة** مساء

Will arrive the train at 10.00 o'clock.

Sawfa yasel al-qetaar **ba** al-saa al-asherah mesaa.

b. سوف يصل القطار **في** العاشرة مساء

Will arrive the train at 10.00 o'clock.

Sawfa yasel al-qetaar **fii** al-saa al-asherah mesaa.

As shown in (1a) the SDM of the English preposition *at* is the Arabic preposition *ba*. The temporal domain of *ba* is used to indicate a point in time extended from the spatial uses of the trajector (the train = alqetaar), a temporal concept which is directly extended from the spatial uses of the landmark (*at* 10.00 o'clock = *ba* al-asherah mesaa). In addition to this, the Arabic preposition *fii* is used to indicate the temporal sense of the English preposition *at,* as shown in (1b) and Figure (2) the notion of this sentence involves the trajector (the train will arrive = sawfa yasel) as enclosed by time rather than a point in time.

c. سوف يصل القطارالساعه العاشرة مساء.

Will arrive the train 10.00 o'clock.

Sawfa yasel al-qetaar al-asherah mesaa.

The second mapping is the ZDM of the Arabic preposition as shown in (1 c). This sentence indicates the future sense (will = sawfa) from the trajector (the train =al-qetaar) to indicate the future sense at an adverbial point which is the landmark (*on* 10.00 o'clock = *ala* al-asherah).This mapping is an interesting illustration of the mapping between languages. In this example, the use of the Arabic prepositions *ba* and *fii* with the English prepositions *at* and *in* are conversely used.

In the translation above, the Arabic preposition *ba* is equally used to the English preposition *at* to indicate the notion of point between the trajector and the landmark. While *fii* is used to indicate the same activity in another position of the trajector and the landmark using the relationship of an enclosed events in a place. Another type of mapping is the ZDM zero mapping of prepositions to indicate the notion of temporal domain in an adverbial sense.

3.2 Temporal- ba

Ba temporal mirrors English temporal *at.* As illustrated in (2) and Figure (3), *ba* denotes the notion of point that links the spatial or physical sense of the trajector action (je'atoo ana) to the temporal sense, the landmark (muntasaf al-lail). This results in *ba* as a temporal domain or in other words, *ba* usage indicates a point in time.

2. جئت بمنتصف الليل.

The configuration below represents the respondents' mapping of temporal *ba* domain into the SDM and the ZDM mapping categories.

a. I came **at** the midnight.

Je'atoo ana **ba** muntasaf al-lail.

Je'atoo **ba** muntasaf al-lail.

As shown in (2a), the Temporal domain of the Arabic preposition *ba* is used to translate to the English preposition *at,* as in the figure above, the English preposition *at* links the trajector action (je'atoo ana = I came) at the temporal point at time to the landmark (muntasaf al-lail = at the midnight). Temporal uses in Dirven's (1993) analysis always extend directly from the spatial uses (Rice 1996). The ZDM mapping is shown in the sentence below.

b. I came midnight.

Je'atoo ana muntasaf al-lail.

Je'atoo muntasaf al-lail.

In this vein, the deletion of the preposition as shown in sentence (2b) resulted in the respondents using a substitute (verb + adverb) to indicate the mapping in the temporal domain of zero prepositions. Thus, the trajector (I came= je'atoo) is placed on an adverbial time (midnight =muntasaf al-lail). In the translation above, the English preposition *at* is used equally to the Arabic preposition *ba* to indicate the notion point at the landmark. The respondents conceptualised their mapping to the ZDM to indicate the same semantic representation in an adverbial sense.

4. Conclusion

The conceptual analysis for the English preposition *at* translated to the Arabic language have been illustrated with examples in the sections above, the results are quite involved on the assumption that the mapping within the temporal domain indicate that *at* merely means 'location at a point' or 'specific location' in the physical and abstracts senses. As for this situation, *at* preposition involves the notion of orientation in the relationship of the trajector and the landmark. Trajector as Point of reference direct at the landmark. In addition, the results of the present study of the Arabic preposition *ba* contribute that the temporal domain of the Arabic preposition *ba* to the English language used to indicate both the physical as well as the abstract positions at a point. This notion could indicate the activity associated with the landmark or involve the notion of the point as the target of motion or aims. The semantic representation of this preposition indicates that *ba* is used to express the idea of a particular or certain relationship with an unspecified dimension of the landmark.

References

Dirven, R. (1993). *Dividing up Physical and Mental Space into Conceptual Categories by Means of English Prepositions*. In: Zelinsky –Wibbelt, the Semantics of Prepositions. From Mental Processing to Natural Language Processing, pp.73-97.

Imran Ho Abdullah. (1999). *A Usage -Type Analysis of Three Prepositions: At, and In, and, On In A Corpus of Written Malaysian English*. PhD thesis. University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.p.88.

Omar, M. (2005). *Baiaan Al-Lazim wa Al- Mutaadie*. Al-Turath Al-Arabi. (Vol 99-100). Arab Union .Damascus. Syria.

Rice, S. A. (1996). *Prepositional Prototypes*. In Putz &Dirven, the Construal of Space in Language and Thought, pp.135-165.

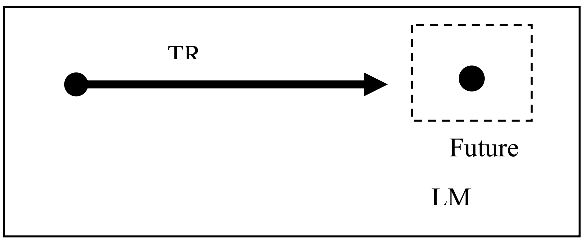


Figure1. Temporal-*At*

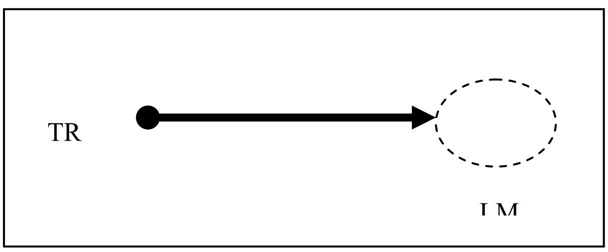


Figure 2. Temporal-*At-Fii*

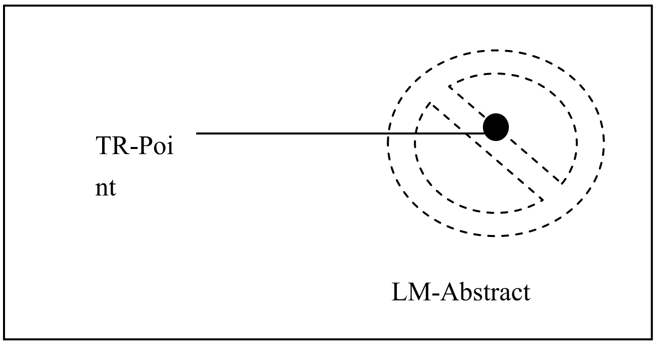


Figure3. Temporal-*Ba*

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

A Third Revolution in Linguistics:

The Interplay between the Verbal and Non-verbal

Jun Liu
Department of Foreign Languages
North China Electric Power University
Beijing 102206, China
E-mail: liuj59@126.com

Abstract

This article regards Saussure's social, static and structural perspective and Chomsky's individual, generative and formal perspective as two revolutions in linguistics in the 20th century. A third revolution is already on the way. This is characterised by considering the individual's mental mechanisms in relation to the interplay between verbal and non-verbal cognitive activities.

Keywords: Chomsky, Saussure, Linguistics, Revolution, Interplay

When we look back at the history of research in linguistics, we cannot help but feel the shifts of research interest, with one interest emerging out of the exhaustion of another. One thing worthy of being noted is that the shifts of interest are shifts of perspectives that grow out of their academic environment. Isaac Newton would not have discovered the law of gravitation had Copernicus not first found that the earth moves around the sun. Without the exhaustion of the comparative linguistics and the development of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure could not have turned to the structural system of language. Had the behaviourists not adopted those absurd "scientific" ways to research language and linguistic behaviours and excluded mind from their research, Noam Chomsky's transformational generative grammar would not have attracted so many enthusiastic linguists and psychologists.

These are the two main shifts of perspective in linguistics in the 20th century. Saussure (1916/1983) elucidated his perspective in his *Course in General Linguistics* at the beginning of the 20th century. Through his work, interest in linguistics was directed away from searching the changes and origins of languages toward the study of the structural system of language as a social phenomenon. The second movement of perspective came mainly with Chomsky (1957; 1965). His contribution was to direct public attention from viewing language as a static social phenomenon to seeing it as a generative individual phenomenon. Saussure extracted language from individual speeches, viz. paroles, and viewed it as a static social phenomenon. Chomsky placed this static and social language system back into an ideal native speaker's head and viewed it not only as a system but also ostensibly a dynamic individual linguistic phenomenon. We consider these two perspectives as two revolutions in linguistics in this century: each influencing the whole world for half a century.

In this article, we shall discuss a third revolution in linguistics that has already begun. One of the outstanding features of this revolution is its focus on the linguistic behaviour of an individual, ranging from an individual's linguistic production and perception, language acquisition, second language acquisition, to various aspects regarding the process of actual linguistic communication. Further study of the individual linguistic processes leads the current trends toward the investigation of the mental mechanisms of individual human behaviours with language. In general, the current concerns in linguistics seem to be with two major processes: the process of acquiring the linguistic capability and the process of linguistic perception and production.

In reality, however, the research of these two processes involves two aspects of the individual's total linguistic behaviour. Acquisition research is a historical study of the individual's linguistic abilities and the research of linguistic perception and production processes is a study of the current working mechanisms of the individual's linguistic abilities acquired. The individual's language, rather than the language system or grammar, will become the main concern of the third revolution in linguistics.

Chomsky regards individual linguistic competence as a pure linguistic competence that develops from an innate language acquisition device or universal grammar. The new perspective will view the individual linguistic competence as a manifestation of his general capacities. Language as a system, structural or formal, has already been exhausted. Research in linguistics seems to have considered individual linguistic behaviour to be isolated and a controller of other behaviours of an individual. However, the new perspective tends to interpret individual's *linguistic* activity and *linguistic* competence from the point of view of the individual's *human* activity and *human* competence. According to this position, an individual's linguistic activity and competence are viewed as a part of and a manifestation of the individual's general behaviour and general capacity. Because of these holistic concerns, the mystery of individual linguistic behaviour is hopefully to be unveiled in this third revolution. The output of the research will contribute to the development of computer sciences and to the understanding of the nature of language and the long-standing controversial issue of the relationship between language and thought.

Chomsky studied the ideal grammatical competence in an ideal native speaker. Like Saussure's research, his study is actually a focus on the social aspect of language. The conception of an ideal speaker-hearer situation itself is another way of describing the social system of language. Therefore, Chomsky's contribution to linguistics is not the result of his grammatical study, which has got nowhere, but his different perspective of seeing the same thing that Saussure had observed. In actual fact, what people have been interested in is not Chomsky's transformational perspective but his generative perspective. It is this dominant interest in linguistics that has led experts from different fields to go beyond Chomsky's deep structure of language and investigate the deeper structure that is non-linguistic.

The third revolution will go beyond this deep end of the spectrum of Chomsky's research and explore the idea end of the individual's linguistic processes. It will try to answer such questions as:

1. How do we mentally process our ideas into language when producing written or spoken language?

2. How do we mentally process the language into ideas when we conduct linguistic perception?

3. How does our cognitive development contribute to our native language acquisition?

4. How do we understand the linguistic producer's intention during communication?

However, Chomsky was not concerned here with anything individual. Furthermore, he blocked the pathway of research into the individual's linguistic behaviour by hypothesising the innate linguistic competence and the universal grammar. This third revolution will break through the block and assume that language is learned, and the general cognitive learning capacity is innate. The individual language learning capability becomes only the manifestation of his general capabilities. The main assumption is that linguistic competence is rooted in a human's general learning capacity. If we consider the individual's linguistic competence as innate, then we have to convince ourselves that many other competencies are innate. The language of an individual plays a very important, even perhaps, crucial role in one's capacity to increase knowledge. However, people can conduct oral or written communication not because they have language, but because they are human beings that can acquire any kind of knowledge and skills including those regarding the use of language and because they are born with the corresponding capacities.

The individual language learning process involves genetic, biological, cognitive and behavioural factors. In this third revolution, the study of language will exceed the boundary of sentence and advance to the realm of ideas and the interface of ideas and linguistic expressions in the linguistic communication of an individual. Theories from philosophy, cognitive psychology, behavioural science, psycholinguistics, language acquisition research and second language acquisition studies will all be integrated into a multidisciplinary theory to explain the individual linguistic phenomena.

The third revolution is a natural and logical development of linguistics research. Both Saussure and Chomsky viewed individual linguistic behaviour as complicated, and shunned the complicated to attack the simple. Because the natural phenomena involving language are complex, the natural response is to study it piecemeal at the first stage of research and then to piece together the separate studies of different branches at a later phase. Saussure (Bally & Sechehaye, 1983: Preface) had promised to cope with parole (linguistics of speech) after he finished his study of langue (linguistics of language structure), but he could not do it for a reason that is all too well known. Chomsky's original interest was also in linguistic competence, i.e. his transformational generative grammar. He, too, excluded the individual's linguistic performance, but he had no intention of dealing with it in the future. The actual discussions on the innateness of the *universal grammar*, his *hypothetical language-acquisition device* and the super deep semantic aspect of linguistic generation are all beyond Chomsky's original intention and scope of research. However, what people are really interested in is none other than these very issues which lie outside the main concern of Chomsky.

Another phenomenon worthy of note is the rise and fall of pragmatics, speech act theories and semantics. All these disciplines seem to adopt a social and so-called objective perspective and fail to attract people's attention. The individual is a subjective human being. The meaning of a word in the individual's mind is not composed of features like the typical description of words in semantics. Human beings are too intelligent to ignore the implied meanings during communication, and awareness of implied meanings does not need to follow any rules as can be easily analysed in speech act theories.

The new upsurge of cognitive science and neuroscience, and the migration of psychologists and neuroscientists into linguistics are things we linguists should not fail to notice. There is a feeling that we are expecting advances in linguistics, psychology, neuroscience and other fields to provide us with background knowledge, against which we will continue our work. Just as Obler & Gjerlow (1999:12) state: "In some ways it might seem that we are all waiting for advances in the crucial disciplines: waiting for linguists to settle on the precise best grammar to describe languages, and waiting for neurophysiologists to describe ways brain cells and their chemical environments contribute to processing it. If we all do our parts in working out how components of those unknown 'black boxes' operate, in another decade or three or five, we hope, the contributing disciplines should be able to converge to answer the basic question of neurolinguistics: how the brain is organised for language."

In linguistics, this expectation is even stronger. We know that we have reached the meaning end of the linguistics boundary and touched the "black box". This is a crucial point when we have to contribute our part to the understanding of this "black box".

Nobody is in a position to assign linguists their task of linguistics despite the fact that Saussure (1916/1983) assigned linguists the task of langue and Chomsky (1957) said that linguists must be concerned with the problem of determining the fundamental underlying properties of successful grammar. Is there any special privilege that we can enjoy if we keep our status as pure linguists? Our attitude is that we should respect reality and seek the truth. It is high time that we shook off the straightjacket of pure linguistics. Only when we seek truth in linguistics research can we conduct interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary research. Formal linguistics is but one aspect in the study of language just like the study of language origins. The task of linguists is to cope with one aspect of the language phenomenon after another. To Edward Sapir, formal linguistic descriptions and analysis were only the beginning of the linguist's task. He understood linguistics as a social science, and every language as one aspect of a whole culture. In his writing and teaching he stressed the importance of dealing with the phenomena of language in the context of culture, of studying speech in its social setting (Mandelbaum, 1949b:vi).

If we confine our research to pure linguistic phenomena or to one specific aspect of the entire language phenomena, we shall do what Sapir warned us not to do half a century ago in an article entitled "Linguistics as a Science"(Mandelbaum, 1949:75). "All in all, it is clear that the interest in language has in recent years been transcending the strictly linguistic circles. This is inevitable, for an understanding of language mechanisms is necessary for the study of both historical problems and problems of human behavior. One can only hope that linguists will become increasingly aware of the significance of their subject in the general field of science and will not stand aloof behind a tradition that threatens to become scholastic when not vitalized by interests which lie beyond the formal interest in language itself."

Some linguists, such as Obler and Gjerlow, have stepped out of the pure linguistics ring. After working with colleagues across a number of disciplines, the two linguists (1999: Preface) were "challenged to think about the special status we linguists accord to language" among cognitive abilities. No matter what conclusion they might reach, the awareness of what other scholars think about individual linguistic competence will benefit us a lot in our research.

To cope with the individual's behavior with language will force us to think about the special status we linguists accord to language. Linguistic behaviour is one kind of the individual's behaviours. Without a better understanding of the individual behaviour, we will not see the wood for the trees in linguistics research. We cannot help doubting one of the maxims in linguistics that man differs from animals because he has language. Human beings can do many things that the smartest primate species cannot. Man differs from other animals not because man has language, but because man is intelligent enough to create and learn language. It is not that we are different from other animals because we have language, but that we have languages because we are human beings, different from other animals. It is the belief in the mystery of language that encumbers our research progress in linguistics and psychology. If we consider language as the main factor that differentiates man from other animals, then we are bound to belittle man and cannot see the essence of human beings.

References

Bally, C. & Sechehaye, A. (1983/1916). Preface to the first edition. in C. Barlly & A. Sechehaye (Eds.), with the collaboration of Albert Riedlinger, *Course in general linguistics*. Translated by Roy Harris. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. (Original work published in 1916).

Chomsky, N. (1957). *Syntactic structures*. The Hague: Mouton & Co. N.V., Publishers.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.

Mandelbaum, D. G. (Ed.), (1949). *Culture, language, and personality*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.

Obler, L. K. & Gjerlow, K. (1999). *Language and brain.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sapir, E. (1970). *Language: An introduction to the study of speech*. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. British edition, Second impression. (The original work published in 1921).

Saussure, F. de. (1983/1916). *Course in general linguistics*. Edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye with the collaboration of Albert Riedlinger. Translated by Roy Harris. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. (Original work published in 1916).

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Using English Songs: an Enjoyable and Effective Approach to ELT

Chunxuan Shen
School of Foreign Languages
Zhejiang Gongshang University
Xuezheng Street 18, Xiasha Higher Education Zone
Hangzhou 310018, China
Tel: 86-571-2800-2084 E-Mail: nosia@163.com

Abstract

How can ELT be made enjoyable and effective? One feasible pedagogical application is to integrate English songs into ELT. Song, a combination of music and lyrics, possesses many intrinsic merits, such as a kaleidoscope of culture, expressiveness, recitability and therapeutic functions, which render it an invaluable source for language teaching. This paper provides theoretical arguments and practical support for using English songs in ELT.

Keywords: English songs, English language teaching, Enjoyable, Effective

1. Introduction

English language teaching (ELT) in China has for quite a long time followed the traditional path-teaching vocabulary and grammar textbooks, cramming students with a considerable amount of exercises and then evaluating their accomplishments through consecutive exams. It is no surprise that EFL learners view English language learning as insipid and an unconquerable obstacle. In fact, ELT can be implemented in a relaxed and enjoyable way by using English songs in EFL classes.

Songs have been an amusing companion for human beings for as long as or even longer than we can speak. As an integral part of our language experience, it can be of great value to foreign language teaching. And the many-faceted merits songs possess may enrich and activate our foreign language class. Georgi Lozanov incorporates music into his teaching method—Suggestopedia, for music is instrumental in creating a relaxing and comfortable environment, which can propel language learning (Larsen-Freeman, 1985). Besides music, another indispensable element of songs is lyrics which serve as a direct genuine source of teaching materials in foreign language classes, so why should songs be overlooked by the teachers? There have been abundant researches abroad on songs as an authentic teaching resource in language teaching (Maley, 1997; Eken, 1996; Gaston, 1968; Geoff, 2003), but a paucity of such studies are reported in China. This paper endeavors to demonstrate the value of English songs in ELT and meanwhile reports several specific teaching activities as serious attempts to work it out in EFL classrooms.

2. Songs should be used in ELT for their own merits

Being a combination of music and language, songs have innumerable virtues that deserve our attention. Their richness in culture and themes, their idiomatic and poetic expressions, their therapeutic functions and so on makes them an impeccable tool for language teaching.

2.1 A kaleidoscope of culture

"Language expresses, embodies and symbolizes cultural reality" (Kramsch, 2000, p.3). Language and music are interwoven in songs to communicate cultural reality in a very unique way. English songs endow the English native speakers with an opportunity to put across their own culture. Black American's call for equality and respect, the legends of the American West, celebration of western festivals and people's attitudes toward love, friendship and marriage all find expression in the lines and rhythmic melodies of the songs.

2.2 Expressiveness

Songs are highly expressive. Some convey love and emotions; some tell a memorable and moving story; some embody one's dreams and ideals; and some reminisce about the golden past. Songs are abundant in themes and expressions which will echo in the learner's heart. "Acquisition of automatic language skills depends on rich, meaningful, repeated exposure to comprehensible input without awareness" (Bolitho et al., 2003, p.253).

2.3 Recitability

Lyrics are characterized by the use of rhythms, conversational speech and poetic expressions. For example, the following song *Vincent* sings of an artist's loneliness, inner contradiction and of the tranquil and perpetual starry night in the very poetic and rhymed lines. The other song entitled *Sing*, however, is of quite different style with simple words, colloquial sentences and an upbeat tune.

Vincent

Starry starry night

Paint your palette blue and grey

Look out on a summer's day

With eyes that know the darkness

in my soul

Shadows on the hills

Sketch the trees and the daffodils

Catch the breeze and the winter chills

In colors on the snowy linen land

Sing

Sing! Sing a song.

Sing out loud. Sing out strong.

Sing of good things, not bad,

Sing of happy, not sad.

Sing, sing a song.

Make it simple to last your whole life long.

Don't worry that it's not good enough

For anyone else to hear.

Just sing, sing a song.

Learners are likely to be attracted by these beautiful and poetic, or colloquial and lucid lyrics, which will be easily recited and long remembered. Singing a song by heart is more delightful and meaningful than rote learning. Many people can not help recalling the songs learned in their early years, even when they only vaguely remember the old melodies and some fragments of the lyrics.

2.4 Therapeutic functions

In general, the foremost function of songs is to provide relaxation and recreation. It is quite common that when people are tired, they will sit back and listen to a piece of music or they may hang out with friends to sing in Karaoke, clubs or bars. Music has the power to soothe people's emotions, refresh their minds and to unlock their creativity. Gaston (1968) has pointed out that music has several therapeutic functions, such as promoting self-esteem through increased self-satisfaction in musical performance and using the unique potential of rhythm to energize and bring order.

3. How can English songs facilitate English language learning

"Language teaching can be defined as the activities which are intended to bring about language learning" (Stern, 1983, p.21). Hence, whatever theory of language teaching should starts from the learning process or the learner's perspective.

3.1 Psychological implications

"The concept of learning, as it is understood today, has been greatly influenced by the psychological study of the learning process…" (ibid, p.18). This section demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating English songs into ELT from the theory of human brain, which is the headquarter of language processing.

3.1.1 MI and listening to English songs

The theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI), proposed and elaborated by Gardner (1993), points out that there are a number of distinct types of intelligence possessed by each individual in varying degrees. In accordance with MI, human intelligence is categorized into at least nine primary types: verbal/linguistic intelligence, mathematical/logical intelligence, visual/spatial intelligence, body/kinesthetic intelligence, musical/rhythmic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, naturalist intelligence and existential intelligence, all of which are not isolated and irrelevant, but interdependent on and complementary with each other. Therefore, it is inappropriate to explore only one type of intelligence in EFL learning. Verbal/linguistic intelligence, musical/rhythmic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, body/kinesthetic intelligence and even more may contribute to developing and complementing a learner's linguistic competence and enhance his ability of learning a foreign language. Listening to English songs is of great value to tap the learner's linguistic potentials through enchanting melodies, varying rhythms and image-evoking lyrics, which appeal to multidimensional development of human intelligence.

3.1.2 Hemisphere functioning in language learning

Research on psycholinguistics reveals that songs can activate language acquisition and learning in both hemispheres of the human brain (Carroll, 2000; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 2000; Williams and Burden, 1997). Through psychologists' persistent study on ear and hemisphere functioning differences, findings come out that right ear, which leads to left hemisphere (LH), takes conspicuous advantages over left ear for speech stimuli, so "the LH does seem to possess an innate and highly specialized linguistic mechanism" which assumes the major responsibility of analytic processing of language (Carroll, 2000, p.349). However, the right hemisphere's important function in language processing can not be ignored. Left ear, which leads to right hemisphere, is keener to nonverbal sound such as melodies and emotional colors of the message. Songs enter the human brain—from left ear to right hemisphere—in a rather different way from our speech and thus can stimulate language learning in the right hemisphere, whose involvement in language processing become more active in eliciting the overall meaning and processing formulaic speech (Ellis, 1985). "Formulaic Speech consists of expressions which are learned as unanalysable wholes and employed on particular occasions" (Lyons, 1968, p.177).

3.2 Stimulation of affective learning by songs

Using English songs in EFL classrooms can successfully bring about affective learning through providing a harmonious classroom atmosphere, reducing students' anxiety, fostering their interests and motivating them to learn the target language. Students will regard English songs as part of entertainment rather than work and thus find learning English through songs amusing and relaxed.

3.2.1 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

In 1982, "Dulay et al. suggested that the use of filter depends upon affective factors such as the learner's motivation, attitude and emotions" (Ellis, 1985, p.297). And later Krashen developed the Affective Filter Hypothesis based on Dulay's point of view. Krashen (1985) argued that affective learning will occur when the affective filter is weak. When the learner is in such an affective state as highly motivated, self-confident and at ease, the filter will be weak and allow in plenty of input, which means a positive attitude toward learning and the optimum state of language learning are present. On the contrary, the filter will become stronger when the learner is haunted with low motivation, lack of self-confidence and high anxiety. In that case, the learner is not ready for language acquisition or learning. The Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that an ideal teacher should be capable of providing a classroom atmosphere conducive to motivating, encouraging his students and lessening their anxiety if there's any.

3.2.2 Anxiety

Anxiety, associated with negative feelings, such as upset, tension, frustration, self-doubt and fear, would impede language learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Students beyond puberty are more apt to be affected by anxiety in learning a foreign language. Therefore, to minimize the amount of anxiety in foreign language learners becomes crucial to successful language learning.

3.2.3 Arousal of motivation by English songs

Motivation is a vital element in affective learning. Williams and Burden (1997, p.129) deciphered motivation as "a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)". Motivation can be triggered by either internal causes like the learner's interest, enthusiasm and desire or by such external influences as peer pressure.

Many English songs, especially pop songs are quite popular among the Chinese young people, such as *Jingle Bells*, *Yesterday Once More*, *Right Here Waiting*, *My Heart will Go on* and *Big Big World*. For one thing, these English songs employ the themes that appeal to young people, like holiday celebration, memories of childhood, love and friendship; and for another, many students desire to learn these English songs, because they want to model themselves on the Hollywood stars and singers or improve their status among the peers. The greater their desire is, the faster they learn. When they are learning fast and continuously making progress, they will be more confident, highly motivated and devoted to the learning task.

3.2.4 Effects of Affective learning

Affective learning is also effective learning. In the light of psycholinguistics, affective engagement with language can "stimulate a fuller use of the resources of the brain", rekindle "neural paths between areas of brain" and deepen the multidimensional processing of language (Bolitho et al., 2003, p.256). Through affective learning, the learner's capacity for learning will be expanded and whereby unexpected results will be produced.

3.3 Songs can promote language awareness

Language awareness is "a means of helping learners to help themselves". The result of raising language awareness "will not just be language use, but also language use which is more sensitive to issues of culture, identity and equity" (ibid, p.254). Songs serve as the very source of such target language use that helps to promote students' language awareness in learning English as a foreign language.

3.3.1 Definition of language awareness

"Language awareness is a mental attribute which develops through paying motivated attention to language in use, and which enables language learners to gradually gain insights into how languages work" (ibid, p.251). Tomlinson (1994, p.123) looks upon language awareness as "dynamic and intuitive", which is "gradually developed internally by the learner".

3.3.2 Songs and language awareness

As for the students who are earnest to learn or sing English songs, listening to English songs can prompt them to ask questions about the language. They have to grab the skills of speaking the English language before they can sing the songs on their own. Hence, they are encouraged to probe how every sound is pronounced and how all the sounds are chained together, thereby attaining growing insights into the way the English language functions to convey meaning. In this process, the difficulties that learners have encountered in singing English songs will enable them to notice the gap between their actual performance in the target language and the proficiency of the native singers. "This noticing can give salience to a feature, so that it becomes more noticeable in future input, and thereby contributes to the learner's psychological readiness to acquire that feature" (Bolitho et al., 2003, p.252).

In addition, although most students regard listening to as well as learning English songs as entertainment, they are also learning implicitly and unconsciously, which is a much more pleasant and efficient way to promote language awareness than mechanically memorizing tedious course-books of vocabulary and grammar. "Language awareness is not taught by the teacher or by the course-book; it is developed by the learner. Language awareness is an internal, gradual, realization of the realities of language use" (ibid, p.252).

4. How to utilize English songs in EFL classrooms

As is demonstrated above, MI theory, hemisphere functioning, language awareness and the intrinsic merits that songs possess are all in support of utilizing English songs in ELT. The next thing that calls for our attention is how to bring about the educational value of English songs in EFL classrooms. Some specific practices adopted by the researcher are recommended here as initial attempts to integrate English songs into teaching various aspects of language skills—listening, speaking, vocabulary, grammar and writing in college English teaching.

4.1 In listening

A good listening comprehension lays the corner-stone for developing other skills in foreign language learning. But it is also the most difficult among all the language skills for novice to master. While listening to a native speaker, in most cases we find their speech running smoothly just like a river, even not fast, so that EFL learners may fail to catch them. A justification for this is that learners have for too long been accustomed to speak word by word without reducing, liaison, loss of explosion and so on which are quite common in a native speaker's ordinary speech. Native speakers talk word by word only under special circumstances, like talking to a baby. For example, few native speakers will say "not at all" as the phonetic transcriptions that the dictionary has offered—/nɒt æt ɔl/. Most often than not, they say /nɒtətɔl/. Not only are the consonants and the following vowels glued together as we call liaison, but /t/ are also voiced, which makes it sound like /d/, and / æ t/ is reduced to /ət/.

Listening to English songs will prepare EFL learners to the genuine English language they are to be faced with. Teachers can devise special exercises to assist students in improving their listening comprehension. A gap-fill task as follows can be used to help students notice and absorb the phonetic reality in native English speakers' speech. Take the popular song *Big Big World* as an example.

Big Big World

I can see the first_______falling it's all yellow and nice

It's so very cold_________ like the way I'm feeling_________

I'm a big big ______ in a big big_________; it's not a big big thing if you leave me.

But___do do feel that____ do do will, ______you much, ______you much…

_______ it's now raining and_____ _____falling from my eyes

Why did it have to________, why did it all have to ______

I'm a big big ______ in a big big_________; it's not a big big thing if you leave me.

But___do do feel that____ do do will, ______you much, ______you much…

I have_____ _____ around me_____like fire

But when I _____ my_____, you're gone…

(keys: leaf, outside, inside, girl, world, I, I, miss, miss, Outside, tears are, happen, end, girl, world, I, I, miss, miss, my arms, warm, open, eyes)

The lyrics are first presented to students certain parts removed. After enjoying the song, students are asked to fill in the blanks with the words they catch. The words in the blanks are taken off not randomly but with intent. Most of them have undergone slight changes in sound, so it is not easy for students to recognize them in listening. The changes obey the phonological rules which are subconsciously employed by native speakers in ordinary speeches but are often neglected by EFL learners. For example, the word "leaf" in the first blank has lost its final consonant /f/ because the succeeding word "falling" begins with /f/. The word "end" in the second blank of the sixth line is mistaken by many students for "when", even though they are confused by the meaning and structure of "why did it all have to when". The reason is that boundary insertion has occurred between the two words "to" and "end". A glide /w/ inserts between the rounded vowel /u/ and the unrounded vowel /e/ (Chomsky, 1968). Additionally, on most occasions final /d/ can not be heard because of its loss of explosion. That's why many students make a mistake here.

This exercise can be of great help because only when the natural pronunciation and all the phonological rules become internalized in the learners can they gradually catch up with the native speakers' speech. The internalization of these phonological rules by the EFL learners certainly demands the coordination of the second step-speaking.

4.2 In Speaking

Songs can be used to teach natural pronunciation efficiently. Native singers' pronunciation provides a model for EFL learners. We can easily find songs sung by either American, British, Canadian or Australian singers and let learners choose which pronunciation they would like to imitate. By repeatedly listening to and learning these songs, students will gradually correct their errors and achieve a more native-like pronunciation.

Moreover, to sing an English song well also demands familiarity with a number of above-mentioned phonological rules. For instance, liaison, loss of explosion, assimilation, voicing, deletion, insertion and so on are the most common phenomena that occur nearly in every English song. To describe these phonological rules in linguistic terminologies could be an abstract and delicate task, but English songs serve as a medium through which these rules can be made concrete and accessible. EFL learners will get familiar with and internalize them through repetition and imitation. The experimental class the researcher taught reveals that students who always listen to English songs pay more deliberate attention to pronunciation, phonological rules, stress and intonation than the others and thus pronounce more correctly and speak English more fluently.

4.3 In Memorizing vocabulary, structure and grammar

When coming across an impressive song, most learners are eager to take a further step—to understand what the singers are expressing and to sing it by themselves. With such a motivation, learners will feel surprised they can remember all the words that appear in the lyrics, even difficult ones. The song in the famous Disney cartoon "*Lion King*"-*Can you Feel the Love Tonight*-always rings in learners' ears. Some words and phrases that appear in its lyrics are difficult indeed, like surrender, vagabond, twisting kaleidoscope, star-crossed voyager, and wide-eyed wanderer. But to teach these words in a melodic context appears easier and more effective.

The nature of songs is fairly repetitive and consistent. For example, *Lemon Tree*-a very familiar pop song provides ample opportunities for students to focus on the study of the present progressive tense in English grammar. "I'm sitting here in a boring room", "I'm wasting my time", "I'm hanging around, I'm waiting for you", "I'm driving around in my car. I'm driving too fast, I'm driving too far", "I'm turning my head up and down, I'm turning turning turning turning turning around", "I'm stepping around in a desert of joy" and so forth. After listening to this song, students will easily memorize these simple sentences, tend to use them in their own conversation and even correctly produce their own sentences of the present progressive tense.

Songs are not always composed of simple sentence structure or grammar. For instance, the following song *Promises Don't Come Easy* serves as a paragon for teaching the subjunctive mood, one of the most difficult and confusing grammatical points for students in learning English. For instance, "I should have known all along", but "I", in the lyrics, actually didn't realize at the beginning that there was something wrong in his or her love relationship. This part presents students with a vivid picture of the inner world of a person in love, in which they can easily capture the mood and content the song writer intends to convey, thereby comprehending and absorbing the grammatical point of subjunctive mood unconsciously.

Promises Don't Come Easy

I should have known all along
there was something wrong
I just never read between the lines
then I woke up one day and found you way
leaving nothing but my heart behind
what can I do to make it up to you

Listening to English songs easily embed new vocabulary and grammatical structures in learner's both conscious and unconscious memory. Its unexpected teaching effects will startle you!

4.4 In Creative Writing

Serious writing may bore EFL learners. So why not occasionally make writing fun in class by inventing something new? In creative writing of songs, students are encouraged to create their own lyrics by following the same tune and imitating the format of the lyrical lines of the original song. In the researcher's class, students were quite interested in such new forms of writing assignment and many turned in surprisingly wonderful and imaginative works. The following version "Baby, Don't Cry" was rewritten by one of the students from the song "Que Sera, Sera".

Baby, Don't Cry	*Que Sera Sera*
When I was just a little girl	When I was just a little girl,
I dreamed of beauty	I asked my mother,
I dreamed of fame	"What will I be?
I wanna marry a rich handsome man	Will I be pretty, will I be rich?"
But reality drove me mad	Here's what she said to me:
"Oh, baby, don't cry,"	"Que Sera, Sera.
My mother told me that,	Whatever will be, will be.
"The future will not be so bad.	The future's not ours to see.
Oh, baby, don't cry.	Que Sera, Sera.
Like a bird you'll fly."	What will be, will be."

Obviously, the new version mimics the original song in form such as both encompass a conversation between the mother and her daughter and then end in the mother's soothing words. However, the student brings in something new in content. The new version focuses on the daughter's disillusionment of childhood dreams rather than on the naive inquiry about the future when she was only a little girl. Use of parallel structure, idiomatic expressions and rhymes in the new version *Baby, Don't Cry* all manifest the student's creativity, imagination as well English writing ability.

Therefore, writing lyrics by imitation might be an effectual way of digging out EFL learners' creativity in language. The right song will arouse their empathy, stimulate their inspiration and light their passion to express their experiences and emotions in the same way.

5. Conclusion

The specific teaching practices of utilizing English songs in reinforcing different aspects of the students' language skills are based on the researcher's own experiment in college English classes. After finishing the text analysis of each unit, which usually takes two weeks, about thirty minutes are spent on different classroom activities concerning English songs described above. Therefore, in 68 teaching hours of the whole semester for each class, 4 teaching hours in all are spared for immersing the students in English songs. The following table is a comparison of the students' total score for the college English course, which is mainly comprised of self-listening tests, final oral test and final written exam, as is prescribed by the university's teaching agenda for college English. The classes the researcher is teaching are two different classes of the same year in the same College, one is Electronics and the other is Communication Engineering, whose average academic performance in National Entrance Exam and in the previous semesters is at a similar level. The table suggests that using English songs in college English classes will not weaken but reinforce the effect of teaching.

Insert Table 1 Here

Note: Class 1 is the controlled group following the same teaching agenda as other classes in the university without the English songs teaching application; and class 2 is the experimental group to whom the English songs approach is deliberately applied. The two classes use the same teaching facilities, have the same English teacher and go through the same teaching procedures except this difference. P in the table represents the correlation of the two classes' scores, which is significant when P is less than 0.05 (i.e. P<0.05).

In conclusion, using English songs in ELT can be justified on the grounds that it will emancipate full mental and affective power in language learning and promote language awareness. Listening to songs can knock down the learner's psychological barriers, such as anxiety, lack of self-confidence and apprehension as well as fire the learner's desire to grasp the target language. Pedagogically, effective learning consists in active engagement with language. English songs are wonderful materials in this respect. EFL learners are easily moved and motivated by the singers, the music, the variety of rhythm, and the popular themes. Furthermore, songs are comprehensible, enjoyable, authentic and full of language we need in real life. These intrinsic merits that songs possess also recommend themselves as effective materials of instruction in EFL classrooms. If used properly by the teacher, English songs are excellent means whereby EFL learners will cultivate interests and high motivation in the target language as well as develop linguistic intelligence and language awareness.

References

Bolitho, R., Carter, R., Hughes, R., Ivanic, R., Masuhara, H. & Tomlinson, B. (2003). Ten questions about language awareness, *ELT Journal* 57/3: 251-259.

Carroll, D.W. (2000). *Psychology of Language*. Beijing: Brooks/Cole/Thomson Learning Asia.

Chomsky, N & Halle, M. (1968). *The Sound Pattern of English*. New York: Harper & Row.

Eken, D. K. (1996). Ideas for using pop songs in the English language classroom. *English Teaching Forum* 34: 234-41.

Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition.* Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Gardener, H. (1983). *Frames of Mind.* New York: Basic Books.

Gardener, H. (1993). *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice.* New York: Basic Books.

Gaston, E.T. (1968). *Music in Therapy.* New York: Macmillan.

Geoff, P.S. (2003). Music and mondegreens: extracting meaning from noise. *ELT Journal* 57/2: 113-121

Kramsch, C. (2000). *Language and Culture*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Krashen, S. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications.* London: Longman.

Larsen-Freeman, D. & Long, M. H. (2000). *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research.* Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (1985). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching.* England: Oxford University Press.

Lyons, J. (1968). *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maley, A. (1997). Poetry and Song as Effective Language-learning Activities. In Wigla M. R. *Interactive Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 93-109.

Stern, H.H. (1983). *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching.* Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Tomlinson, B. (1994). Pragmatic awareness activities. *Language Awareness.* 3/3: 119-129.

Williams, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Table 1. A comparison of students' total score for college English between two classes

Class	Mean	Std. Deviation	P
Class 1 (N=26)	70.07	9.10	.02
Class 2 (N=31)	76.65	7.52	

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to Classroom English Vocabulary Instruction for EFL Learners in Mainland China

Yanqing Chen
School of Foreign Languages
Yunnan University of Finance and Economics
Kunming 650221, China
Tel: 86-871-552-3589 E-mail: perfectrose817@163.com

Abstract

Vocabulary learning and teaching has been one of the main issues in ESL/EFL learning and teaching research. EFL teachers in China, in particular, are grappling with the effective vocabulary teaching methods. This paper is doing part of this job in a different way. It discusses three principles based on Cognitive Linguistics (CL), namely the study of categorization, prototype, and metaphor, and implications of these principles in formal vocabulary instruction in a Chinese context of English learning in South-western mainland China.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, Prototype theory, Categorization, Metaphor, English vocabulary teaching

1. Introduction

Cognition is part of mental process, the behavior and ability through which we human being perceive and acquire knowledge. It involves such mental activities as emotion, motivation, and power. Cognitive linguistics is one important interdisciplinary branch of cognitive science, and is closely related to cognitive psychology and linguistics. It is also an approach to language, which views language as a kind of cognitive action, and studies the formation, the meaning, and the rules of language with cognition as its departure. In short, cognitive linguistics is an approach that is "based on our experience of the world and the way we perceive and conceptualize it" (Ungerer and Schmid, 2001, p. F36), an approach to the analysis of natural language that focuses on language as an instrument for organizing, processing, and conveying information and in the more restricted sense but one type of a cognitive science approach to language, to be distinguished from, for instance, generative grammar and many forms of linguistic research within the field of artificial intelligence(Geeraerts,1997, pp.7-8). Although cognitive linguistics is a new marginal discipline which has a history of twenty years or so, it does not only broaden our belief about the word 'cognition', but also has striking influence on the study of the process of second and foreign language learning and teaching. It is on this sense that this paper addresses the classroom teaching of English vocabulary from the perspective of cognitive linguistics.

2. Teaching English vocabulary

2.1 Significance of vocabulary

It has long been acknowledged in EFL teaching that vocabulary is essential, in China in particular, to English learning and teaching. It is also stressed by the linguist David Wilkins, who points out that 'Without grammar very little can by conveyed, without vocabulary *nothing* can be conveyed (Wilkins, 1974).' This best saying about the importance of vocabulary learning has been welcomed by teachers and learners for many years.

Most learners, too, acknowledge the importance of vocabulary acquisition. Here are some statements made by some non-major college English learners from south-western China:

- First, vocabulary is very important. It measures a man's English level.
- My problem is that I forget the words soon after I have looked in the dictionary. And I cannot recognize them whenever I come across in reading English books.
- I want to enlarge my vocabulary. I have the feeling that I always use the same expressions to express different sort of things.

However, vocabulary teaching has not always been very responsive to such problems, and teachers have not fully recognized the tremendous communicative advantage in developing an extensive vocabulary. For a long time, teaching approaches such as Direct Method, which insists that only the target language should be used in class and meanings should be communicated 'directly' by associating speech forms with actions, objects, mime, gestures, and situations, but overemphasizes and distorts “ the similarities between naturalistic first language learning and classroom foreign language learning and failed to consider the practical realities of the classroom” (Richards, 1986,p.10), and audiolingualism gave greater priority to the teaching of grammatical structures. In order not to distract from the learning of these structures, the number of words taught were often chosen either because they were easily demonstrated, or because they fitted neatly into the ‘structure of the day.

The advent of the communicative approach in the 1970s set the stage for a major re-think of the role of vocabulary. The communicative value of a core vocabulary has always been recognized, particularly by tourists. A phrase book or dictionary provides more communicative mileage than a grammar-in the short term at least. Recognition of the meaning-making potential of words meant that vocabulary became a learning objective in its own right. In 1984, for example, in the introduction to their *Cambridge English Course*, Swan and Walter wrote that ‘vocabulary acquisition is the largest and most important task facing the language learner; Course books began to include activities that specially targeted vocabulary’.

Nevertheless, most English language courses in China were (and still are) organized around grammar syllabuses. There are good grounds for retaining a grammatical organization. While vocabulary is largely a collection of items, grammar is a system of rules. Since one rule can generate a great many sentences, the teaching of grammar is considered to be more productive. Grammar multiplies, while vocabulary merely adds. However, two key developments were to challenge the hegemony of grammar. One was the lexical syllabus, that is, a syllabus based on those words that appear with a high degree of frequency in spoken and written English. The other was recognition of the role of lexical chunks in the acquisition of language and achieving fluency. Both these developments were fuelled by discoveries arising from the new science of corpus linguistics both at home and abroad, and of cognitive linguistic-based exploration of lexicography in China by Zhao Yanchun and Wangyan (Zhao, 2003; Li and Wang, 2005).

The effect of these developments has been to raise awareness as to the key role that vocabulary development plays in language learning. Even if most course books still adopt a grammatical syllabus, especially those designed for distance learning and adult learning, vocabulary is no longer treated as an ‘add-on’. Much more attention is given to the grammar of words, to collocation and to word frequency. This is reflected in the way course books are now promoted. For example, the explanations of some widely-used course books claim:

Well emphasis on cognitive vocabulary, with a particular focus on high frequency, useful words and phrases. (from *A Modern English Course*)

2.2 Some underlying causes for problems in vocabulary learning

Knowing a word is one thing—but how is that knowledge acquired? In learning their first language the first words that children learn are typically those used for labeling—that is, mapping words on to concepts—so that the concept, for example, of dog has a name, *dog*. Or *doggie.* But not all four-legged animals are dogs: some may be cats, so the child then has to learn how far to extend the concept of *dog*, so as not to include cats, but to include other people’s dogs, toy dogs, and even pictures of dogs. In other words, acquiring a vocabulary requires not only labeling but categorizing skills.

Finally, the child needs to realize that common words like *apple* and *dog* can be replaced by superordinate terms like *fruit* and *animal*. And that *animal* can accommodate other lower order words such as *cats, horse* and *elephant*. This involves a process of network building—constructing a complex web of words, so that items like *black* and *white*, or *fingers* and *toes*, or *family* and *brother* are interconnected. Network building serves to link all the labels and packages, and lays the groundwork for a process that continues for as long as we are exposed to new words (and new meanings for old words)—that is, for the rest of our lives.

Consider the Chinese college English learners, the problems they face when learning English kinship terms such as grandparents, cousin, aunt, uncle, so few in English, but so many different terms in Chinese. For most language learners, however, there will be much more that is shared than is foreign in conceptual system. The fact that the adult learners’ conceptual system is already installed and up-and-running, means that he or she is saved a lot of the over- and under-generalising associated with first language learning. An adult learner like college students is unlikely to confuse a dog with a cat, for example.

However, there is a downside to having a ready-made conceptual system with its associated lexicon. Faced with learning a new word, the second language learner is likely to short-cut the process of constructing a network of associations—and simply map the word directly onto the mother tongue equivalent. Thus, if a German-speaking learner learns the English word *table*, rather than creating a direct link from *table* to the concept of table, they are more likely to create a link to their L1 equivalent (T*isch*). The L1 word acts as a stepping stone to the target concept.

Many cross-language errors are due to what are known as false friends. False friends are words that may appear to be equivalent, but whose meanings do not in fact correspond. Examples of false English friends for speakers of Polish, for example, are:

actually (*aktualnie* in Polish means 'at present', 'currently')

apartment (*apartment* in Polish is a 'hotel suite')

chef (*szef* is Polish for 'chief' or 'boss')

history (*historia* in Polish means 'story')

lunatic (*lunatyk* in Polish is a 'sleepwalker')

pupil (*pupil* in Polish is a 'pet' or 'favourite')

(Thorbury, 2003, p.19)

Over-reliance on transfer from L1 could, conceivably, result in a misplacement of some words and even misleading or misunderstanding.

Generally speaking, however, languages that share words with similar forms (called cognates) have many more real friends than false friends. A French learner of English, for instance, need not feel suspicious of the English word *table* (*table* in French), nor *restaurant* (the same in French except the pronunciation)—among thousands of others.

As well as false friends and real friends, there are strangers: words that have no equivalent in the L1 at all, since the very concept does not exist in the learner's lexicon. Supposedly, Chinese has no equivalent for the English words *privacy* or *community*. In this case, the Chinese learner of English is in a position not dissimilar to a child learning his or her L1; they are learning the concept and the word in tandem. The way colour terms are distributed in different cultures is also a possible source of conceptual strangeness.

By analogy with false friends, real friends, and strangers, it may be the case that, for a good many second language learners, most of the words in their L2 lexicon are simply acquaintances. They have met them, they know them by name, they even understand them, but they will never be quite as familiar to them as their mother tongue equivalents. This is because the associative links in the second language lexicon are usually less firmly established than mother tongue links. To extend the metaphor: learning a second language is like moving to a new town—it takes time to establish connections and turn acquaintances into friends.

3. Implications of cognitive linguistics for classroom English vocabulary instruction

Zhao Yanfang (2003), a well-known scholar specialized in the study of Cognitive Linguistics (CL) in China, proposed that at least three principles based on CL can be used to direct our teaching of vocabulary, that is, the study of categorization, prototype, and metaphor.

3.1 Focusing on the teaching and learning of basic level categories of vocabulary

According to Zhao (2003), categorization is the classification of things in the cognitive process, which is essentially mental. Correspondingly, the process that the subject interacts with the object and classifies is a process of categorizing. And it is on this basis that we can conceptualize and make sense of the world around us. More important, 'categories and categorizations are existing everywhere, and are ways we perceive the world, otherwise we cannot know it in appropriate way' (Glass & Holyoak, 1986; cited in Zhao, 2003). Our experience tells us that one object can at the same time belong to some multi-categories. For example, a wolf-dog can be listed under the categories of animals, dogs, puppy dogs, etc., and constitute the different levels of categories. But how can we define it? Cognitive science takes the term 'basic level category' to answer this question scientifically. In CL, human mind gets to know things at the middle level, on which we know objects most easily, and the categories in this level is thus called basic level category. And vocabulary that comes into existence on the basis of the basic categories goes to basic level vocabulary. These vocabularies share a most distinctive attribute bundles that help to distinguish them from other vocabularies: less time to recognize, high frequency of use, and the most widely used items in everyday communication.

Consequently, in our present teaching of English vocabulary, enough attention and great importance should be given to the acquisition and instruction of basic vocabularies. And we should put vocabulary teaching in a prominent place, because basic lexicon is the basis for teaching other vocabulary categories, and it is only through which can the teaching of others be extended and fulfilled. This is a cut-way we learn English, and also an important principle for modern language teaching, course books compiling, and even dictionary compiling. It is well known that English words are extremely tremendous and large. For instance, in *Oxford Concise Dictionary*, 140,000 words are collected. It is, obviously, very difficult to remember them one by one in sequence. However, if we focus on basic level vocabularies, not only can we remember more effectively and more efficiently, but also can save more time to spend on some other learning activities.

Linguistic categorization is the major focus of CL, because 'Cognitive linguistics is not a single theory of language, but rather a cluster of theoretically and methodologically compatible approaches' (Zhao, 2000). The general research strategy of cognitive linguistics, in fact, is characterized by two major features. First, the study of categorization processes in the lexicon is taken as a methodological point of departure for the study of categorization processes in the grammar at large. If linguistic categorization is the major focus of cognitive linguistics, then studying the lexicon first is a plausible step to take: the categorizing function of the lexicon has received much attention in the linguistics, as lexicon is conceived of as an inventory of meaningful units.

3.2 Prototypes and polysemies

3.2.1 Prototype theory

In 1970s, Rosch made experiments of the category BIRD, thereby she identified that, to be a bird, it should share 13 common attributes, which involve a) laying eggs, b) having a beak, c) having two wings and two legs, d) having feathers, e) being able to fly, f) being small and lightweight, g) chirps/sings, h) legs are thin/short, j) kept in a cage, k) has long neck, l) has decorative feathers, and m) has exotic colours (Ungerer &Schmid, 2001, p.27). She found that ROBIN shares the most attributes resemble to the other family members, which she classified as the prototype of the category BIRD. All the family members have similar features with the prototype. So when we think of BIRD, we will first think of robin, but not OSTRICH or PENGUIN, just because ROBIN have the largest number of attributes of BIRRDS, and as a prototypical member of BIRD, robin is maximally distinct from the prototypical members of other categories.

Basically, there are two ways to understand the notion of prototype. It can be deduced from categorization experiments. For instance, some members of a category first come to mind in association experiments and are recognized more quickly as category members in verification tasks. If one takes these members as prototypes of the respective categories, this leads to definitions like ‘best example of a category’, ‘salient examples’, ‘clearest cases of category membership’, ‘most representative of things included in a class’ of ‘central and typical members’ (see Rosch 1978; Lakoff 1986; Brown 1990; Tversky 1990).

In 1970s, Rosch made experiments of the category BIRD, thereby she identified that, to be a bird, it should share

However, if one takes the cognitive view of categories seriously, one is justified in defining the prototype as a mental representation, as some sort of cognitive reference point. From this perspective, four characteristics that are frequently mentioned as typical of prototypicality are:

(i) Prototypical categories exhibit degrees of typicality, not every member is equally representative for a category.

(ii) Prototypical categories exhibit a family resemblance structure, or more generally, their semantic structure takes the form of a radial set of clustered and overlapping readings.

(iii) Prototypical categories are blurred at the edges.

(iv) Prototypical categories cannot be defined by means of a single set of criteria (necessary and sufficient) attributes.

(Lin, 2003, p.17)

Thus we can apply the prototype theory to the understanding of polysemy of words. In other words, among the bundles of meaning of a certain vocabulary, there must be a core meaning that can be served as the prototype of the others. Or all the other meanings are based on the extension or radiation of this prototypical meaning. For instance, for the word ‘down’, its core meaning is that ‘of motion from a higher level to a lower level’—the prototype. Then following this prototype, we can have expressions like ‘of a motion from upright position to horizontal position, from a more important place to a less important place’, and so on. As a result, the different meanings given in a dictionary is relatively limited, and we can, in effect, use the prototype and extend to many other meanings. Then, in our teaching of English vocabulary, the teacher should try to make her students aware that the meaning of a word is not fixed and unchanged, but that using human cognitive imagination, we can have some more correlated categories based on the prototypical meaning. Accordingly, core words are devised. And they are likely to be more useful than non-core words. Core words are typically those words used when defining other words. In doing so, students can benefit a lot. It can save them from memorizing each meaning listed in the dictionary blindly. Instead, they are encouraged to learn vocabulary in a more scientific way by making full use of prototypical sense of the given semantic meaning.

3.2.2 The effect of prototype theory on polysemy

Semantic category is both the tool and result of cognition. It has to supply the needs required by the development of cognition. Geeraerts (1985) pointed out that “cognition should have a tendency towards structural stability; the categorical system can only work efficiently if it does not change drastically any time new data crop up. But at the same time, it should be flexible enough to adapt itself to changing circumstances. To prevent it from being chaotic, it should “have a built-in tendency towards structural stability, but this stability should not become rigidity, lest the system stop being able to adapt itself to the ever-changing circumstances of the outside world” (p.141). It is obvious that semantic categories meet the requirements of both stability and flexibility.

It is well-known that very many words in English have different but overlapping meanings. Take *hold,* for example. It is a good example of a polysemous word:

I *held* the picture up to the light.

I was *held* overnight in a cell.

You need to *hold* a work permit.

Mrs. Smith is *holding* a parting next week.

Marxists *hold* that people are all naturally creative.

He was finding it a strain to *hold* his students' attention.

They'll probably *hold* the London train if we're late in.

The theatre itself can *hold* only a limited number of people.

(Thornbury, 2003, p.9)

Dictionary writers (lexicographers) classify words like *hold* as being polysemous— that is, of having multiple but related meanings, each of which is called a polyseme. If the polysemous nature of English provides a challenge to dictionary compilers, it is a complete headache for learners. It is difficult to decide at what point when we know the different shades of meaning represented by all its polysemes.

The studies on polysemy have proved that most semantic categories are complex networks formed by a series of interdependent values fixed on prototypes. More and more research findings have shown that those networks are not arbitrarily formed, but developed from prototypes by specific mechanisms of semantic extensions (e.g. metaphor, formulation and transferring of semantic scope, etc.)(Shen, 1991, pp. 2-3).

3.2 Metaphor and vocabulary teaching and learning

Metaphor is not just a figure of speech, but a way we perceive the world. "Language is essentially metaphoric", because metaphor is widely used in our daily life, lives in our language, and above all, is in our thought and behavior. As Johnson and Lakoff (1980) note, the conceptual system that our thought and behavior rely on is metaphoric in nature. In the same sense, metaphor is an important way of language change and development. We can feel metaphor everywhere, at any time, since it is a way of thinking. So it will be a good try to teach English vocabulary by making use of metaphors. They are powerful cognitive tools for our conceptualization of abstract vocabulary categories. The most important feature of metaphor is that its relatedness between things and categories. For example, the word 'leg' can be used to refer to legs of human beings, legs of a chair, a bed, a table, and so on, which basically means 'the support of things'.

In brief, the research findings of metaphor based on man's cognition can provide some motivations for our accounting for semantic change and development. Therefore, we should not only lay emphasis on basic vocabulary and interpret polysemy by means of metaphor but also pay special attention to the diversity and similarity of cultures and ideology. In vocabulary teaching and learning, we should try every possible means to develop metaphorical awareness, make full use of the cognitive function of metaphor and reveal the metaphorical relationship between word meanings.

4. Conclusion

Although most of the issues of cognitive linguistics addressed are not altogether new and most of what cognitive linguistics offers seem to be the essential questions that linguistics and people interested in language have always been asking, we still believe that it is a promising new perspective on vocabulary teaching and learning. In addition, the traditional methods of vocabulary teaching do and will still play an important part in teaching, but if we make an active use of this new perspective of vocabulary teaching, our efforts will be expectedly fruitful.

Vocabulary teaching and learning is a cycle of semantization and internalization, which is closely linked to and to a large extent dependent on the way a word is presented. To reduce students' learning load and make sure that the students can enlarge vocabulary quickly and efficiently, a cognitive approach that is based on prototypes, family resemblance, or basic level categories is a worthwhile attempt for us to try out in both elementary and intermediate level of English learning for EFL learners in mainland China.

References

Geeraerts, Dirk. (1985). Cognitive restrictions on the structure of semantic change. In Jacek Fisiak (ed.). *Historical Semantics, Historical Word Formation: Historical Word-Formation*. Berlin·New York·Amsterdam: Walter de Gruyter.

Geeraerts, Dirk. (1997). *Diachronic Prototype Semantics: A Contribution to Historical Lexicology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lackoff, G.. & M. Johnson. (1980). *The Metaphors We Live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Langacker, R. W. (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Vol.1. Theoretical prerequisites*. Stanford: University of Stanford Press.

Li, Hong., and Wang Yan. (2005). *A Cognitive Analysis & Learning of English Vocabulary*. Beijing: Science and Technology Press of China.

Lin, Caihui. (2003). Cognitive Linguistics and Its Implications for Vocabulary Teaching in Middle Schools. Unpublished dissertation. Fu Jian Normal University.

Richards, Jack C., and Rodgers, Theodore Stephen. (1986). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: CUP.

Schmitt, Norbert et al. (1997). *Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy*. Cambridge: CUP.

Shen, Jiaxuan. (1991). The Study of Language: A Cognitive approach. *Foreign Language Teaching Abroad,* 1991, (04).

Swan, Michael. & Walter, Catherine. (1984). *The Cambridge English Course* 1 (teacher's book). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thornbury, Scott. (2003). *How to Teach Vocabulary*. Beijing:: World Affairs Press.(Longman: Pearson Education).

Ungerer, F. & Schmid, H. J. (2001). *An Introduction to Cognitive Stylistics*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Wilkins, D. A. (1974). *Linguistics in Language Teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.

Zhao, Yanchun. (2003). *Cognitive Exploration of Lexicography.* Shanghai: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Zhao, Yanfang. (2000). A Survey of Cognitive Linguistics (I). *Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages*. Vol.23. No. 5.

Zhao, Yanfang. (2001). *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*. Shanghai: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

The Impact of Note-taking Strategies on Listening Comprehension of EFL Learners

A. Majid Hayati (Corresponding Author)
Dept. of English
College of L Literature & Humanities
Shahid Chamran University, Iran
E-mail: majid_hayati@yahoo.com

Alireza Jalilifar
Dept. of English
College of Literature & Humanities
Shahid Chamran University, Iran
E-mail: jalilifar20@yahoo.com

Abstract

The main concern of the present study is to probe the relationship between note-taking strategy and students' listening comprehension (LC) ability. To conduct the study, a language proficiency test was administered to the undergraduate students majoring in English Translation at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz and sixty students were selected to enter into the next phase of the experiment. They were then randomly divided into three groups: uninstructed note-takers, Cornell note-takers, and non note-takers. Next, the three groups were asked to listen to the listening section of a simulated TOEFL proficiency test. The results, in general, supported a clear link between note-taking strategy and LC ability. An important finding of this study was that students who took notes according to their own method showed lower level of language achievement than those who took notes on the basis of the Cornell method.

Keywords: Note-taking, Listening comprehension, Learning strategy

1. Introduction

When you pack for college, you're not likely to forget your favorite clothes, music, and equipment; but if you're like the most students, you may forget the importance that memory skills play in your college career (Brown, 2000). For many freshmen, the prospect of attending first year university classes among literally hundreds of students in large lecture theatres can be very intimidating. Being accustomed to smaller classrooms and discussion grouping, high school students coming to university for the first time often have to develop new skills of listening, for example note-taking, and using notes as a cognitive learning strategy (For a detailed classification of learning strategies see Hismanoglu, 2000) .

According to Ferris and Tagg (1996, cited in Kim, 2004) lack of note-taking skills and problems with note-taking as well as listening comprehension are troublesome areas most often reported by international students. Consequently, students' lack of comprehension may contribute to their silence in oral classroom discussion. It is critical for learners to master note-taking for school, work, and life in general. A good reason to take notes is that you can never re-listen to speech or a presentation. You must take every opportunity to record and keep information so you can use it later. A further problem that listeners often address is the rapid disappearance of the content of what they listen to. Many language learners claim that as they listen, they can follow the speakers with some ease, but when it comes to remembering it some time later, they find themselves behind eight balls. This is a serious problem that has to be taken into more consideration in studies on retention. One way to alleviate the problem is to expose learners to varied post listening activities of which note-taking is one.

Language educators have approached note-taking from different perspectives (Carrier, 2003; Fajardo, 1996; McKeating, 1981; Slotte & Lonka, 2003). Some researchers have found positive relationships between note-taking and learning. According to Hartley and Davies (1978, cited in Boon, 1989) out of 35 studies on the effects on note-taking, 17 studies found that the note-takers performed better than the non-note-takers, 16 studies found no difference, 2 studies found that note-taking interfered with performance. Other studies indicate that note-taking has no effect on achievement. A few researchers have even found that taking notes has an adverse effect on student achievement (Hartley, 2002; Ornstein, 1994; Peck & Hannafin, 1983). The studies showing no difference or negative results were analyzed by Ladas (1980, cited in Boon, 1989) and serious methodological weaknesses were found in them. The negative results were obtained from lectures delivered at high speeds.

Gilbert (1989) observes how difficult it is to take notes from a lecture in a foreign language. Even in some cases, it is suggested that the students take notes in L1 while listening to L2 (Koren, 1997). In another instance, Wald (2006) moves one step ahead by suggesting learning through multimedia for those who find note-taking difficult.

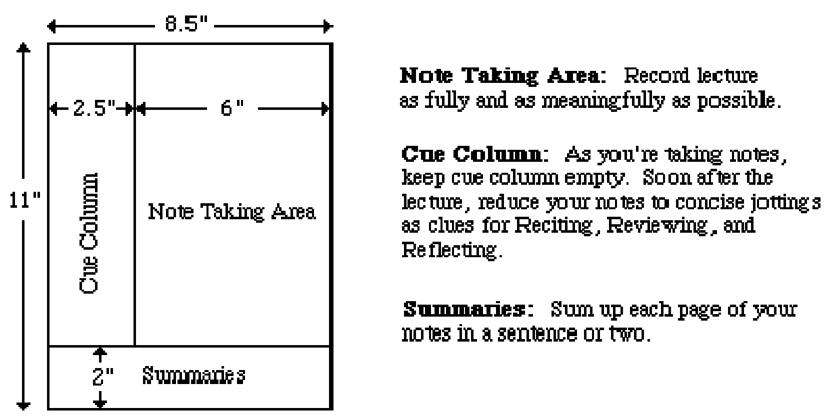
In their study, Titsworth and Kiewra (2004) pointed out that spoken organizational lecture cues boosted the number of noted organizational points and details by 39 and 35%. As another alternative result to their research, it was confirmed that note-taking resulted in about 13% higher test achievement than not taking notes.

Whether or not note-taking strategies have an effect on student achievement is still open to dispute. The results of the experimental studies on this issue are diametrically opposed on this case and yet many questions remain unanswered and the researchers have suggested that more research needs to be conducted on the topic to determine if teaching note-taking strategies can boost student achievement (Bretzing, Kulhavy, Caterino, 1987; Chen, 2007; Falout, 2002; Palmatier, 1971; Peck & Hannafin, 1983; Wilson, 2003).

A question that many scholars have wondered about focuses on why note-taking is rarely taught in high schools and universities? Since note-taking is a crucial skill, many educators believe that it should be explicitly taught in school (Bakunas & Holley, 2001; Eidson, 1984; Kiewra, 1987; Ornstein, 1994; Spires & Stone, 1989). According to Ornstein (1994), note-taking should be part of the curriculum. It is critical for learners to master note-taking for school, work, and life in general. A good reason to take notes is that you can never re-listen to speech or a presentation. You must take every opportunity to record and keep information so you can use it later. So with regard to the obstacles that many students experience which could easily be observed in the Iranian education system, the present study intends to investigate the effect(s) of note-taking instruction on the students' listening comprehension (LC) achievement.

Recent investigations into language learning behaviors have revealed that there are several methods of note-taking strategies, each of which is deployed for different purposes in acquiring the target language. O different types of note-taking, i.e. the Sentence Method, Mind Mapping Method, The Formal Outline Procedure, Clustering, and the Cornell Method (CM), the last one was selected for the present study because of its more comprehensive and widely used format.

The CM was developed by Pauk (1974) to assist Cornell students in their lecture classes to improve the organization of their notes. This system provides a systematic method for recording and reviewing notes.



The method is great for those who are new to taking notes; the format makes it easy to pick out what the key words and concepts are so that the note-takers do not waste their time or energy studying irrelevant material.

2. Research questions

The present study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. Does instruction on note-taking strategies improve LC skill in academic situations?

2. Is there any significant relationship between the students' LC skill and their note-taking strategies?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The subjects who participated in this study consisted of sixty undergraduate students, majoring in English at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, who had passed between three to seven courses in English. 73% of the participants were female and the rest were male, ranging from 20 to 24 years old. They were selected from a population of 110 undergraduate students by taking a simulated TOEFL proficiency test (Peterson, 2005). The test consisted of listening, grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, 20 items for each.

3.2 Instruments

The materials used in this study were composed of a tape-recorder, the TOEFL test, the Cornell Method pamphlet, an audio-taped listening comprehension test, an achievement test, and a post-test.

3. 3 Procedures

This study was conducted over the course of 6 weeks beginning with administration of a sample TOEFL test to select the intermediate level students. The assigned time for this test was 100 minutes. As a result, the researchers selected those students whose language proficiency scores were at most one standard deviation above or below the mean. Based on their scores, the subjects were called for the next phase of the study.

Then, the participants were randomly divided into three 20-student groups. The Non-note-takers group (NNTG) was considered as a group who took no notes during the two times play back of a part of TOEFL listening comprehension. The Uninstructed note-takers group (UNTG) took notes on their own usual manners during listening comprehension test. The Cornell note-takers group (CNTG) received the necessary instruction in form of "informal instruction" ─that is the participants did not directly receive any instruction from the instructor within the class. But they were taught the Cornell note-taking system through a pamphlet. This was an instructional source to make them familiar with and practice the system prior to the post test. The pamphlet included notes and recommendations on paper size, taking down information in the six-inch area, writing in the left margins, and copying instructors' notes on the board. The pamphlet introduced the Cornell note-taking in five Rs: recording, reducing, reciting, reflecting, and reviewing. Along with the pamphlet, a series of comprehension tasks in form of audio-taped recording was designed for them to help them with the comprehension of points. The rationale for learning the Cornell method as how to utilize the note-taking system was explained in the pamphlet to students. Some directions were also given to the subjects in the pamphlet. All the three groups were given a chance to listen to the tape twice before answering the listening comprehension items.

Next, after an interval of a week, an achievement test-including 30 multiple choice items was used to assess the CNTG to check their knowledge about the Cornell system. (See appendix for sample MCQ format on Cornell system). After being assured that all 20 students had got a good command of Cornell method, a post-test was given to them. Then, like the other two groups, they listened to the same part of the TOEFL (2005) listening comprehension, and they took notes according to the instruction they had received. The post-test was roughly equivalent to the pre-test and also to the tasks used in the exercises which were presented to them in the form of audio-listening comprehension test. The reliability of this test calculated through KR21 for the NNTG, the UNTG, and the CNTG were 0.654, 0.681, and 0.72 respectively. There was an interval of five minutes after the first playback, for the participants, to review their notes and after the second playback they had to answer the questions.

4. Data analysis

After administering the post-test, according to the obtained data, the performance of the three sample groups was compared and contrasted by applying ANOVA and t-test to determine any significant differences. The results of the two tests are presented in the following table.

Insert Table 1 right about here

The results of the post-test are also shown in the following tables. The scores obtained from the post-test of each of the two groups were compared with each other by "matched t-test" to observe any significant effects on the performances of the subjects. Thus, table (2) displays the means obtained from the post-test of NNTG and UNTG.

Insert Table 2 right about here

Table (3) compares the means obtained from the post-test of NNTG and CNTG.

Insert Table 3 right about here

In order to examine whether the students who received instruction did better than those who took no notes, another t-test was applied. As shown in table (3) the t-value obtained from comparing the two means was equal to 2.53 and the t-critical at 0.05 level of significance was equal to 2.45, so we were justified in rejecting the null hypothesis.

Our two groups scored differently in the post-test in listening comprehension. The difference was then statistically significant, and this supported use of Cornell note-taking method in promoting the student's achievement test on listening comprehension.

Table (4) indicates the means obtained from the post-test of "UNTG" and "CNTG".

Insert Table 4 right about here

As shown in table (4) the t-value obtained from comparing the two means of NTG and CNTG was equal to 2.19 and the t-critical at 0.05 level of significance was equal to 2.07. Since the t-value exceeded the t-critical for 38 degrees of freedom, it was concluded that the difference in the performances of UNTG and CNTG was highly significant.

From the above calculations, it was realized that the participants who received instruction and benefited from the *Cornell note-taking strategy* scored higher in listening comprehension than those who received no instruction and took notes in their own usual manners.

5. Discussion

This study has examined the effect of Cornell note-taking strategy in listening comprehension students learning English as a foreign language. The central question of the study was whether there was any positive/negative relationship between the students' listening comprehension and their note-taking strategies.

The results of one-way ANOVA revealed that there were significant differences among the three groups; then the *non note-takers* and the *untrained note-takers* scores were carefully compared to find out if there was any significant difference between the (NNTG) and the (UNTG) groups.

Looking through tables 3 and 4, one notices that students who took no notes (NNTG) and those who took notes on their own usual manners (UNTG) showed lower levels of language gains than those who took notes on the basis of the Cornell note-taking method (CNTG). On the one hand, students often acknowledge the difficulty they experience in simultaneous listening and note taking. Some students contend that taking notes during a lecture hampers their listening comprehension. These students state that they are so busy writing down one point that they do not hear the others. They wonder if they would be better off just focusing on listening and not taking notes. On the other hand, in case of UNTG, it should be added that the reason for their low performance, in contrast with the CNTG group, is thought to have originated in some keys such as writing in sentences rather than in phrases, using full words instead of using the symbols and abbreviations, interfering with listening while note-taking, and the lack of concentration, comprehension, and retention. If one or more of these keys are missing, incomplete listening occurs and misunderstanding results.

However, trained note-takers yield significantly better performance than untrained note-takers because they are instructed, though informally, to take a more systematic step towards note-taking. Students often seem surprised when they have listened in class, everything they heard made sense, they took notes, and they still could not recall the information later on. It should not be surprising; most of what you hear in class stays only in short-term memory (STM) and then is lost.

Unless we actively take steps to remember, the mind is capable of retaining information for only relatively short periods of time. Studies show that, after hearing an important lecture, the average person is able to recall:

- 50 % after one day
- 35 % after one week
- 20 % after two weeks

Research suggests that people listen very badly. Students listening to lectures have been found to comprehend half or less than half the basic matter (Nicholas, 1988). In a more precise look, Rockler-Gladen (2007) gives at least two tentative reasons why so many students lack note-taking skills. Giving reference to one of her students' response, she mentions that probably one of the reasons is that students' so-called notes have not been looked at before, or even worse than that, they have not been instructed on how to take notes properly. At this stage, therefore, we think that the fault goes to the curriculum designers in general and the relevant teachers (especially in Essay Writing courses) in particular. To compromise with Rockler-Gladen's words, the second reason goes to the fact that in the present world of speed, technology is moving in a non-stop fashion and thus is overused by specialists to present information to students. As an example, the card memories in the cell phones do not give enough opportunity to mobile users to keep some simple numbers in their mind. Sticking to Power-Point slides, and other high-tech organizational tools, has made the students ill-equipped to take notes in a more traditional environment. Of course, this is not to deny the effective/positive role of technology in the area of learning and teaching but to emphasize that it has to be utilized properly.

6. Conclusion

As a result of the present study, we suggest that students should be taught the useful techniques of note-taking (such as the one tested in the present study) with a number of lecture topics. Although the Cornell note-taking technique at first may seem cumbersome, it is possible that once students master this technique they could then be taught to fade out the use of the forms and incorporate only the written prompts during note taking (Weishaar & Boyle, 1999). Another important finding of this research is that teaching the Cornell note-taking strategy to university students can help improve students' achievement. In this way, the students will get the most benefit from learning note-taking strategies, if those strategies are practiced over the course of several months, even a full semester.

Specifically speaking, the results of this investigation might have implications for EFL teaching, testing and research programs. Based on the finding of this study, the teachers are recommended to include note-taking materials as part of their instruction to help students learn more about the subject matter under instruction (Boch & Piolat, 2005).

References

Boch, F. & Piolat, A. (2005). Note taking and learning: A Summary of research. *The WAC Journal*, 16, 101-113.

Boon, O. (1989). Note-taking for hearing and hearing impaired students. *Journal of Reading, 32,* 523-536.

Bretzing, B., Kulhavy, R.W., & Caterino, L.C. (1987). Note-taking by junior high students. *Journal of Educational Research*, *80* (6), 359-362.

Brown, F. (2000). Don't Forget Your Memory Skills. *http://www.suit101.com/article.cfm/college_success/43235/2.* Retrieved July 20, 2007.

Carrier, C. & Titus, A. (1981). Effects of note-taking pre-training and test mode expectations on learning from lectures. *American Educational Research Journal, 18*(4), 385-397.

Carrier, K. A, (2003). Improving high school English language learners' second language listening through strategy instruction. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *27*(3), 383-408.

Chen, Y. (2007). Learning to learn: The impact of strategy training. *ELT, 6*(1), 20-29.

Fajardo, C. P. (1996). Note-taking: A useful device. *English Teaching Forum 34*(2), 22-26.

Falout, J. J. (2002). Focused tasks to proceduralize TOEIC learning strategies. Proceedings of the 3rd Annual JALT PAN-SIG Conference (pp.38-44). May 22-23, 2002, Tokyo, Japan: Tokyo Keizai University.

Ferris, D. & Tagg, T. (1996). Academic listening/speaking tasks for ESL students: Problems, suggestions, and implications. *TESOL Quarterly, 30,* 297-320.

Gilbert, J. B. (1989). *Clear speech.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hartley, J. (2002). Note-taking in non academic settings: A review. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, *16*, 559-74.

Hartley, J. and Davis, K. (1978). Note-taking: A critical review. *Programmed Learning and Educational Technology 15*, 207-24.

Hismanoglu, M. (2000). Language learning strategies in foreign language learning and teaching. *The Internet TESL Journal*, *6*(8). http://iteslj.org/ . Retrieved July 16, 2007.

Kim, S. (2004). *Teaching international students across the curriculum: Supporting academic listening/speaking*. http://ftad.osu.edu/Publications/intloral.html. Retrieved Nov. 2006.

Koren, S. (1997). Listening to lectures in L2: Taking notes in L1. *TESL-EJ, 2*(4). http://www.tesl-ej.com/, Retrieved July 20, 2007.

Mckeating, D. (1981) Comprehension and listening: In Abbott & Wingard (eds.) *The teaching of English as an international language.* London: Collin.

Nicholas, L. N. (1988). Teaching listening comprehension. *English Teaching Forum 1*, 19-22.

Ornstein, A. C. (1994). Homework, studying, and note-taking: Essential skills for students. *NASSP Bulletin*. *78* (558), 58-70.

Palmatier, R. A. (1971). Comparison of four note-taking procedures. *Journal of Reading, 14*(4), 235-240.

Pauk, W. (1974). *How to study in college* (2nd Ed). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Peck, K. L., & Hannafin, M. J. (1983). The effects of note-taking pre-training and the recording of notes on the retention of aural instruction. *Journal of Educational Research, 77*(2), 100-107.

Peterson, T. (2005). *Peterson's TOEFL Success*. New Jersey: Heinle & Heinle/Tamson Learning.

Rockler-Gladen, N. (March 25, 2007). Taking effective lecture Notes. http:// collegeuniversity.suite101.com/blog.cfm/taking_effective_lecture_notes. Retrieved July 20, 2007.

Slotte, V. & Lonka, K. (2003). Note-taking review-practical value for Learners. *Arobase, 1-2,* 79-86. www. Arobase.to, Retrieved July 18, 2007.

Titsworth, B. S. & Kiewra, K. A. (2004). Spoken organizational lecture cues and student note-taking as facilitators of student learning. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 29*(4). 447-61.

Weishaar, M. & Boyle, J. R. (1999). Note-taking strategies for students with disabilities. *Clearing House, 72*(6), 392–395.

Wilson, M. (2003). Discovering listening: Improving perceptual processing. *ELT*, *57*(4), 335-343.

Appendix: **Achievement Test on Cornell Note-taking Method**

1. The symbol “<” is used for

a) more than or grater than

b) rather than

c) numerical order

d) less than or fewer than

2. If a point is very confusing and needs to be clarified, you will use the symbol ……..

a) ?

b) ??

c) *

d) @

3. “Positive/negative/degree/at and each” is symbolized as

a) + / - / ○ / @

b) + / < / ≃ / &

c) + / - / × / @

d) > / < / ○ / et

4. In order to show that one idea results from or causes another, we will use the symbol …….

a) colons :

b) arrows →

c) colons or arrows (: or →)

d) change Δ

5. If you hear some thing that sounds like the main idea for the lecture, you have to

a) draw an arrow from one to the other.

b) draw a big question mark in the column.

c) put a big exclamation point.

d) draw a box around it with a big star at the left.

6. In Cornell note-taking system we draw an arrow → from one to the other ……

a) to show a connection between two points

b) to show the main ideas of the lecture

c) to replace words

d) a and c

7. “Of./eg/no/i.e/nb etc.” belong to:

a) common abbreviations

b) personal abbreviations

c) discipline-specific abbreviations

d) acronym abbreviations

8. …………. is related to discipline-specific abbreviations?

a) diff = different

b) gov = government

c) etc. = etcetra

d) au = gold

9. An acronym is an abbreviation which is pronounced as a ………………

a) phrase

b) word

c) clause

d) letter

10. Which symbol is applied for “namely”?

a) viz.

b) c.

c) i.e.

d) cf.

11. The symbol “»” is used for “……………..”

a) is related to

b) will be

c) as a result of

d) increased

12. Which of the following symbol does not match its equivalence?

a) ! important point

b) xx will be on exam

c) x I disagree

d) ?? approximately

13. The symbol ……….. is used for “compare”.

a) Δ

b) cf

c) ↓

d) ↑

14. …………….. is a symbol which comes for “changed”.

a) Δ

b) ff

c) →

d) ∞

15. We use the symbol ……………. for “definition” and the symbol …………… for the function.

a) def / fun

b) def / fxn

c) defn / fan

d) dfn / fnc

16. C/B is a symbol which stands for ………….

a) at

b) could be

c) should be

d) before

17. Which of the following symbols corresponds to its equivalence?

a) input = inp.

b) reaction = rxn

c) function = fxn

d) a, b and c

18. In short abbreviations, we utilize …………… of a word.

a) a, b and c

b) the first three letters

c) the first syllable

d) the first syllable as well as the second letter

19. The words “different, government and necessary” can be shortened to

a) dif – gov – nec

b) diff – govn – nec

c) diff – gov – nec

d) dif – govn – nec

20. In chemistry we represent ………….. for gold and …………..for magnesium.

a) Gld – Mgs

b) Au – Mg

c) Au – Mag

d) Au – Mgs

21. The symbol w/i stands for ……………….

a) will be

b) within

c) without

d) wish

22. To highlight important points you should use ……………….

a) asterisk

b) underlining

c) exclamation points

d) a, b and c

23. Mathematical symbols can be used to show comparison between two things, so …..… is used to indicate …….

a) = / equivalence

b) > / less than or fewer than

c) ↓ / increase

d) … / etc

24. The noun phrase of "Light Amplification by Simulation Emission of Radiation" can be abbreviated to

a) LASER

b) LAZER

c) LAISER

d) LEISER

25. The symbol ………….. does not match its equivalence.

a) viz = namely

b) NB = note

c) c = compare

d) re = with reference to

26. The items such as "decrease, will be on exam and following" can be abbreviated to:

a) De - * - Fol

b) ↓ - ** - ff

c) ↑ - ! - →

d) – - !! - :

27. We use colons

a) to show that one idea results from or causes another

b) to replace words such as "leads to" "becomes" or "follows"

c) to group information that belongs together

d) a and b

28. To group information that belongs together, we use the symbols ………….

a) a, b and c

b) parenthesis ( ) and brackets [ ]

c) brackets [ ] and circles ○

d) colons :

29. The symbol “×” is used for …………………

a) I disagree

b) multiplied by

c) maximum

d) closed

30. Which symbol is used for “therefore” and “with reference to”?

a) .. / re.

b) the / wrt

c) ~ / ref

d) … / re

Answer key

1. d	7. a	13. b	19. c	25. c
2. b	8. d	14. a	20. b	26. b
3. a	9. b	15. b	21. b	27. d
4. c	10. a	16. b	22. d	28. a
5. d	11. c	17. d	23. a	29. a
6. a	12. d	18. a	24. a	30. c

Table 1. One-way ANOVA for the subjects' performances on the post-test

Source of variance	SS	DF	MS	F_{ratio}	$F_{critical}$
Between groups	207.7	2	103.85	4.21	3.17
Within groups	1405	57	24.65		
Total	1612.7	59			

MS = Means Squares SS = Sum of Squares

Table 2. The performances of the NNTG and UNTG

Groups	N	Mean	SD	SD.E	DF	t-value	t-critical	Sig(2-tailed)
NNTG	0	20.75	5.25	1.17	8	0.686	2.042	0.497
UNTG	0	21.75	3.86	0.864				

Note: $p<0.05$ N = Number SD = Standard Deviation SD.E = Std.error mean

Table 3. The post-test performances of the NNTG and CNTG

Groups	N	Mean	SD	SD.E	DF	t-value	t-critical	Sig(2-tailed)
NNTG	20	20.75	5.25	1.17	38	2.53	2.45	0.16
CNTG	20	21.75	5.6	1.25				

Note: $p<0.05$ N = Number SD = Standard Deviation SD.E = Std.error mean

Table 4. The post-test performances of the UNTG and CNTG

Groups	N	Mean	SD	SD.E	DF	t-value	t-critical	Sig(2-tailed)
UNTG	20	21.75	3.8	0.864	38	2.19	2.07	0.034
CNTG	20	25.1	5.6	1.25				

Note: $p<0.05$ N = Number SD = Standard Deviation SD.E = Std.error mean

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

A Study on the Approaches to Culture Introduction in English Textbooks

Lin Zu
School of Foreign Language, North China Electric Power University
Tel: 86-312-318-8265 E-mail: zulin3188@163.com

Zheqiong Kong
School of Foreign Language, North China Electric Power University
Mailbox 336, No. 689 Huadian Road, Baoding 071003, Hebei, China
Tel: 86-312-754-2668 E-mail: kongzq666@yahoo.com.cn

Abstract

Language is embedded in society and culture, and for that matter, learning a foreign language involves learning its culture. This paper is concerned with the inseparability of culture and language in foreign language teaching, arguing that culture introduction is an effective way to promote students' cultural awareness and language proficiency. Foreign language textbooks are major channels for culture introduction. Therefore, this study attempts to analyze one set of English textbooks for Chinese secondary school students, and hence reveals the approaches to culture introduction in English textbooks.

Keywords: Culture introduction, English textbooks, Approaches, Direct introduction, Indirect introduction

1. Introduction

Linguists, especially language teachers and educators, are among the first to realize the importance of including host culture into foreign language curriculum and the impossibility of foreign language acquisition without relevant cultural understanding. Unfortunately, as some studies have shown, this does not necessarily lead to the practice of combining the two in language teaching classroom. The scarcity of authoritative, systematic and scientific culture materials and the irrationality of English textbook design have become, to some extent, barriers to the development of the English culture teaching. This study aims to probe into the main approaches to culture introduction in foreign language textbooks through a systematic analysis of one set of English textbooks entitled *Learning English*.

2. Language and Culture

2.1 Defining Culture

Culture is so broad in its scope that "there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture." (Hall, 1977, p.14) Till now linguists have had many kinds of definitions about culture; each has its own focus in one particular aspect, ranging from all-encompassing concepts like "it is everything" to some narrowly-viewed concepts like "it is opera or ballet".

It is believed that Sir Edward B. Tylor gave the first definition of culture. He defines culture as "That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."(Cited in Yue 1999, p.112) This concept of culture is all-embracing, and includes the behavioral ("custom"), the creative-material ("art"), the institutional ("moral" and "law"), and the cognitive ("knowledge" and "belief"). Robertson (Cited in Deng, 1989) says that "culture consists of all the shared products of human society." Samovar et al (2000, p.36) define culture as "the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving". This is a descriptive definition that tries to cover everything about culture. It has even included the aspect of nonverbal communication.

We can see from the above-mentioned definitions, although they are given from different angles, that culture is shared, learned, transmitted, integrated with ways of life, deep in beliefs, values, and social norms. Besides, culture is dynamic and subject to change.

2.2 Inseparability of Culture and Language

Some people say that language is the mirror of culture, in the sense that people can see a culture through its language. Others compare language and culture to an iceberg: the visible part is language, with a small part of culture; the greater part, lying hidden beneath the surface, is the invisible aspect of culture. Brown (2001, p.165) describes the relation of the two as follows: "A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one can not separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture." In one word, culture and language are inseparable.

Through the following three metaphors, a new understanding of language and culture can be conveyed (Jiang, 2000).

From a philosophical view:

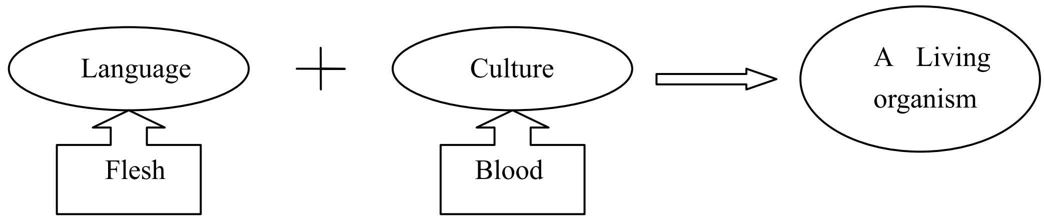


Figure 2-1 Philosophical View

Language and culture makes a living organism; language is fresh, and culture is blood. Without culture, language would be dead; without language, culture would have no shape.

From a communicative view:

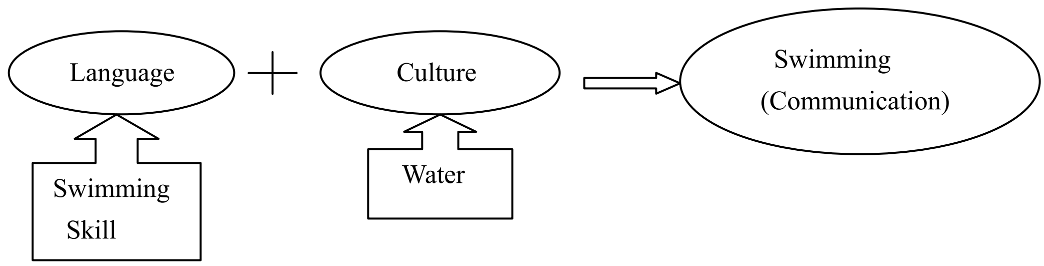


Figure 2-2 Communicative View

If communication is considered as swimming, language is the swimming skill, and culture is water. Without language, communication would remain to a very limited degree (in very shallow water); without culture, there would be no communication at all.

From a pragmatic view:

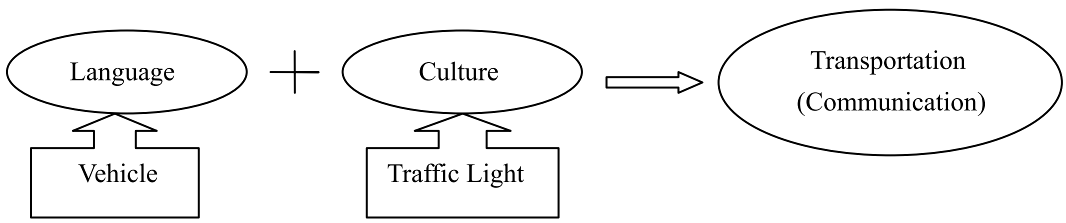


Figure 2-3 Pragmatic view

Communication is the transportation, language is the vehicle and culture is traffic light. Language makes communication easier and faster; culture regulates, sometimes promotes and sometimes hinders communication.

Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. Culture is the foundation of communication.

2.3 Culture in Foreign Language Teaching

Due to the inseparability of language and culture, it is necessary to incorporate culture into the language teaching process. In her book *Context and Culture in language Teaching*, Kramsch (1993) states that cultural awareness and the learning of a second culture can only aid the attaining of second language proficiency. She also indicates that the teaching of culture implicitly or explicitly permeates the teaching of social interaction, and the spoken and the written language. In her view, second and foreign language learners necessarily become learners of the second culture because a language cannot be learned without an understanding of the cultural context in which it is used since "culture is not an independent aspect of language learning or teaching, it is a feature of language, it is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners' proficiency when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them." (Kramsch, 1993, p.1)

However, as we know, culture covers so many aspects that it is impossible to teach everything in limited classroom. Therefore, it is necessary to decide what and how to introduce and to what extent should culture be introduced in accordance with the students' current level of language proficiency.

3. Approaches to Culture Introduction in English Textbooks

Despite the fact that the majority of the language teachers and learners recognize the important role that culture plays in foreign language teaching and learning, we are still in dire need of cultural materials that could provide a comprehensive picture of culture knowledge required to conduct appropriately in cross-cultural communication. Since textbooks serve as a guide for language teachers in language education, it is of vital importance that textbooks provide a systematic and comprehensive cultural perspective for both the teachers and learners. In this regards, it is essential that textbook compilers take culture introduction into consideratrion by means of integrating culture into the English textbooks. In the hope of finding out the approaches to culture introduction in English textbooks, we will have a thorough analysis of one set of English textbooks entitled *Learning English*.

3.1 Cultural Characteristics of Learning English

Compared with the English textbooks more than one decade ago — *the Junior English for China*, the current one — *Learning English* have definitely made a great breakthrough owing to its sufficient provision of cultural elements. There are the following six cultural features that are noticeable throughout the textbooks.

(1) Presentation of a wider range of cultural topics

This set of textbooks deals with topics of various kinds. Each unit centers on one particular topic. Most of these topics are concerned with the western cultures, or at least a reflection of them, which are certain to be of interest to learners. They include everyday life, leisure, family relationships, social customs, hot issues of contemporary society, etc. Whilst being primarily designed for language teaching, these topics are also informative, challenging, amusing, exciting and occasionally provocative. They can provide opportunities for expanding students' experience in general. Moreover, students may learn better when they are not only concentrating on learning the target language, but also knowing about the target culture.

(2) The variety of culturally-conditioned activities involved

The various activities or tasks in each lesson provide a great deal of opportunities for students to become more aware of the conventional behavior patterns in the target culture. They include pair-work, group discussion, role-play, interviewing, researching and so on. In the process of conducting these activities, students are actually learning to appreciate the way English people behave. Meanwhile, they may come up with their own creative way of coping with various circumstances.

(3) A truthful presentation of home culture and target culture.

In *Learning English*, we not only find target culture materials, but also home culture and international target culture materials. As an English learner, one will inevitably be involved in two or more different cultures. Therefore, one of the goals of language teaching is to train culturally double-directional learners who know about both their native culture and the target one, rather than to train totally native-like behavior imitators who cast their eyes solely on the target culture. Besides, it is our responsibility to introduce home culture to the target language people and vice versa. Consequently, it is of necessity that we incorporate both the home culture and the target culture materials into the English textbooks in the hope that we understand both cultures better. *Learning English* provides us with such an opportunity. It not only includes topics about western cultures, such as the various western holidays, their way of life, but also topics about Chinese culture.

(4) A reflection of popular cultures

Nowadays, with the popularization of computer and Internet, more and more people begin to use E-mail as a substitute for ordinary letters. Taking full advantage of this, *Learning English* presented most of its texts in the form of e-mails. Besides, it also discusses hot issues of the world today, like that of environmental protection, extinction of wild animals, the world population, etc. This can provide students with the opportunities to have a better understanding of the present society and keep up with the ever changing world.

(5) A focus on everyday life

Most of the topics in *Learning English* deal with different aspects of everyday life which would be of interest to teenagers. Thus, from time to time, students can ascertain the differences and similarities between their lifestyle and that of the target language people. This will, consciously or unconsciously, cultivate their awareness of the existence of potential contradictions and conflicts between the two cultures and build up a picture of life in the target community.

(6) Adoption of authentic pictures

The presentation of numerous authentic pictures, especially of good-quality visuals, is one of the remarkable features throughout the textbooks. Pictures are always visual, vivid, impressive and easy to understand; they can leave a deep impression on students and can thus promote and even reinforce their learning process. Moreover, the authentic pictures illustrated in the textbooks are a truthful reflection of some aspects of western and Chinese culture. They are a good way of informing, stimulating and enriching students' experience.

3.2 Main Approaches to Culture Introduction in Learning English

Since there are so many cultural elements included in this set of textbooks, we would better focus our attention on them in order that we could find out the approaches to culture introduction in these textbooks. According to our observation, there are mainly two approaches to the introduction of culture, that is, the direct and indirect introduction. The two approaches are then further divided into several subcategories.

3.2.1 Direct Introduction

By direct introduction, we mean that the textbooks provide students with materials concerning the cultural aspects of the language in a clear and unambiguous manner in the form of cultural knowledge, such as ways of greeting and farewell, ways of addressing, etc. It enables students to obtain cultural knowledge from the contents of textbooks in a direct way.

3.2.1.1 Words Accompanied by Pictures

To a large extent, understanding cultural diversity is also built on interpreting the denotative and connotative meaning of words. Therefore, a better understanding of word meaning can lead to a better understanding of cultural differences. However, as we know, in English, there are a lot of culture-loaded words and idioms that can hardly find their equivalents in Chinese. The textbooks tend to lead the students astray by giving wrong equivalents in which the English words and their supposed equivalents in fact refer to different things. For example, the English word "dragon" and its Chinese counterpart "long" are quite different both in image and connotation. More often than not, the English explanations will make the students more confused. In this case, a picture or photograph beside the English words not only saves us a lot of trouble but may also be pleasing to both the eye and the mind.

In *Learning English*, we can find the large amount of pictures alongside the English words. They not only facilitate the memorization of new words, but also enable students to use them in appropriate situations. With the help of pictures, students can know exactly what a donut is like, which color is blond, what a grocery store is like, etc.

3.2.1.2 Situational Dialogues

In the process of teaching situational dialogues, students are not only repeating and memorizing the sentence, but also understanding the explanation behind the conversation, i.e. the values and beliefs underlying it. This is well justified by the following conversation:

-Li Ming: I like your skirt.

-Jenny: Thanks! (Student Book 1, Lesson 13)

Was Jenny's reply immodest, as it seemed to some of the Chinese? Absolutely not! In English-speaking countries, praise is to be accepted, generally with a remark like "thank you." It is assumed that compliment is sincere, that the praise is for some not unworthy achievement or thing. Therefore, there should be no show of false humility, no pretended modesty. To Chinese, however, the customary reply to a compliment would be to claim that one is not worthy of the praise, that what one has done is hardly enough, or that success was more a matter of luck or some other circumstances. Acceptance of a compliment would imply conceit or lack of manners. Through the presentation of this small dialogue, students can perceive the "hidden" rules of conversation under their teacher's guidance and will thus be able to behave appropriately when faced with the same or similar situation.

In addition to that, culture knowledge can also be channeled into the content of the dialogues. Look at the following dialogue:

Li Ming: I like porridge for breakfast. Would you like some porridge?

Jenny: No, thanks! I like cereal for breakfast.

Li Ming: Cereal? What's cereal?

Jenny: In Canada we eat cereal for breakfast. I put milk and sugar on it. Would you like some?

Li Ming: Yes. Mmmm … It's delicious! (Student Book 1, Lesson 28)

From the above dialogue, students are able to distinguish the different dietary habits between English-speaking countries and China.

3.2 1.3 Texts Depicting Cultural Events

Texts are major carrier of culture knowledge. To some extent, they can convey comparatively greater amount of cultural information than words and dialogues. By virtue of texts, various cultural events such as holidays, historical events and geography can be illustrated. Besides, they can also reflect some aspects of culture, whether it be target culture or native culture. In Learning English, a lot of cultural information is conveyed through texts. Take the Student Book 4 as an example:

Lesson 34 is an introduction of railways which provides a great deal of facts about railways. For instance, who invented the steam engine? Who invented railways? And when did the passenger railway open?

Lesson 42 deals with e-mail instructions which inform students of how to get started, how to send e-mails and how to receive e-mails.

Lesson 46 talks about the two western holidays, i.e. Mother's Day and Father's Day. It presents the students with their respective history and the ways people celebrate them.

Lesson 49 to lesson 51 is concerned with geography. They provide students a lot about the world with its populations, oceans, deserts, rivers and so on.

3.2.1.4 Cultural Notes

The adoption of cultural notes in the English textbooks is a preferable way of introducing culture, especially in situations which might otherwise make students confused or even at a loss. However, this does not mean that we should provide as much cultural information as possible. We should take students' level of proficiency and time into consideration. This set of textbooks present the students with the appropriate amount of notes required to facilitate the understanding of texts. Most of them are concise, easy to understand, and presented in a humorous way.

For instance, in Lesson 6 of the Student Book 1, the given explanation of "Mrs." is like this: "I am married, so you can call me 'Mrs.' Liu. My husband is 'Mr.' Liu. My daughter is 'Miss' Liu." In this way, the usage of "Mrs., Mr., and Miss" is made quite clear. Other examples are as follows:

What's hot chocolate? It's a drink. It has hot milk, sugar and chocolate in it. It's so good! (Student Book 3, Lesson 29)

Do you know hockey? It's a sport. In Canada, everyone likes hockey. (Student Book 3, Lesson 29)

- The United Nations is a place where the countries of the world meet.

- I still don't understand! What do you mean by "United Nations"?

- Well, "united" means "together." The meaning of "nation" is "country."

- Oh! Now I understand. (Student Book 3, Lesson 42)

However, the direct approach has its limitations: though students have an overall knowledge of English culture, they are still in lack of real and actual communication. Communicative competence, if any, will be very limited with this kind of information provided directly by the textbooks.

3.2.2 Indirect Introduction

By indirect introduction, we mean that culture is presented in an implicit way, not in the form of cultural knowledge. Apart from the explicit cultural knowledge that is explainable and learnable through direct introduction, there are also some hidden and implicit aspect of culture, i.e. the values, attitudes and world outlooks that are vital to the understanding of a language. This set of textbooks approach these aspects of culture in two different ways, that is, cognitive approach and behavioral and affective approach.

3.2.2.1 Cognitive Approach

Cognitive approach here means the mental process in which students learn to think or to do things by virtue of the target language. The various tasks in these textbooks meant to introduce culture via cognitive approach. Some typical examples are as follows:

Task 1: Writing something about home culture

Irfan has learned a lot about China. Think of some things he may not know about your hometown. Write a letter to Irfan about them. (Student Book 3, Lesson 14)

Write an e-mail to describe a Chinese festival. When is it? How is it celebrated? How did it begin? (Student Book 3, Lesson 24)

Task 2: Writing thank-you letter

Suppose it's your birthday today. You get many presents from your friends. Your parents have a party for you at home. Write a thank-you note/card/letter to thank your parents and friends. (Student Book 3, Lesson 23)

Task 3: Making contrast and comparison

Are hobbies the same or different in China and Canada?

First, study Canadian hobbies, using your Student Book and Activity Book/Reader.

Next, think of some hobbies in China. Do Canadian and Chinese people enjoy some of the same hobbies? Are some hobbies different in China and in Canada? Write down your ideas in a chart. (Student Book 3, Lesson 51)

Task 4: Searching for cultural information

People in different countries celebrate festivals in different ways. Try to find out more about festivals around the world. Discuss one or more of them with a partner, then exchange your ideas with another pair. (Student Book 3, Lesson 20)

Task 5: Cultural quizzes

Cultural quizzes are a preferable way for testing students' mastery of certain cultural knowledge. By quizzes, students can further consolidate their knowledge and learn something new to them as well. For example, after students have learned something about English-speaking countries, they are expected to do the following task:

A student stands in front of the class. He is thinking of a country. Ask him some questions. Guess the name of the country. (Student Book 1, Lesson 64)

Task 6: Discussion

Talk with a partner about these questions:

What do you think of the idea of April Fool's Day?

Have you ever played a trick on somebody? Share a trick with your partner.

What do you think "white lie" means? (Student Book 4, Lesson 22)

Task 7: Brainstorming

Before learning the text about Europe, two questions are presented to the students as warm-up exercises: What do you know about Europe? Make a list of the countries you know in Europe. (Student Book 4, Lesson 54)

By accomplishing the various tasks on one's own, students could check what they have learnt and find out things that they have missed and improve their language proficiency by noticing gaps in their own ability to explain. Besides, these tasks can stimulate students' interest of learning and knowing more about cultural knowledge.

3.2.2.2 Behavioral and Affective Approach

There are various kinds of activities assigned to students in Learning English. These activities can facilitate the learners to perceive the differences between cultures and thus provide learners with opportunities to adjust themselves to those differences. While conducting the various activities, students are actually learning to behave in a "new" situation and to empathize with the target language community, which is a process of testing how well the learners understand the language functions and the internal system of the foreign culture. It is hoped that students can work out the reasons for behavior or some abstract rules from observable behavior by themselves or under the guidance of the teachers. Some of these activities require a lot of knowledge and spontaneous reaction. Therefore, learners need sufficient information and exercises to get used to the western style of learning and the English way of expressing their opinions with the teachers' guidance. These activities include role-play, song-singing, experimentation and the like.

Activity 1: Role-play

(1) Planning a birthday party

It's Li Ming's birthday soon! Make a plan for his birthday party. What things do you need? Where will the party be? Who will come to the party? Who will bring the birthday cake? Share you plan with the rest of the class. (Student Book 3, Lesson 17)

(2) Asking the way

Act out a play with a partner. One of you is looking for a bookshop, theatre or museum, but you don't know the way. The other is a policeman who offers to help. Try using these expressions: Do you know the way to______? Go ______ (direction) and turn ______. (Student Book 3, Lesson 30)

(3) Making telephone calls

Make up a dialogue with a partner. Act out a phone call between two friends. One is in China; the other is in the U.S. Try to use the expressions you learned in this lesson. (Student Book 3, Lesson 41)

(4) Dealing with dogs

What do you think Mike's father and mother would do when Brandy ate the hamburgers? In a group of three, act out this scene. Who in your group will be Brandy? (Student Book 4, Lesson 18)

While acting out these scenes, students should put in the shoes of the western people. Take (4) as an example, for the majority of the people in Western countries, dogs are good companions or even faithfully friends. Unlike the Chinese, they seldom beat them or scold them. So students are expected to take this point into account while acting the play.

Activity 2: Song-singing

Songs can create a delightful atmosphere for both the learners and the teachers. In this sense, they can promote students' motivation of learning. In addition to that, by emerging themselves to songs, students can have a better understanding of what the song meant to convey. In lesson 60 of Student Book 3, there is a song like this:

Be confident in yourself,

Be proud of who you are,

Strive to be the best you can be!

We're unique —

You are you and I am me!

Be yourself and celebrate

How no one is quite like you!

Be yourself and celebrate —

You are special through and through!

There is an emphasis on and high praise of individuality between the lines. The advocate of individuality is quite common in most of the western countries, especially among young people. An awareness of this will certainly lead to students' better understanding of their peers in the target culture.

Although indirect introduction is a preferable way of fostering students' communicative competence, it is often prone to be neglected by both the teachers and students. Often times, they might fail to perceive what the textbook compiler have intended to convey. Another point is that, this approach requires the teacher to be possessed with high inter-cultural communicative competence. While students are fulfilling certain task, teachers should pay particular attention to their performance and give constructive suggestions for further improvement. In other words, both the teachers and students are required to reflect on their performance before they move on to the next part of lesson.

4. Conclusion

This paper, by discussing the relationship between language and culture, has contended that language and culture are closely associated and that channeling Western culture into English language curriculum is both important and necessary. Only if culture were integrated in language teaching, the whole teaching process would be complete. The direct and indirect introduction of culture in English textbooks could certainly make cultural learning and teaching manageable for both teachers and students and is therefore, a preferable way of introducing culture in English textbooks.

References

Brown, H. D. (2001). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Deng, Yanchang, & Liu, Runqing. (1989). *Language and culture*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Hall, E. T. (1977). *Beyond culture*. New York: Anchor Doubleday.

Jiang, W. T. (2000). The relationship between culture and language. *EFT Journal*, 54.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching.* Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Luo, Changpei. (1950). *Language and Culture*. Beijing: Beijing Press.

Samovar, L. A., & Porter, R. E., Stefani, L. A. (2000). *Communication between cultures*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Yue, Meiyun. (1994). *Applied linguistics*. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

On Symbolic Significance of Characters in *Lord of the Flies*

Xiaofang Li & Weihua Wu
School of Foreign Languages
Yan'an University
Yangjialing 716000, China
E-mail: lxf0318 @126.com.

Abstract

The characters in *Lord of the Flies* possess recognizable symbolic significance, which make them as the sort of people around us. Ralph stands for civilization and democracy; Piggy represents intellect and rationalism; Jack signifies savagery and dictatorship; Simon is the incarnation of goodness and saintliness. All of these efficiently portray the microcosm of that society.

Keywords: William Golding, Characters, Symbolic significance

1. Introduction

Lord of the Flies is written by famous contemporary novelists William Golding (1911-1993), who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983.Since its publication in 1954, the novel has become the best sellers and has been studied in schools and universities nearly all over the world.

Such success has great relationship with the author's unique writing style—he puts symbolism in a delicate blending of fable, allegory and adventure story. *Lord of the Flies* depicts the transformation into savagery of a group of English schoolboys stranded on a desert island without adult supervision in the aftermath of a plane crash. At the beginning, the children manage to take care of themselves and expect the hope of rescue. However, the boys are soon controlled by the fear in their hearts. The island community breaks up into two rival groups, represented respectively by Ralph, who insists on civilized values and the hope of rescue; Jack, who wants to enjoy the freedom and benefits of hunting on the island. Eventually, the paradise-like island is destroyed in fire of cannibalism. The schoolboys are rescued and reverted from savages to obedient schoolboys on the arrival of an English Cruiser when he was in his business of fighting another cruiser.

2. Symbolic Significance of Characters

The characters in *Lord of the flies* possess recognizable traits that make them individuals as the sort of people that everyone has known in school, work and society, and become convincingly embodiments of particular aspects of human nature.

2.1 Ralph—Civilization and Democracy

Ralph, fair-haired, athletically built, good-looking and from a prosperous, middle-class family, is the charismatic protagonist of *Lord of the Flies.* He leads and accommodates to others in terms of the fondly cherished, moderate English tradition. Ralph, the representative of civilization and democracy, lives by rules, acts peacefully, and follows moral commands and values the good of the group, who dramatically reveals the condition of civilization and democracy in Golding's time.

Driven by his instinct of civilization and democracy, Ralph wants to set up a civilized utopia for all the boys on the island. He blows the conch and summons the deserted children together. He suggests the boys making a chief by voting, which shows his thought of law, order and democracy. After he is elected as the chief, he makes rules of speaking; Ralph tries to have the boys preserve the civilized living principles.

Although he is the only one who worries over the welfare of the other boys and his instinct of civilization survives longer than any other character, he is not resolute and decisive when facing the problems. Since he becomes a leader, Ralph is determined to seek way for rescue by keeping a signal fire for attracting a passing ship. But with the appearance of beast from water, Ralph is confused in despair to ask a sign from that ruined world. In "Beast from Air", after their exploration, his intelligence is crippled by fear, so they keep a signal on the rock instead on the top of the mountain. When Jack challenges his authority, Ralph does not give a firm counterattack, even wants to give up the position of chief, and takes part in the feast of Jack and killing of Simon. To a great degree, Ralph helps the expanding of savagery.

If we set the story against the social background during World War II, it is easy for us to find the boys in the novel from the politicians at that time. "If Ralph is Chamberlain and Jack Hitler, Roger is the Gestapo."(Kirstin Olsen: 14) This kind of comparison is seemingly surprising to us, but as a matter of fact there's something reasonable in it. Chamberlain was British Prime Minister before the war, who took a policy of appeasement towards Hitler's aggression. It's his diplomatic policy that should be partly responsible for Hitler's expansion, which finally caused the greatest tragedy in the history of the world. There is something similar between Ralph and Chamberlain. Ralph is the chief among the boys, but when Jack challenges his authority, he in most cases is reluctant to fight against Jack. He has such a capability but he fails to make use of it. He could challenge Jack physically and defeat him once and for all; he could lend Piggy more assistance in forming a coalition. Yet he does nothing and even thinks to "give up being chief". His attitude towards Jack to some degree makes all the things go wrong and gets Jack's group becomes more ferocious and violent.

But, to our relief, Ralph is aware of the reason of the savagery at the end of the novel. When he is hunted by the "hunters", Ralph has found the lord of the flies—the Beelzebub, He smashes the Beelzebub, and he grows mature and begins to be aware of the reason So, at the end, when the officer rescues him, Ralph weeps, "for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy"(William Golding:223).Though he fails in striving for the returning of the values of civilization, it's not only his fault. It is the failure of mankind to deal with the forces of evil. Some critics say that Golding is a sheer pessimist. No, one of his hopes lies on Ralph's self-awareness.

2.2 Piggy—Intellect and Rationalism

Piggy is the embodiment of intellect and rationalism. He firstly senses the seriousness of their life on the island and he reminds Ralph of their serious situation by using three words of death in succession when Ralph takes it for granted that they will be rescued soon. In addition, he firstly suggests that they should do something such as collecting the scattered boys. And he gives the information of conch and teaches Ralph the ways of blowing. Piggy, too, is the first to recognize that life entails making certain choices and establishing certain priorities. And Piggy firstly suggests lighting a small smoke and avoiding the danger of setting fire on the forest and the necessary wood for the signal fire when they firstly light the signal fire, but the enthusiastic action overwhelms his advice. Piggy even thinks about creating a sundial by which they can know time. Piggy takes a scientific and rational attitude towards life. When the fear of beast confuses them, Piggy speaks that life is scientific (William Golding: 92).

Piggy suggests the real fear is the fear of people. His forward-looking imagination sees things very clearly as they will be. He senses the evil people, but he can do nothing. When the "hunters" worship their God—the lord of the flies, the science and rationalism keep him from participating in the superstition of the other boys and keep him standing with Ralph. What is important is that Piggy shares the out-of-date confidence of Ballantyne that common sense can master any problem, and he believes that most people, given the chance, are as sensible as him. In the period of overwhelming war, Piggy's confidence is as resolute as that of an old man, so he is like an old father compared to the boys on the island. He always stands with Ralph and he believes the confidence of Ballantyne.

Piggy's near-sight implies that his intelligence is limited. Simon is aware that man is heroic and sick, but for Piggy man is not ill, man just has a foolish but corrigible habit of following Jack (fascist) if Jack should be taking Piggy's sensible advice. He does not realize that fascism overwhelms and will kill anything they want to.

Piggy, representative of intellect and rationalism, is like a sacrificial pig impaled on the sharpen stick since anarchy and animalism is in dominion. There is no rescue.

2.3 Jack—Savagery and Dictatorship

Jack, Ralph's antagonist, represents the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill and dictator, the authoritarian man-of-power who enters the scene like a sergeant. Jack is the strong-willed, egomaniacal boy, who is the novel's prime representative of the instinct of savagery and violence. From his appearance, Jack is always associated with shadows and obscurity, and his frustrated angry eyes reveal his mind. From the start of the story, he claims to hunt for meat. Actually his argument is a filmy pretext for the fact that he needs blood. He wants to share the pleasure of conquest and killing more than eating meat as he recalls, "He has outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, and taken away its life like a satisfying drink".(William Golding, 76.)

When the restraints of civilization no longer take effect, the evil reveals its true face. Jack devises the painted mask of the hunter, with which the recall of civilization covers. Then he is liberated from shame and self-consciousness and becomes the leader of the anonymous mob of murderous savages. With the expanding of the bloodlust, Jack becomes more and more savage and violent. Under the enforcement of savagery, he has already forgotten the distinction between animals and men, as do primitives. He leads the hunters not only to kill pigs but also to kill his companions such as

Simon, Piggy and nearly Ralph. As Alastair Niven puts it, "Jack represents more completely than anyone else in the novel the theme of 'reversion to savagery' and he finds that behind the disguise of paint and mask he can assume a more self-confident personality" (Alastair Niven, 48).

On the other hand, Jack is a totalitarian, an authoritarian man-of-power who despises assemblies and conch, and becomes an absolute ruler of his tribe in the end. When he appears at the assembly, he shows the desire of power and authority as he claims with simple arrogance "I ought to be chief, because I'm chapter chorister and head boy. I can sing C sharp" (William Golding 23). His privileged choir-school background has undoubtedly taught him much about the necessity of hierarchies; including the notion that head boy from such a school ought to be a top man anywhere. Although he fails in the vote, it does not defeat him. He continuously rages and breaks the democratic procedures of the assembly. The way to get things done, he believes, is to compel, not ask, to terrorize, not persuade. At last, Jack becomes the real dictator who enjoys the worship of his "hunters" and rules them by terror. After he successfully controls the island, he is the undisputed lord of the feast, "where he sits upon his log-throne, painted and garlanded, sat there like an idol. There were piles of meat on green leaves near him, and fruit, and coco-nut shells full of drink." and "power lay in the brown swell of his forearms: authority sat on his shoulder and chattered in his ear like an ape."(William Golding, 164-65)

The sense of power has given him a newly sinister quality behind his paint. He abuses his power by his arbitrary beating of Wilfred, violent stealing of fire, cruel robbing of spec from Piggy, forceful enlisting of Sam and Eric and delirious killing of Piggy. What's more, to satisfy his need of dictatorship, Jack has sacrificed the island, which means sacrificing themselves, to kill Ralph. Their behavior reaches the climax of terrorism and frenzy.

The character of Jack not only shows us how the primitive desire and actions are released where there are no restrictions of civilization but also what an dictator would have done or would do when driven by his evil power and lust for blood.

2.4 Simon—Goodness and Saintliness

If Ralph stands at one end of a line, representing civilization, and Jack stands at other end of the line, representing savagery, where does Simon stand? The answer is that, unlike all the other boys, Simon stands on a different plane from every other character in the novel. Why? During World War II, William Golding witnessed the expenditure of human ingenuity in the old ritual of war. As the illusions of his earlier rationalism and humanism fell away, he concluded, "the shape of society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable"(James R. Baker: 23) and he illustrated it in *Lord of the Flies*. In a way, Simon represents the future ideal personality of Golding. Therefore, Simon stands higher than any other characters.

Simon represents saintliness and a kind of innate, spiritual human goodness that is deeply connected with nature and, in its own way, as primal as Jack's evil instinct. The other characters in the novel abandon moral behavior as soon as civilization no longer imposes upon them; they are not innately moral but have simply been conditioned to act morally in the adult world with the threat of punishment for misdeed. Of all the other children on the island, only Simon acts morally not out of some guilt or shame but out of his inherent value. His affection for the other boys never wanes like a saint.

In the eyes of William Golding, Simon is a saint as he has described, "Simon is a Christ-figure…a lover of mankind, a visionary" (Alastair Niven: 49). When the other boys are busy satisfying releasing their nature restrained by civilization, such as playing in the water, eating the rich ripe fruit, going on hunting, Simon explores the forest, marveling at the beauty and harmony of the natural world and discovering a secret place of his own as his sanctum, where he acknowledges the truth by intuition.

Simon is endowed with insight into the unchanging nature of human beings and communities, which is also why he is so affirmative a figure on Beelzebub's island among sadists and savages. When the children on the island have got themselves into a hell of mess, Simon "thought of the beast, there rose before his inward sight the picture of human at once heroic and sick".(William Golding:113) This embodies his double vision of human being. To Simon, when the goodness of human nature directs the behavior of human, man is heroic, as we have once created so many marvels by our nature; when the evil of human nature overwhelms us, man is sick. Simon has sensed not only the history and reality of human being, but also the philosophy of human nature, while other boys haven't.

With the knowledge of human evil, Simon seems to have consigned himself to the fate as Christ has done. When the boys are confused about the beast of air, Simon is the real skeptic and he suggests "I think we ought to climb the mountain". (William Golding: 142) What's more important is that Simon alone with his inner vision climbs the mountain to explore the evil without any awareness of losing his life or anything. It is his belief in spiritual reality that diminishes his fear of death, and he enters the dark forest without any fear of strange "beast". Through the dialogue with the lord of the flies, Simon has been aware what is the beast, and has discovered the dead parachutist. Simon has found the truth that the imaginary beast is "harmless and horrible".(William Golding:162) On a deep level, if we recognize the truth of man's evil and purges ourselves from it, the beast is harmless; otherwise it is horrible. Simon ignores the threat of the lord of the flies and goes down to give the good news to the boys on the beach, who are having a beast-slaying dance. Before he preaches his truth, Beelzebub's promise is fulfilled; he is killed with tearing of teeth and claws of his companions.

In his martyrdom, Simon meets the fate of all saints. Simon's obsequies are those of hero, saint, martyr, an essentially religious affair. His death occurs while the island world cowers under the lash of a gigantic storm. As we pass from the horror of Simon's murder, from the storm's rage, and the ritual's frenzy, to the absolution of cleansing, healing nature, we pass from the atmosphere of tragedy to the glorification of saint. The typographical device of the dropped line, visibly marking the shift from bloodlust to benediction, signals the diminuendo. It is almost as though, in the atmosphere of uncontaminated serenity that follows, nature were striving to atone for the previous wickedness. Finally, with wonderful impact, presently even the sound of the water was still. Simon's lovingly adorned, meticulously tended corps is reverently received by ocean.

Along the shoreward edge of the shallows, the advancing clearness was full of strange, moonbeam-bodied creatures with fiery eyes. Here and there a larger pebble clung to its own air and was covered with a coat of pearls. The tide swelled in over the rain-pitted sand and smoothed everything with a layer of silver (William Golding: 169).

Never is a god more appropriate than to this scene. Simon's coarse hair is dressed with brightness, the line of his cheek is silvered, and the turn of his shoulder becomes sculpted marble. In death Simon becomes a new creation, a work of art, and then "softly, surrounded by a fringe of bright, inquisitive creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellation, Simon's bright body moved out towards the open sea"(William Golding:170). The beauty of the sea and the power of the cosmos convert the human horror of Simon's murder into a scene of tranquility and dignity. It is difficult not to recognize the hint of a resurrection motif here, for the hero is carried through the water to his apotheosis.

Simon does not successfully tell the boys truth, but Golding does give reader enlightenment and a warning through Simon. The enlightenment is that the innate goodness is the fundamental way of saving the world and the warning is that people are sick. Only if people had been aware of these, the world would avoid killing and destruction in the atomic and nuclear war nowadays and in future.

Apart from the above main characters, Roger is the representative of brutality and terrorism at their extreme; the little ones embody the mass; the naval office stands for the adult people who are participating in the war. All these people with symbolic significance attribute to the greatness and success of the novel.

References

Alastair Niven. (1989). *William Golding: Lord and the Flies, York Notes Series*.Beijing: World Publishing Corporation, p 48.

James R. Baker. (1988). *Critical Essays on William Golding*. Bosten: G.K. Hall & Co. p 23.

Kirstin Olsen. (2000). *Understanding Lord of the Flies: a student casebook to issues, sources and historical documents*. Westport: Greenwood Press, p 14.

William Golding. (1958). *Lord of the Flies*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

The Relationship between Motivation and Achievement

——A Survey of the Study Motivation of English Majors in Qingdao Agricultural University

Peipei Li & Guirong Pan
Foreign Languages School
Qingdao Agricultural University
Qingdao 266109, China
Tel: 86-532-8608-0418 E-mail: Willa@qau.edu.cn

Abstract

The survey conducted in Qingdao Agricultural University reveals the relationship between motivation and achievement as follows: instrumental motivation influences both high achievers and low achiever; while high achievers have greater integrative motivation than lower ones; Interest plays an extremely important role in study and high achievers have a strong sense of achievement.

Keywords: Motivation, Interest, English Learning

1. Introduction

Among the factors influencing students' learning, motivation is thought to be a very important reason for different achievement. Qin Xiaoqing (2002) says that motivation is a very important factor which determines the success or failure in second language learning, for motivation can directly influence the frequency of using learning strategies, willpower of learning, goal setting, and the persistence in learning. Qin (2003) also says that learning motivation influences the learners' autonomous learning ability, and determines the learners' confidence in overcoming learning difficulty. These theories on motivation demonstrate that motivation, as one of the crucial factors determining the success in language learning, attracts much attention of the researchers.

Theorists define motivation differently, which reveals the difficulty of describing it in clear and simple terms. Motivation is commonly thought as an inner state of need or desire that activates an individual to do something to satisfy them. Motivation is typically defined as the forces that account for the arousal, selection, direction, and continuation of behavior. Williams and Burden (2000) also give a proposed definition of motivation. In their opinion, motivation maybe constructed as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) defines the integrative motivation as those that indicate an interest in learning the language in order to communicate with members of the second language community. It is characterized by those who learn the second language so as to identify themselves with the language speaking group and ultimately join it. They describe instrumental motivation as a motivation to acquire some advantage by learning a second language. A learner with instrumental, motivation regards language as an instrument to get a reward.

In the same line with Gardner and Lambert, Deci and Ryan (1985) put forward intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theory. More specially, intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation to engage in an activity which the learner thinks is enjoyable and satisfying. Extrinsically motivated behaviors are those actions carried out achieve some instrumental end, such as earning a reward or avoiding a punishment.

As mentioned above, motivation plays an important role in the learning of a foreign language, and most previous studies on the role of motivation have been greatly influenced by the classical model (Gardner and Lambert 1972) and their expansions. These studies focus on two types of motivation: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation.

An interactively motivated L2 learners show an interest in learning about the culture of the target language. "Learners with an integrative attitude have a compelling purpose for learning, which is an intrinsic force to learn a language and those learners will achieve more than the others" Ellis (1994). Though instrumental motivation is tied to a specific goal, its influence tends to be maintained only until that goal is achieved. On the other hand, if the goal is continuous, it seems possible that an instrumental motivation will also continue to be effective. Students with strong instrumental motivation can also achieve a lot, if the kind of motivation is strengthened in the process of learning (Gardner 1972). Deci and Ryan claim that learners who are interested in learning tasks and outcomes for their own sake (intrinsic) rather than for rewards (extrinsic) are likely to become more successful and effective learners. They also claim that when someone is told to have done a task well, this external events will enhance feelings of competence. Intrinsic motivation is likely to increase. By contrast, events that lead to feelings of incompetence are likely to undermine intrinsic motivation.

In China, a lot of researchers pay attention to learners' motivation. The notion is accepted that motivation can lead to successful learning. (Shu Dingfang & Zhuang Zhixiang 1996; Wen Qiufang &Wang Haixiao 1996) Therefore, understanding the situation of students' motivation will be helpful for the organization of various teaching activities, the adoption of effective teaching approaches and the promotion of English teaching. Wu Heping (2001) points out that researchers on motivation of foreign language teaching (FLL) can help us to understand the individual difference, the psychological process of learning foreign language and to come up with effective methods to promote students 'motivation.

Currently, scholars design and conduct a lot of studies on motivation, but in these studies, non-English major students are often chosen as subjects, while the achievement of English majors is seldom studied. People often think that it is reasonable for English majors to learn English, since they choose English as their majors. In this paper, juniors of English majors are chosen as the subjects and their scores of TEM4 as the symbol of achievement to explore the relationship between motivation and achievement.

2. Methodology

In order to understand English majors' motivation, a survey was conducted on 28th March, 2007. The study is intended to answer the following questions:

1. Is instrumental motivation very important in English majors' study?

2. Which type of motivation has more influences on high achievers, integrative motivation or instrumental motivation?

3. Is interest the key factor influencing students' achievement?

4. Are there any differences in the sense of achievement between high achievers and low achievers?

The participants are 65 juniors from two classes and they are divided into three groups: low achievers, moderate achievers and high achievers according to their TEM-4 grades.. Most of them began to learn English when they were in junior middle school. When they entered the university, there were not so much differences in their records of exam. Then, they choose the English as their major for various motivations. Three years have passed and they have different achievements which may be explained in terms of different motivations.

The questionnaires were handed out by their teacher, and the students were told to answer the questions carefully and did not worry about the results. Since there are no right or wrong answers, they did not need to feel worried about their choices, they can make their own decisions according to their own situation. Therefore, the data can truly reveal their response to the questions.

The questionnaire was designed according to the GaoYihong's Motivation Questionnaire, but some items had been changed to be appropriate to the particular situation under research.

The questionnaire consists of 15 questions. Each was designed to have a test of students' motivation. They were grouped by instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, interest and sense of achievement.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Instrumental Motivation and Achievement

Table 1 (statements 1--5) was designed to study the different motivation between high achievers and low achievers. Statements are listed as following: (1)"One important aim of learning English is for the certificate of graduation." ; (2)"My first aim to learn English is to get good results in the test for going abroad and further education." ; (3)"It is very beneficial for me to learn English very well since it is a very important instrument in the modern world." ; (4)"As long as I learn English well, I can find a good job." ; (5)"The purpose of my learning English is to better understand the situation of economy and technology of foreign country." The results are as follows:

Insert Table 1 Here.

From the above table, it can be seen clearly that instrumental motivation plays a very important part in each group. Almost every student has instrumental motivation. They choose English major for graduation, job-hunting, going abroad and better knowing the world. It is extremely obvious that students who choose English as a useful instrument are very high. The rate is 83.3%, 80.5%.100% respectively in each group.

It is beyond the expectation to find the fact that English majors' attitude and motivation towards learning English is just opposite to my original opinion. It can be explained from the following reasons. As the world is becoming more and more open, traveling, doing business and other international activities are popular and frequent, as a result, English as a popular language is being learned by more and more people. It is required that almost every person needs to understand and speak English well. If a youth wants to get well off in the modern world, he had better master English very well. Therefore, choosing English as one's major is a good selection for most students. Under the guidance of this principle, they put their efforts to study English, whether they are low achievers or high achievers.

It is also easy to find the second reason. As the job-hunting is both hard and fierce in our modern society, "will choose a major for finding a better job" is a common reason for students to make their choices. English as a new subject in our country is still popular while most people still do not have a good command of English and a lot of people are not skillful at it. As adults, students choose English as their majors and they hope to find a relatively good job in the future.

The last reason is not as obvious as the first two ones. It is for practical use. It is well known that we need to pass a fixed grade in TOEFL exams, and then we can have the qualification for further education in foreign countries. Therefore, most people think that if they choose English major, they will have more chances to communicate with foreigners in order that their English will be improved a lot. Thus the high rate of choices of instrumental motivation is easy to understand as the specific reasons have been listed.

3.2 Relationship between Integrative Motivation and Achievement

Statements that focus on students' integrative motivation are listed as following (6) "I learn English because I am interested in the social relationship and culture of English speaking people." (7)"Since the European and American countries have their unique ways of thinking, I learn English for a better knowledge of them.",(8) "I learn English to have my personal experience of their foreign culture." A comparison between students' choices of integrative motivation is as following:

Insert Table 2 Here

It can be seen from the table that the high achievers and the low achievers have the most significant distinction in integrative orientation. As analyzed above, both high-achievers and low-achievers are instrumentally motivated and influenced by the learning situation to some extent. They both attach considerable importance to extrinsic goals. However, their achievement is quite different from each other. The complicated reasons will be analyzed one by one.

Motivation consists of motivational intensity, attitude toward English and desire to learn English. Motivation is positively and significantly related to students' achievement. It is understandable because it is also consistent with the results of some researchers. Motivation has been widely accepted by teachers and researchers as one of the key factors influencing the success of foreign language learning (Ely 1986; Dornye 1994; Williams and Burden 1997). When the subjects really have a positive attitude towards the target culture and English -speaking people, they will enjoy learning English and plan to learn English as much as possible and thinking English as an important part of learning program, and they will also put great efforts to learn it. Therefore, they will improve their listening, reading and writing ability.

With integrative motivation, students will have a better understanding of the culture, technology of English-speaking countries, and their horizon will be broadened. Those students will make long-termed and short-termed study plan according to their own learning situation. They will also arrange the studying time reasonably, and take part in some activities related to English in order to achieve the best learning results (Wei Zhaomin 2006).In the process of participating, their performances are improved a lot day by day, the high achievers learn much in the course of it.

"Students with surface motivation usually have a very clear purpose of learning English---passing the English tests or finding a better job." (Liu Xianhong 2005) They hope to turn their "dream" into reality as soon as possible and do not realize the importance of management strategies that play an important role in improving learning efficiency. They are not concerned about the learning process and only care about the final result. So they seldom make a study plan, arrange a proper study time and assess their progress. They spend less time on reading, listening, speaking and wring which require great efforts. When they learn English, they just turn to the mother tongue for help and do not use other strategies to improve their English. It is because they are only motivated by external purpose without internal motivation. As a result, the goal of their study is simple and they are easily influenced by learning environment. Therefore, "they have less power to sustain efforts to learn and cannot achieve a lot; as a result, they become unsuccessful learners" (Wei Zhaomin 2006).

"Internal motivation is related to the long-termed success, whereas, external motivation with short-termed success."(Hua Huifang 1998) Successful language learners can overcome the anxiety of competition and are propelled to study better rather than overwhelmed by difficulties (Ellis 1986). This result is consistent with the strategy of successful learners, successful learners have a strong desire to communicate with the English-speaking people, they do not fear mistakes, and they are not frightened to lose faces, and can bear the vagueness of language to some extent (Rubin 1975). Successful learners are risk-taking, and are good at making full use of every chance to improve them.

(Beebe 1983)

The great majority of the less successful students learn English for pragmatic or extrinsic reasons, such as finding a good job or passing tests. Once they meet difficulties, most of them choose to stop learning; they fear to lose faces and are afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, it is quite reasonable for them to become less successful learners.

3.3 Comparison between Different Achievers in Terms of Interest

Interest comes from inside the learner--love of the language, internal curiosity and it can be explained to be a love of the target language and target culture and its people. Interest plays an important role in the learning process. Deci and Ryran (1985) argue that internal motivation becomes very important in education setting because learning is most likely to bear fruit when the environment provides opportunities for the learners to satisfy their natural curiosity.

Statements 9, 10 and 11 focus on learners' interest, they are listed as follows: "I have special interest in language."; "I am interested in English because I have the hobby of watching English movies."; "My love for the English magazines makes me feel interested in learning English." The data are collected as follows:

Insert Table 3 Here

It is easy to find the positive correlation between interest and achievement from the above table. Students exhibit an internal orientation, participation in the learning task which provides its own motivation: it is the desire. And students exert efforts because the task itself stimulates curiosity and interest through uncertainty or challenge or promotes satisfaction through feelings of competence or control.(Brophy 1998; Butler1988; Goltfried 1985;Lepper 1988).

Learners with high motivation tend to be more successful in learning. The source of motivation can be derived from interest, which then fuels the desire to learn and continue to influence the learners' conscious decision to act and the effort that they will put into learning. Learning is not a burden for them but a moment of enjoyment, they will feel very happy to learn, and the efficiency will be greatly improved. (Gardner 1972).

It is also reported that the persistence of learners is positively affected by having internal interest (Qin Xiaoqing 2003). The chances of success will be greatly enhanced if the students come to love the learning process. It is common for students to meet difficulties in learning such as getting low results in test, poor pronunciation and so on. However, if the students have strong interest in learning the language, they will try to analyze the situation and find the solutions to the problems. At last their efforts will be sustained rather than lessened.

American psychologist A.l.Lasarus' study shows that students will enjoy great advantage of highly intelligent persons if they have great interest in learning. The reason is associated with the strategy of interest. It can be put in this way when students have to face the dull, repeated task, their internal motivation will be improved and their interest toward the present activities and situation will finally benefit their performances (Wang Zhenhong 2000). High achievers take advantage of this strategy and can feel the enjoyment of learning and finally internal motivation is aroused and achievements are improved.

On the contrary, students who have no interest in learning are likely to feel anxious and achieve low in the end. The learning is just a burden to them (Wen Qiufang (1996), students with interest learn something because they want to learn, but the opposite group is just to have to learn without internal motivation. They won't use proper strategy to learn and they do not put great efforts and they never feel the enjoyment of learning. Without initiative and interest, they just finish the homework hurriedly and never go deep to learn more, and learning becomes dull to them and their little sense of responsibility of learning is lessened, at last they lose their interest forever.

3.4 Comparison of Sense of Achievement between Different Achievers

Sense of achievement refers to the fact that people need a sense of success and satisfaction in the process of their learning English, and become confident in their ability to learn.

Sense of achievement is categorized as one of the subjects of internal motivation. McClelland and Atkinson (1953) suggest that people have different levels of need for achievement according to the previous learning experiences. High achievers are those who expect the world to contain reasonable challenges and respond to such challenges and believe that even if tasks or situations are beyond their present abilities, they can achieve with some efforts on the basis of encouraging and successful earning experience. In contrast, low achievers are those who have discouraging and unsuccessful learning experiences and prefer challenges and tasks which are either excessively demanding or very easy. If tasks are very easy, they can feel confident in their success. If tasks are too difficult, the failure is endurable because they do not have to worry themselves about their failure, although it is contrary to our intuition (Skehan 1989).

Since the sense of achievement is very important for second language learning, statements 12~15 are designed to have a better understanding of different achievers' motivation. Statement 12 is "I got a strong sense of achievement in the process of learning English." Only 33% of low achievers agree with the item, whereas it is 36% and 100% for moderate achievers and high achievers respectively. Statement 13 is "if I make a great progress in learning English after overcoming a lot of difficulties, I will love English very much.” The rate is 41.6%, 76.5%, 83.3% respectively for each group. Statement 14 is “If I often get low scores in learning English, I will think I am unable to learn the subject well” The positive response to is 33.3%, 17.02%, 0% of the low achievers, moderate achievers and high achievers respectively. Statement 15 is “when I can not do well in the English test, I feel gloomy and do not want to go on studying”. The positive rate is 25%, 25.53%, 0%.

From the data listed above, we can easily find that low achievers relatively have lower sense of achievement. However, the higher the students achieve, the higher their sense of achievement is. And also, low achievers are easily defeated by difficulties, on the contrary, the high achievers will not stop studying when they meet difficulties and they are not easily discouraged as other group members.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggest that motivation is the independent variable and achievement is the dependent one in the L2 acquisition. High motivation enhances learning and success or perceived success can sustain motivation (Xie Xiajun 2003).In other words, motivation is interdependent with achievement. Students’ motivation promotes their achievement. On the other hand, achievement can lead to higher motivation. As Burn Stall (1975) and McNamara (1993) argue, the successful experience in the process of language learning affects motivation at a later stage. The reason can be easily found as following:

High achievers tend to attain self-perfection through language learning. They have a desire to promote their abilities to learn, which in turn leads to effective efforts such as listening carefully in classroom, seeking chances to talk with people who speak English well, and they will also do a lot of activities to improve themselves since they tend to be perfect. They are not easy to be satisfied with the present situation and achievement and they will also compete with others due to the fact that they have a strong a sense of competition.

Besides, high achievers are more willing to accept challenges than low achievers. When the challenge is too demanding, low achievers tend to avoid it and seek for other chances of challenging in which they may feel competent. On the contrary, high achievers can feel competent even in the excessive challenges. In the process of employing the strategy of challenges, they make more progress and they become more confident than before, which in turn gives their strong sense of achievement.

The more efforts they make, the more fruits they will reap. High achievers are good at carrying out a plan about realizing the aim of language. Moreover, they could persist in carrying out their plans. With their scores in exams getting higher, the high achievers may get the sense of achievement more frequently and they are more internally motivated to learn. (Lai Xuefang 2005)

On the other hand, low achievers often lose their sense of achievement because of too low scores which result in their weaker and weaker internal motivation of learning English. They are just satisfied with the low scores although they are not willing to accept the fact. They never try to attain to be perfect in language learning since it is far beyond their abilities.

Students who get high scores in the exams can continue their learning behaviors more easily than those with low scores, and the former, who get sense of achievement in the process of learning English more frequently are internally motivated to continue learning more effectively. On the contrary, students who have no success in the process of learning English may give up their learning behaviors which may lead to their failure in exams.

4. Conclusions

The results of the survey reveal the correlation among motivational factors and their influences in students’ English learning. To sum up, the major findings include:

Instrumental motivation plays an extremely important role in English majors’ learning; both high achievers and lower achievers have higher instrumental motivation; high achievers have higher sense of achievement while low achievers have lower sense of achievement.

Students with higher motivation always achieve greater success in their language learning, while those lacking in motivation make no attempts in the process of language learning and often fail the exam.

If a student lacks motivation, it seems that he is unlikely to achieve success no matter who the teacher is or what the curricula are, whereas the highly motivated students can succeed in whatever conditions. Therefore, arousing students’ motivation has become an important part in foreign language teaching. Teachers should concentrate on increasing students’ motivation and developing the skills or strategies to make them more competent so that they are able to take ownerships of their own learning.

Admittedly, it is unavoidable that there are some limitations in the survey, since the questionnaire used in the survey is not perfect. Another limitation perhaps lies in the sample used in the survey. The participants are all from the same grade, so they may not fully represent all English levels of majors.

This paper only emphasizes the effects of motivation in language learning. In fact, motivation is just one of the many factors which influence the learning process and the learning results. So, teachers should also pay attention to other factors such as learners' learning style, personality and language aptitude, etc. to get them actively involved in class. What is more, the motivational strategies discussed above need to be supplemented and justified by further empirical research.

References

Caihong Zhang. (2003). Different Study Motivations and Different Achievements, *Northern China Industrial Transactions,* No. 2.

Deci, E. & R, Ryan. (1985). *Intrinsic Motivation and Self Determination in Human Behavior*. *NY*: Plenum Press.

Gardner, R. & W, Lambert. (1972). Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning. *Rowley*, Mass: Newbury House.

Huifang Hua. (1998), Studies on English Learning Strategies, *Foreign Language World* No. 3.

Liang Chen. (2006). Affective Factors and English Achievements of College Students, *College English* No. 1.

Qiufang Wen. (1996). *Studies on English Learning Strategies,* Shanghai Foreign Language Education Publishing House Williams, M.1997. *Psychology for Language Teacher: A Social Constructivist Approach.* Cambridge University Press.

Rebecca Oxford. (1994). Language Learning Motivation Expanding the Theoretical Framework. *The Modern Language* (4).

Rod Ellis. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University.

Xianghong Liu. (2005). *Learning Concepts of Non-English Majors---- A Survey of Learning Strategies and Motivation.*

Xijun Xie. (2003). Objects Management and English Achievements----Teacher's Role in Inspiring Students' Motivation and Objects Managements, *Exploration of Medical Education* No. 1.

Zhenhong Wang, Ping liu. (2000). Effects of Motivation, Strategy and Intelligence on Students' Achievements, *Journal of Psychology* No. 1.

Table 1.

Achievement Groups	**Statements**				
	1	2	3	4	5
Low- Achievement Group	50%	58.3%	83.3%	75%	41.6%
Moderate- Achievement Group	34.04%	21.2%	80.85%	59.5%	34.0%
High- Achievement Group	16.6%	16.6%	100%	83.3%	33.3%

Table 2.

Achievement Groups	**Statements**		
	6	7	8
Low-Achievement Group	25%	8.3%	16.6%
Moderate-Achievement Group	17%	29.78%	46.8%
High-Achievement Group	66.6%	66.6%	83.3%

Table 3.

Achievement Groups	**Statement 9**	**Statement 10**	**Statement 11**
Low-Achievement Group	41.6%	50%	41.6%
Moderate-Achievement Group	44.6%	63.8%	63.8%
High-Achievement Group	66.6%	66.6%	83.3%

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Generative Syntactic Transfer in L2 and L3 Acquisition via the Channel of Translation

Zohreh Gooniband Shooshtari
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz
E-mail: zshooshtari@yahoo.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study was two-fold: it primarily intended to incorporate some insights into the newly-explored field of L3A: secondly, it aimed to highlight the significance of translation as a valid language activity in exploring the native language influence on non-native language acquisition process. To this end, it investigated the acquisition of two syntactic properties of head and operator movements in English by L2 and L3 learners within UG framework. The participants consisted of 144 Persian monolingual and Arabic-Persian bilingual learners of English who were assigned to three proficiency bands after taking the general proficiency test (ECPE). The results showed no significant difference between the performance of monolinguals and bilinguals at each level of proficiency. Nonetheless, significant differences were found across the levels of proficiency.

Keywords: L2A, L3A, FFFH, FAFT, Persian-monolingual, Arabic-Persian bilingual, Oral/written translation

1. Introduction

To date the field of second language acquisition of syntax has been dominated by generative models which despite their distinct views share the assumption that grammar building in second language acquisition will be UG-constrained. For the majority of these models, L1 settings are claimed to be influential in the L2 learners' interlanguage grammar though there is considerable variation as to the extent of this effective role (Hawkins & Chan, 1997; Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996; Smith & Tismpli, 1995; White, 1985). Alongside this trend in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), during the last decade, however, there has been an increased interest in a relatively under–explored field, namely, third language acquisition. Cenoze (2001) holds that the learners who come into contact with a foreign language are not always monolinguals. Especially, for learners who are members of linguistic minorities in their countries, the acquisition of English may take place in a multilingual situation which is linguistically more complex than the L1-L2 situation that has usually been considered in the SLA literature. Cook (1992) asserts that the language knowledge of multilinguals is not the same as that of monolinguals.

Iran sets a real example of those countries in which a good number of English learners-especially in secondary and tertiary academic settings- are members of linguistic minorities like Arab, Turkish, and Kurdish. These learners are bilinguals who acquire English as a third language. And they are increasingly identifying themselves as L3 learners of English. As such these learners assume to develop unique interlanguage patterns as they possess a distinct type of language background. This reality along with the growing awareness that approaching language learning through the study of L2 alone seems to yield an incomplete picture of language learning (Vinniskaya & Flynn, 2003) triggered the initiation of this study.

This paper then sets out to empirically substantiate the claim whether English L3 learners' distinct language background causes them to develop interlanguage patterns which are different or similar to those of monolingual learners of English. That is, the major question addressed in this study is the impact of the previously learned languages on the L3 interlanguage patterns and the extent to which the L3 learners' performance with regards to the syntactic features involved in the formation of English questions would be similar to or different from that of L2 learners. In this respect the role of the language background possessed by Arabic-Persian bilingual learners of English is investigated through a comparative study in light of the most recent syntactically- based generative models of L2A, namely, Full Access Full Transfer (FAFT) and the Failed Functional Feature Hypothesis (FFFH). Within this framework the performance of the Arabic-Persian bilinguals on the English questions which involve the syntactic features of head and wh-movement is compared with that of Persian monolingual learners at three levels of proficiency. This comparative study may help to demonstrate whether L3A is different from L2A or it is simply another case of L2A.

As to the methodology, I preferred to adapt translation to other types of data elicitation tasks since a main contribution of translation as a valid language activity is "to help us to understand better the influence of one language on the other" (Duff, 1989). In translation, the language learners are exposed to the form of their mother tongue; this direct exposure would find its way into the learners' interlanguage grammar. Thus, the impact of the native language on the subsequent language learning could be traced more easily in translation.

2. Theoretical Framework

The Failed Functional Feature Hypothesis (Hawkins, 1998, 2000; Hawkins & Chan, 1997) is a particular version of the No Parameter Resetting. This proposal predicts that interlanguage grammars will be confined to L1 feature values, even if there is ample positive evidence to motivate resetting. That is to say, the parameterized properties that are not instantiated in L1 are not available in L2 interlanguage. The logical extension of this prediction to L3A should be that parameterized properties not instantiated in L1 will never be acquired in L3 initial state. The general prediction of FFFH on L3/Ln acquisition implies that persistent L1 transfer effects from the initial state all through to the final state of L3/Ln cause the failure of eventual attainment of target language parameters.

The proponents of Full Access Full Transfer Hypothesis (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1994, 1996) propose that the entire L1 grammar (in the sense of all abstract properties) constitute the initial state in L2A. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that changes to the initial grammar can take place; that is to say, the L2 learners are not confined to representations based on L1 steady state. In fact, the L2 learner has recourse to UG options not instantiated in the L1, including new parameter settings, functional categories and feature values. Full access, then, is their claim about subsequent grammar restructuring during the course of development. Applying the model to L3/Ln acquisition, full transfer is predicted in the L3/Ln initial state but the source is not restricted to L1. In other words, it can be claimed that transfer in L3 does not necessarily come from L1 alone and the parameterized properties are ultimately acquirable in L2/L3/Ln final states.

2.1 Linguistic assumptions

2.1.1 The structure of English questions

Following Chomsky (1995) and Radford (1997), in English, interrogative clauses are CPs headed by a strong C which contains the strong question affix [Q]. The strong Q affix needs an overt head to attach to it. The shortest movement principle requires that this head must be the auxiliary in I. That is, auxiliary moves from the head I position in IP into the Head C position in CP. Since Q also carries a [wh] specifier-feature, the wh-operators move to spec-CP in order to check the interrogative specifier –feature carried by Q. Thus, the two properties of [Q] in English demand two types of movements: head movement to (C position) and operator movement to (spec-CP position).

What did John buy?

$[_{CP}$ what$_i$ $[_c$ did$_j$ +Q $[_{IP}$ John t_j $[_{VP}$ t_j buy $t_i]]]]$

Such movement or extraction of wh-phrases can also take place from embedded clauses:

Who did Freda discover bought an electric guitar?

$[_{Cp}$ who$_i$ $[_c$ did$_j$ $[_{IP}$ Freda t_j discover $[_{IP}$ ti bought an electric guitar]]]]

In main yes/no questions, the [+Q] feature is checked by a null operator in the specifier position. And the [+affixal] property of [Q] imposes Aux-movement.

$[_{CP}$? $[_C$ will$_i$ $[_{IP}$ you t_i marry me]]

2.1.2 The structure of Persian questions

In the formation of yes/no questions in Persian, the yes-no particle ***aayaa*** is used in formal register, yet it is non-overt in informal language. The most common position of this particle is clause-initial. That is, the question particle ***aayaa*** is inserted in the front position (spec-CP) (kahnemuyipour, 2001).

Q president letter Acc to prime minister give-past? (1) aayaa rais Jomhur Name-ra be Naxost vazir dad?

$[_{CP}$? $_C$ aayaa $[_{IP}$ rais Jomhur Narmera be naxost vazir dad]]

Persian is a wh-in-situ language; that is, wh-expressions do not get preposed, but rather occur in their base position (Karimi 1989; Lazard 1992; Raghibdoost 1994; Bateni 1995 Mahootian 1997).One reason why such movement is not licensed in Persian can be due to the proposal that in Persian [spec-CP] is a [-wh] position (Youhanaee, 1997).

(2) Ali ye ketab xarid.

Ali a book buy- past. 3sg

'Ali bought a book.'

(3) Ali chi xarid?

Ali what buy-past.3sg

'What did Ali buy?'

(4) Ali hassan-o zad.

(5) Ali ki-yo zad?

Ali Hassan-Acc hit.Past.3sg Ali who-Acc hit.Past.3sg

Ali hit Hassan.' 'Who did Ali hit?'

2.1.3 Question formation in Arabic

Similar to Persian in the formation of Arabic yes/no questions C bears [Q] and a question particle (hal) is inserted in the front position (Spec-CP)

(5). Yagru Ahmed algasedata.

Read Ahmed the poem.

Hal yagru Ahmed algasedata?

[Cp hal Ce [yagru Ahmed algasedata]]?

The formation of wh-questions in Arabic is similar to English in that in both languages the syntactic movement of wh-phrase to (Spec-CP) is realized. In Arabic C bears Q and [wh]. The strong [wh] in C triggers the wh-phrase to move to Spec-CP (Benmanoun, 2000; Al-Eid, 2006, P.C.)

(6) Yagru Ahmed algasedata. (7) Matha yagru Ahmed?

Read pres Ahmed the poem. What read pres Ahmed?

Ahmed reads the poem. What does Ahmed read?

The above account of Question formation in English, Persian and Arabic highlights marked parametric differences and similarities among the three languages concerning the formation of interrogative constructions. As to English and Persian, the latter is a wh-in-situ language but English involves the syntactic wh-movement to Spec-CP and head movement from I to C. On the other hand, Arabic turns to be similar to English in that the formation of wh-questions in Arabic involves the movement of wh-phrase to Spec-CP, but C remains empty. Concerning the formation of yes/no questions in these languages, English is different from Persian and Arabic in that English yes/no questions involve a head to head movement from I to C but in the other two languages the inserting of the Q particle does not require any syntactic changes. That is to say, in Arabic and Persian the question particle moves to Spec-CP but C remains empty.

2.2 Previous generative studies on third language acquisition

Trilingualism has been prominently tapped on within the general context of cross linguistic influence. However, a few studies have ever investigated the syntactic architecture of the initial and subsequent grammars of L3A and the extent to which it is similar or different from L2A. Vinnitskaya, Flynn and Foley (2003) investigated the acquisition of relative clauses in English as a third language and compared the L3 results with the findings of earlier studies on L2 acquisition of English relative clauses. As background, Vinnitskaya, et al. summarized the results of previous studies on L2 acquisition of English relative clauses. It was reported that in these studies, using an imitation task, three types of relative clauses were tested: a) lexically headed relative clauses where the head has semantic content; b) lexically headed relative clauses where the head lacks semantic content; and c) free relative types. The L2 acquisition of the these types of English relative clauses by speakers of Japanese, a head-final language which does not match English, revealed that the free relative appears to be significantly more productive than either of the lexically headed types (Flynn, 1983).

Also the results of L2 acquisition of the three types of English relative clauses by L1 speakers of Spanish, a head-initial language like English, revealed that in the acquisition of L2 English by Spanish speakers, the free relative is not a developmental precursor to the lexically headed forms. In this respect, L2 acquisition of English by Spanish speakers appears different from L1 acquisition of English and the L2 acquisition of English by Japanese speakers (Flynn & Lust, 1981).

The results from these previous studies suggest that free relatives are developmental precursors to lexically headed relatives when the learners develop a new CP architecture. However, learners can draw upon earlier experience in constructing CP architecture if a target language matches earlier languages in key features, including branching directions.

Presenting this background, Vinnitskaya et al. (2003) in their L3 study of the same English relative clauses hypothesized that if there is a privileged role for L1 in all subsequent language acquisition, then L3 acquisition of English by L1 speakers of Kazakh should resemble L2 acquisition of English by Japanese speakers (since Kazakh is similar to Japanese in a head direction). On the other hand, if the role of L1 is not privileged, then L3 acquisition of English by L1 speakers of Kazakh who has experience with an L2 which matches English in head direction should resemble L2 acquisition of English by Spanish speakers. To test this hypothesis, Vinnitskaya, et al. used thirty-three adult Kazakh L3 speakers of English who had all acquired Russian as an L2 before acquiring English as an L3. Unlike Kazakh, Russian is a head- initial branching language similar to English. Using an elicited imitation methodology, the participants responded to the sentences which displayed the same three relative clause types used in previous L1 and L2 studies mentioned in the background.

Results for percent correct (0-100%) indicated that the performance of the Kazakh L1/ Russian L2/ English L3 adult speakers pattern with that of the L1 Spanish/ English L2 speakers as hypothesized. These results indicated that the performance of the Kazakh L3 speakers of English did not evidence the free relative as a significant development precursor to the lexically headed relative clause structures. In other words, all three relative clause structures were equally accessible to the adult Kazakh L3 learners of English. These results vividly contrast with the Japanese results. Since Kazakh is like Japanese in its SOV left-branching structure, this contrast would have been surprising if these speakers had not also had experience with a right-branching language, Russian, as an L2.

In general these results suggest that prior CP development can influence acquisition of CP structure in subsequent languages. Taken together, it was suggested that experience in any prior language can be drawn upon in subsequent acquisition: however, there appears to be no privileged role for the L1. Instead, all prior language experience can be either neutral or enhancing in subsequent language acquisition. Moreover, Leung(2003) investigates the acquisition of the formal features associated with the functional category of T(tense), namely, Finiteness, agreement and [+-past] in French as L3 vs. L2 by Cantonese- English bilinguals and Vietnamese monolinguals. Extending the predictions of the two current L2A competing models namely, the Failed Feature Hypothesis (FFH) and the Full Transfer Full Access (FTFA) to L3A, it was hypothesized that a) according to FFH, the L3 French initial state is to be L1 Chinese final state. That is, [T] and the associated features of [+-finiteness], agreement and [+-past] should be absent in L3 French interlanguage b) according to FTFA, no such specific prediction could be extended and L1 or L2 final states can both compete in the initial stages of L3 acquisition. In this case all either features of the L1 or L2 can be present in L3 French initial state.

In general, the results on the L3 experimental group have supported the presence of the L2 English steady state in the L3 French initial state. The data are inconsistent with FFH which predicted the L3 French initial state to be L1 Chinese; if such was the case, the verbal features would be expected to be absent from L3 subjects' interlanguage grammar; this is contrary to what the author has found. Actually, the findings supported FTFA hypothesis instead, which has predicted the possibility of L2 effect: verbal features, though absent in L1 Chinese, were acquired in the L2 English acquisition process and these successfully facilitate acquisition in the L3 French initial state. Concerning the L2 group's performance both production and judgment data demonstrated that agreement features were not well in place in the subjects'L2 French initial state. To sum up, L2 group's performance was significantly poorer than that of the L3 group especially with respect to agreement features. It is argued that this is because the L3 group has acquired the relevant properties in English (their L2) which aids the subsequent acquisition of French (the L3) right at the onset; the L2 subjects, on the other hand , do not benefit from this advantage because they have not acquired English as an L2 previously. This borne out the author's claim that L3 is different from L2A at least as far as the initial state is concerned.

As stated by Leung (2003), there are few comparative studies that have investigated different combinations of source/target languages with respect to some grammatical property to find out about the route of L3 development within a generative framework. Accordingly, it seems worthwhile to pursue generative L3A further by looking at other syntactic properties across different L3 populations.

3. The present study

Based on the theoretical framework presented in section II and the parametric similarities and differences among the three languages of Persian, Arabic and English as the target language, the present study addresses the following questions in order to accumulate the relevant evidence. Given sufficient exposure to target English:

1) To what extent do Persian monolingual and Arabic-Persian and Arabic-Persian bilinguals perform similarly or differently in the formation of yes-no and simple wh-questions due to the effect of their L1?

2). To what extent does knowledge of a second language affect the acquisition and the developmental process of third language acquisition

To give logical answers to these questions, it is hypothesized:

1) There is no difference between Arabic-Persian bilinguals and Persian monolinguals' performance in the acquisition of English head movement.

2) There is no difference between Arabic-Persian bilinguals and Persian monolinguals' performance concerning the acquisition of operator movement.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Participants

The study was undertaken among second and third language learners of English in Khuzestan. The primary population included Arabic-Persian bilingual and Persian monolingual learners of English who were volunteered university students majoring in English language and literature. A brief oral interview was conducted to check on the language background of the Arabic-Persian bilinguals. This interview helped the selection of those bilingual learners who were raised in a linguistic community where both parents were Arabs and they used Arabic among the family and local Arabic linguistic community members. The Arabic-Persian learners use Persian extensively in their every day life. So they were advanced or near native speakers of Persian too. The final selection of the monolingual and bilingual learners of English was done on the basis of their performance on Michigan English language proficiency test (Briggs et al, 1997). This was a multiple –choice test consisting of three sections: grammar section with 40 items, vocabulary section with 40 items and a reading part with 20 items. Hence the maximum total possible score was 100.

Following the administration of the general proficiency test, the monolingual and bilingual samples were assigned to three proficiency bands which resulted in six groups of participants: two elementary monolingual and bilingual groups, each consisting of thirty members; two intermediate monolingual and bilingual groups, each consisting of thirty members and two advanced groups, each including twelve members.

3.1.2 The tests

A translation test was used in this study; however, it was administered in two modalities: written and oral (See Appendix II for sample items). The rationale behind using these two tasks was to check the participants' performance in two different modalities and see if more focus on form in the written task would cause any significant change in the L2 & L3 learners' performance on the syntactic properties under investigation. The preparation of the translation test was done in three stages: initially it was decided to include yes/no and wh-questions in this test. Secondly, the grammatical functions of wh-questions (subject, object, adjunct and genitive) and some other features like the type of verb, subject and the tense of yes/no were identified. Given these features, a large number of yes/no and wh-questions, nearly two hundred and fifty were written down and grouped out of which forty-six questions were selected. The final test consisted of ten yes/no questions and thirty-six questions in Persian and Arabic to be translated into English. The same test was administered orally.

It should be noted that the primary order of the test items (the main test items and the filler questions) was scrambled in the final version of the test. As to the format of the test, it was prepared in the form of a checkbook, so the learners could respond to one item at a time. To avoid ambiguity, clear instructions and sample test items for doing the test was given orally and put at the front page of the written task.

3.1.3 Administration, scoring and data analysis Procedures

One week after the participants completed the general proficiency test, the written translation task was given to them. Before they started, clear instruction was given concerning the time limit and the way to perform the task. Also they were not allowed to return to previous items and to change their answers while doing the test. The test took forty-five minutes.

One week later, the oral translation task was conducted. To ensure optimal performance, attempts were made to provide a relaxing testing environment. To perform the task, the administrator read each of the written questions aloud to the individual participant at normal rate of speech; then the learner's oral translation of the heard question into English was tape recorded. Each question sentence was read only once and the participant was asked to translate it as quickly as possible without paying attention to the form and focus on the communication of meaning. Of course, the Arabic-Persian bilinguals were asked to do the oral translation of Arabic version and the Persian monolinguals the Persian version of the questions.

Each correct translation response for the tasks was scored 1. And each wrong response or no response was given a score of zero. Lexical errors were ignored as they were not of any importance to this study.

The results obtained were analyzed using the SPSS software. Implementing this statistical package, firstly the main test items were defined, coded and given value. The values of similar variables were computed in percentage in order to have more organized data. Finally, applying one-way ANOVA and post hoc Scheffe tests, the group mean percentage for each variable was calculated and between groups comparisons were conducted.

4. Results

To arrive at plausible answers to the research questions, the results of written and oral translation tests are presented in turn. To begin with, figure (1) exhibits the mean percentages the learners obtained on the written translation task:

Insert Figure 1 right about here

Graph (1) shows that both monolinguals and bilinguals learners at each level of proficiency performed quite similarly on written translations task. That is to say, L2 & L3 learners at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels obtained rather similar mean percentages. However, in comparing with intermediate and elementary monolinguals and bilinguals, the advanced L2 & L3 obtained the highest mean scores. The results of one-way ANOVA indicted significant differences across the groups (F: 415.58, P: .000). The results of Scheffe post hoc test (appendix I) revealed that elementary L2 & L3 learners performed significantly different from both the intermediate and advanced bilinguals and monolinguals. Moreover, intermediate L2 & l3 learners performed significantly different from the advanced L2 & L3 groups.

The next piece of data analysis expounds the results of analyzing the L2 and L3 learners' performances on the oral translation task. This piece of evidence would help to specify if the change of modality would cause any difference on the learners' performance on the same test. Respectively, the following graph shows the mean percentages obtained by monolinguals and bilinguals on oral translation task at three levels of proficiency.

Insert Figure 1 right about here

According to graph (2) at the elementary and intermediate levels monolinguals and bilinguals performed similarly. The advanced L2 and L3 learner obtained the same and the highest mean percentages on oral translation task. Significant contrasts were found across the L2 and L3 six groups on the oral translation test (F: 72.44, p: .000). Multiple comparisons of post hoc Scheffe test showed that elementary L2 and L3 performed significantly different from both L2 and L3 intermediate and advanced learners. Moreover, the intermediate monolinguals and bilinguals performed differently from advanced L2 and L3 learners. Comparing the results of ANOVA and post hoc tests on the oral and written translation tasks, it can be claimed that the L2 and L3 learners' mean percentages on written translation task were higher than those on the oral translation (evidenced by graphs 1 and 2). However, in both written and oral translation tasks the same significant differences were located across the six groups. To explain, in both tasks, the elementary L2 & L3 learners performed significantly different from the intermediate and advanced monolinguals and bilinguals. In addition, the intermediate L2 and L3 learners performed significantly different from the advanced monolinguals and bilinguals. To conclude, it can be asserted that the change of modality did not greatly affect the L2 and L3 learners' performance on the same task.

Having presented the overall results of oral translation task, the next table is a display of the L2 and L3 learners' performance on the written translation of yes/no questions which mainly involve the parameter value of auxiliary raising in English interrogative constructions.

Insert Figure 3 right about here

As shown in graph (3) the six groups' overall performance on yes/no questions seem quite good as all participants obtained similar mean percentages. That is to say, the range of mean percentages is 92 to 100 across the elementary, intermediate and advanced monolinguals and bilinguals. To report on any significant differences across the groups, the results of ANOVA on written yes/no questions indicated significant differences across the groups (F: 10.75, P: .000). The results of Scheffe test showed that the elementary bilinguals and monolinguals performed significantly different from both the intermediate and advanced bilinguals and monolinguals.

To Locate any further differences across the groups on yes/no questions which may result from a shift of modality, graph(4) presents the mean percentages obtained by all L2 and L3 participants on the oral translation of yes/no questions.

Insert Figure 4 right about here

As shown by graph (4) the overall performance of L2 and L3 participants on oral translation of yes/no questions are similar and native- like. In other words, the range of mean scores across the elementary, intermediate and advanced L2 and L3 groups is not very great and is close to %100 (85- 100). Yet, the results of one-way ANOVA displayed that the six groups performed significantly different on oral yes/no questions (F: 13.47, P: .000).

Considering the results of the analysis of learners' overall performance on oral and written yes/no questions, it can be inferred that the same significant differences were found across the monolingual and bilingual learners. To rephrase, in responding to written and oral translation of yes/no questions these were the L2 and L3 elementary learners who performed significantly different from intermediate and advanced monolinguals and bilinguals, but no significant difference was found across intermediate and advanced L2 and L3 learners. However, comparing the graphs (3) and (4) shows that the elementary L2 and L3 learners obtained lower mean percentages due to their making more errors in the oral translation of yes/no questions. The analysis of errors on yes/no questions, revealed that the majority of errors committed by the elementary L2 and L3 learners reflected the absence of auxiliary raising (a refection of echo yes/no question in Persian) or they raised the wrong auxiliary (indication of gradual acquisition of auxiliary raising in English).

1) *Omid went to his friend's house?

2) *Mother prepared dinner?

3)*Does he can speak English?

4) *Should have mother prepare lunch?

We now consider the participants' performance on written translation of wh-questions.

Insert Figure 5 right about here

As illustrated by graph (5) the monolingual and bilingual learners at each level of proficiency obtained quite similar mean percentages on the written translation of wh-questions. However, it should be added that the difference between the mean scores of the elementary L2 and L3 learners and those of the intermediate and advanced groups is noticeable. To specify any significant differences across the six groups, the results of conducting ANOVA on written translation of wh-questions indicated significant differences between the performances of the groups (F: 383.09, P: .000). Multiple comparisons of post hoc Scheffe test revealed that the elementary L2 and L3 English learners performed significantly different from the intermediate and advanced L2 and L3 groups. Moreover, a significant contrast was observed between the performances of the intermediate L2 and L3 English learners and the advanced monolinguals and bilinguals.

To inspect the effect of the change of modality on the L2 and L3 learners' performance, the next table presents the mean percentages the L2 and L3 learners obtained on the wh-questions in oral translation task.

Insert Figure 6 right about here

As indicated by graph (6), at each level of proficiency the L2 and L3 learners obtained nearly the same mean percentages; however, at the elementary level the bilingual learners performed slightly higher than their monolingual counterparts. The advanced L2 and L3 learners obtained the same and the highest mean percentages among the six groups. The results of one-way AVOVA indicated significant differences across the L2 and L3 groups on the oral translation of wh- questions (F: 57.69, P: .000). Multiple comparisons of scheffe test indicated that elementary bilinguals and monolinguals performed significantly different from the intermediate and advanced L2 and L3 English learners. Besides, the intermediate L2 and L3 learners performed significantly different from the advanced monolinguals and bilinguals.

Looking back at the results of multiple comparisons of post hoc Scheffe tests on written and oral translation of wh-questions, it can be argued that the same significant differences were found across the groups. That is to say, in both tasks the elementary groups performed differently from the intermediate and advanced groups. Moreover, the intermediate groups performed significantly different from advanced groups. Also, comparing the mean percentages displayed in graphs (5) and (6), it can be observed that the elementary and intermediate L2 and L3 learners obtained higher mean scores on the written translation of wh-questions. This is again can be attributed to their making more errors in the oral translation of the wh-questions. Examining these errors, it was found that a major part of errors was due to inversion for subject questions.

1) *who will/does open the door?

2) * How many tourists did visit the museum?

3) * Who did break the window?

The lower level L2 and L3 learners seemed to over generalize auxiliary raising they more or less acquired in the formation of yes/no or other wh-questions to subject wh-questions.

Examining other types of errors on wh-questions, we categorized them into three classes: Group A included those errors in which the learners failed to reset both of the parameter values operative in English wh-questions.

1) * They visited who?

2) * John is drawing whose picture?

3) * Ali bought what?

Group B consisted of those errors in which the learners failed to reset auxiliary raising but applied wh-movement parameter value.

1) *When usually Hassan studies?

2) *What fatemeh wrote?

3) *Where you bought this novel?

Group C covers those errors in which the learners moved wh-operator together with the main verb or the auxiliary along the main verb to the upper position:

1) *what wrote Fatemeh?

2) *whose car borrowed Ali?

3) *Whose picture is drawing John?

4) *where did go those men?

Analyzing these three types of errors, Group A is likely to reflect the Persian wh-question pattern, a wh-in-situ one. These errors were exclusively committed by the elementary L2 and L3 learners. The errors in type B partly reflect Arabic wh-question pattern in which [+wh] is realized and also the learners' acquisition of wh-movement as a result of having more exposure to English input. Group C errors reflect gradual acquiring of the operator and head movement by monolingual and bilingual learners of English. In short, the types of errors committed by L2 and L3 learners are likely to display the influence of both L1 and L2 settings and analyses other than L1 and L2 (examples 4- 6 in Group C).

5. Discussion

In this study we have sought to test whether the predictions of particular syntactically- based L2A theories, namely, The Failed Functional Feature and Full Access Full Transfer Hypotheses about the impact of previously learned language(s) on the target language provide insights into the acquisition of wh- movement and auxiliary raising operative in English questions by Arabic-Persian bilinguals and Persian monolingual learners at three levels of proficiency.

What we have found was that the results obtained using the written and oral translation tests with monolingual and bilingual learners of English at different levels of proficiency are compatible with FAFT theory but failed to support the FFFH stand point. The main justification for this claim turns to be the overall finding that Arabic-Persian bilinguals, despite their potential superiority, did not significantly outperform their monolingual counterparts.

To be more concrete, in the first place, the overall results of both tasks as well as the results of wh-questions revealed that at each level of proficiency, the bilingual and monolingual learners did not perform significantly different from each other with respect to the resetting of the two parameters of head & operator movements. That is to say, at the elementary level the L3 and L2 learners performed similarly to each other. This finding seems to contradict the prediction of FFH model which claims that L2 learners have access only to those functional features instantiated in their L1. The extension of this claim to L3/Ln situation implies that the L1 steady state partially affects the L3/Ln interlanguage patterns in case the L1 and subsequent languages share the same parameters. It follows that if L1 had an exclusive role in the acquisition of language(s) other than the first, the Arabic-Persian bilinguals would have outperformed their monolingual counterparts as the former enjoys a first language background which is partly similar to English in the formation of wh-questions. As it was explained in section III, Arabic language –similar to English but unlike Persian- is endowed with syntactic wh-movement since an interrogative C has a strong [wh] feature which triggers the wh-phrase to move to spec-CP. Accordingly, the Arab-bilingual learners should experience less difficulty, at least at the outset, in deriving wh-questions by means of operator movement compared with Persian monolinguals whose first language lacks a strong C. However, it was observed that the former did not outperform the latter in the formation of wh-questions at the elementary level. So, this finding seems to be in accordance with the predictions of (FTFA) hypothesis if L2 transfer being hypothesized. L3 learners did not perform significantly higher than L2 learners as their interlanguage grammar seemed to reflect more of the parameter values of their L2, Persian, which is a wh-in situ language.

The same results also showed that at the intermediate and advanced levels the bilingual and monolingual learners performed similarly. And the average group means obtained by the intermediate and advanced L2 and L3 learners were quite high (intermediate L2 and L3 %82; advanced L3 & L2 %95). These findings highlight two important facts: first, the interlanguage patterns of the L3 learners beyond the initial state are not significantly different from the L2 learners' grammar with respect to the [+wh]. This implies that the L3 learners' grammar at upper levels did not show considerable improvement against L2 learners' grammar suggesting that L3 learners did not benefit much from their distinct language background beyond the elementary level. Second, the high degree of accuracy on both tasks at upper levels indicates the possibility of the restructuring of the interlanguage grammars and their approximation toward the target language grammar. These interpretations appear to attest to the extension of the predictions of Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis to L3/Ln learning situation which hold that restructuring of the interlanguage grammars is possible beyond the initial stage of L2/Ln learning. Therefore, the L2/Ln learners can eventually reset the target Language values in response to L2/Ln input and due to the accessibility of U.G constraints.

Moreover, the overall results of oral and written translation tasks as well as the wh-questions demonstrated significant differences across the levels of proficiency. That is to say, the elementary L2 and L3 learners performed significantly lower than both the intermediate and advanced groups. Also, the advanced groups performed significantly higher than the intermediate groups. This evidence may suggest that L2 and L3 learners were progressively more accurate as exposure to English increased. In other words, their accuracy on the mentioned properties increased with proficiency and aided the restructuring of L2/L3 grammars. This finding turns to be counter evidence to the claim of FFFH which purports that while the L2/Ln grammar is not impaired, no development is possible in the sense of grammar restructuring (Hawkins and Chan, 1997 cited in White, 2003, p.127).

One marginal point derived from the overall results and the results of wh-questions in the mentioned tasks is that in written translation task, the L2 and L3 learners especially at the elementary level were more accurate than in the oral translation. This might suggest that in the former the participants had the chance to "focus more on form" and this in turn aided them to respond more accurately.

A further discussion concerns the interpretation of the results of the analysis of yes/no questions which reflects three points among which the high rate of mean accuracy across three levels of proficiency is quite distinct. That is to say, the range of mean percentages obtained by the six groups is from %92 to %100 in written translation and from %85 to %100 in oral translation task. This may give rise to the proposal that even at elementary levels parameter resetting--at least for specific feature values, e.g. auxiliary raising in our case-- is likely to happen even if the target language parameters are absent in the L2/Ln learners' language background(s). Referring to the exposition on the construction of questions in Persian and Arabic, it became clear that in contrast to English, both Persian and Arabic lack auxiliary raising to C as in these languages in the formation of yes/no questions Tense is inflected to the verb; hence, the verb contain a strong feature and C remains empty. In spite of this difference between the native and target languages the L2 and L3 learners across the three levels of proficiency, in particular, at the elementary level were successful in acquiring the property under investigation, that is, the raising of auxiliary from I to C in the formation of yes/no questions. It is important to consider these findings in relation to other L2 studies which have examined the acquisition of L2 features strength where these were different from L1 features strength. The results of the study by Yuan (2001) revealed that French speakers of Chinese with [weak I], regardless of proficiency level, recognized the impossibility of verb raising in Chinese. That is, there was no effect of the strong feature value of French in their interlanguage. This finding may also be in line with the proposal made by Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) which argues that when the L1 grammar is unable to accommodate properties of the L2 input, the learner has recourse to UG options in the L1, including new parameter settings, functional categories and feature values, in order to arrive at an analysis more appropriate to the L2 input, although this may turn out not to be the same analysis as that found in the native-speaker grammar. The resulting interlanguage grammars are UG-constrained.

The second worth-mentioning point derivable from the results of the analysis of yes/no questions is that at each level of proficiency the L3 learners did not perform significantly different from L2 learners. This means that the bilingual learners failed to outperform the monolingual learners, suggesting that the L3 learners were not at an advantage over their L2 counterparts though the former brought the valuable knowledge of two separate grammar systems into the task of learning English as a third language. Another justification is that where native languages are similarly different from the target language in a certain parameter-here the auxiliary raising parameter- similar behaviors are likely to be detected from L2/L3/n learners.

Thirdly, the analysis of yes/no questions revealed that the intermediate and advanced L2 and L3 learners performed significantly higher than the elementary groups. This suggests that as proficiency increased among the L2 and L3 learner, the tendency to leave the head C empty declined, an indication of restructuring of L2/Ln interlanguage grammars.

6. Conclusion

With regard to the role of language background in L3A, the overall results of the study led to the conclusion that bilingualism presents no significant advantage in third language acquisition. Of course, in some cases the bilingual learners performed higher than the monolingual ones but not significantly. This means that the bilingual learners did not take full advantage of their distinct language background as their performance did not outweigh that of the monolingual learners. The L3 learners were presupposed to benefit from their unique language experience at least at initial state in two ways: the privilege of having knowledge of two separate grammar systems and the availability of the parametric similarity between the target language, English, and their first language Arabic. In relation to the acquisition of auxiliary raising, operative in English but absent from Persian and Arabic, the L3 learners assumed to outperform their monolingual counterparts due to the very fact that they already have access to the knowledge of more than one language system which possibly results in 'multi competence' defined by Cook as 'the compound state of a mind with two grammars.' (1992: 12). Cook's notion of 'multi competence' refers to multilingual linguistic competence characterized by the increased metalinguistic awareness, greater creativity and cognitive flexibility and more diversified mental abilities. Yet, the findings identified no facilitative role for this unique knowledge in the enhancement of the L3 learners' performance and acquisition processes with regard to the above-mentioned features. One possible explanation for this neutral role can be the effect of language typology.

It is argued that having a language background which is typologically distant or close to the target language would greatly affect the L2/L3 learners' interlanguage patterns (Cenoze, 2001; Ecke, 2001). Here in the case of Arab-Persian bilinguals, the typological distance in terms of the lack of congruent structures between their first and second languages and English as their third language concerning some of the properties under investigation, seemed to override the positive effect of their unique language experience and caused them not to perform significantly higher than their monolingual counterparts.

Having cross-linguistic effect in perspective, Arab-Persian bilinguals could also benefit from the availability of the [+wh] feature in their first language to enhance their L3 interlanguage grammar with regard to the formation of English simple wh-questions at least at the elementary level. However, the findings of the study made it clear that the elementary L3 &L2 learners' performance were consistent. In other words, the L3 learners did not perform significantly higher than the monolingual learners in spite of the fact that their first language Arabic shared [+wh] with English. This attests to the claim that L3A is different from L2A as the more of L2 was reflected in the interlanguage grammar of the elementary L3 learners than their L1. It also contradicts the claim that transfer is more likely from the first language than those learned later on (Ringbom, 2001). Furthermore, it disconfirms the prediction of FFFH which argues for the resetting of only those parameters instantiated in the L2/Ln learner's L1. Moreover, the findings revealed that at upper levels of proficiency, the bilinguals' performance did not outweigh that of the monolinguals with regards to operator and head movement in English wh-questions. It follows that upper level L3 learners benefited neither from their multi-competence-characterized by increased linguistic awareness, greater creativity and cognitive flexibility-nor from the availability of the [+wh] in their first language Arabic.

To sum up, the findings of the study with respect to language transfer in L3A give rise to the conclusion that the source of cross-linguistic influence in L3A is probably more of the learners' L2 than their L1, evidence in support of the prediction of FTFA hypothesis which argues for the availability of the all sources available to language learner. In other words, in third language acquisition, the first language seems to give its role to the L2 as the latter determines more crucially the shape and speed of third language acquisition. The other logical conclusion is that the bilinguals' unique language experience is less likely to play a facilitative role in the enhancement of the L3 interlanguage grammar.

Regarding the L2 and L3 learners' performance beyond the elementary level, it can be concluded that significant improved performance at this level is likely to be taken as an indication of the restructuring of the L2/Ln learners' interlanguage and its approximation toward native level performance; the enhancement of the L2 and L3 learners' performance at upper levels confirms the view that changes to initial grammar can take place and final attainment of target language parameters is possible, a claim put forward by the proponents of FTFA hypothesis (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996).

As a final remark, it is worthwhile to note that although in L2A there is transfer of L1 properties, this transfer is not full. Some other factors like unspecified features of UG might be important in determining the shape of L2 interlanguage on the first exposure to L2 data. The unspecified features of UG are also available in later stages of L2A. The same is true about L3A, with the addition of another factor, the L2 grammatical system. Whenever the features of L2 and L3 are similar, the L3A is accelerated and vice versa.

References

Al-Eid, S (2006). *Syntactic operations to construct yes/no and wh-questions in standard Arabic*. P.C.

available at http; US. F543. Mail.Yahoo.com. Saleid@ essex.ac.uk.

Bateni, M. R. (1995). *Tosif-e sakhteman-e dastury-e zaban-e Farsi [Description of Persian syntax].* Tehran: Amir Kabir Publishers.

Benmamoun, E. (2000). *The* feature *structure of functional categories: A comparative study of Arabic*

Dialects. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Briggs, S. Dobson, B. & Strom.E. (1997). *Examination for the certificate of proficiency in English.* Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Cenoz, J. & Ulrike J. (2001). (eds.) *English in Europe: The acquisition of a third language.* Clevedon: Multilingual matters.

Chomsky, N. (1995). *The minimalist program*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Cook, V. (1992). Evidence for multi-competence. *Language Learning, 42* (4)*,* 557-591.

Duff, A. (1989). *Translation. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.*

Ecke, P. (2001). Lexical retrieval in a third language: Evidence from errors and tip- of –the tongue states. In J.Cenoz,B. Hfeisen,& U.Jessner(Eds.) *Cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition:*

Psycholinguistic perspectives, pp..90-114. Clevedon, RK: Mltilingual Matters.

Flynn, S.(1983). *A study of the effects of principal branching direction in second language acquisition* .PhD dissertation,Cornell University.

Flynn, S. and Lust, B. (1981). Acquisition of relative clauses: Developmental changes in their heads. In W.

Harbert and J. Herschensohn,eds., *Cornell Working Papers in Linguistics*. Ithaca, NY: Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, Cornell University.

Hawkins, R. (2001). The theoretical significance of Universal Grammar in second language acquisition. *Second Language Research*, *17* (4), 345-367.

Hawkins, R. and Chan, Y.H. C. (1997). The Partial availability of Universal Grammar in second language acquisition: The failed functional feature hypothesis. *Second Language Research*. *13*, 187-226.

Kahnemuyipour, A. (2001). On wh-questions in Persian. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*. *46*(1/2), 41-61.

Karimi, S. (1989*). Aspects of Persian syntax, Specificity, and the theory of grammar*. Unpublished PhD dissertation. MIT.

Lazard, G. (1992). *A grammar of contemporary Persian*. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers.

Leung, yan-kid, I. (2003). *Functional categories in second and third language acquisition: A cross linguistic study of the acquisition of English and French by Chinese and Vietnamese speakers*. PhD dissertation, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec. [distributed by McGill Working Papers in Linguistics URL: www.arts.mcgill.ca/programs/linguistics/mcgwpl/index.html.

Mahootian, Sh. (1997). *Persian*. New York: Routledge.

Radford, A. (1997). *Syntactic theory and the structure of English: A minimalist approach.* Cambridge: CUP.

Raghibdust, Sh. (1994). Multiple wh-fronting in Persian. *Cahiers Linguistics D'Ottawa 21*, 27-50

Ringbom, H. (2001). Lexical transfer in Le production. In J. Cenoz, B. Hufeisen, & U.Jessner(Eds.) *Cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition: Psycholinguistic perspectives,* pp.59-68. Clevedon, RK: Mltilingual Matters.

Smith, N.V. and Tsimpli, I.M. (1995). *The mind of a savant: language learning and modularity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Schwartz, B. D. and Sprouse. R. (1996). L2 cognitive Status and the full transfer/ Full access model. *Second Language Research*, *12*, 40-72.

Vinnitskaya, I., Flynn, S. and Foley, C. (2003). The acquisition of relative clauses in a third language: Comparing adults and children: Proceedings of the 6th generative approaches to second language acquisition conference. (GASLA 2002). Eds. Juana M. Licerus, *et al.* 340-345. Sommerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

White, L. (1985). The pro-drop parameter in adult second language acquisition. *Language learning, 35*, 47-62.

White, L. (2003). *Second language acquisition and Universal Grammar*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Youhanaee, M. (1997) *The acquisition of English complementizer system by adult Persian speakers*. Unpublished PhD dissertation. University of Essex.

Yuan, B. (2001). The states of thematic verbs in the second language acquisition of Chinese. *Second Language Research*, *17*, 248-72.

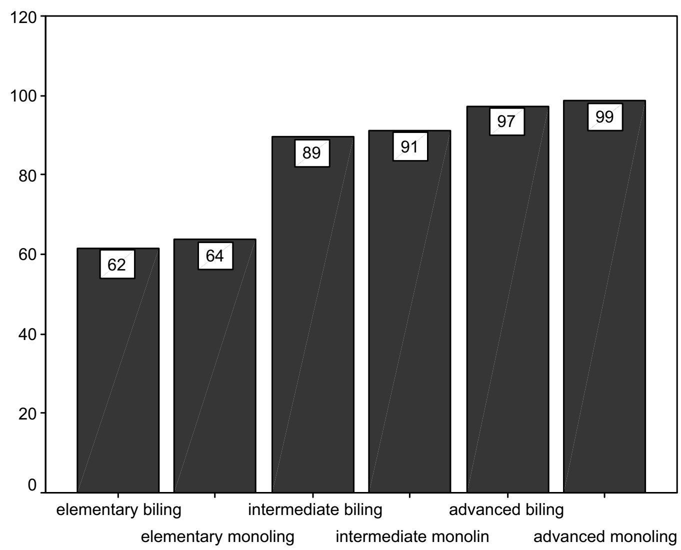


Figure 1.Mean percentages of written translation task

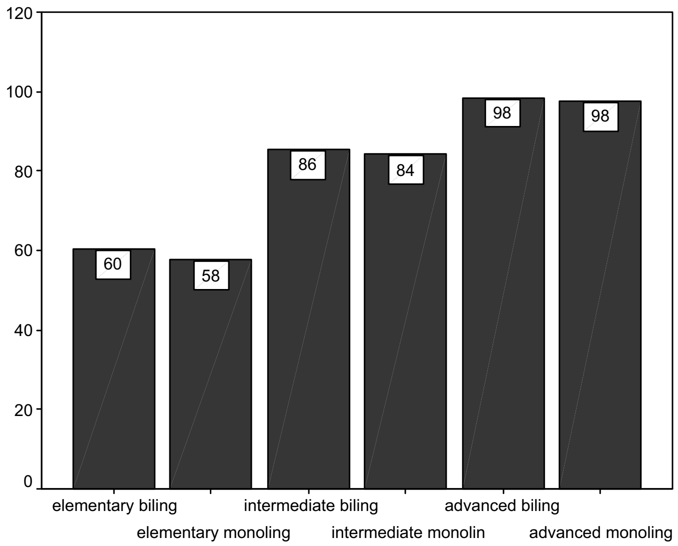
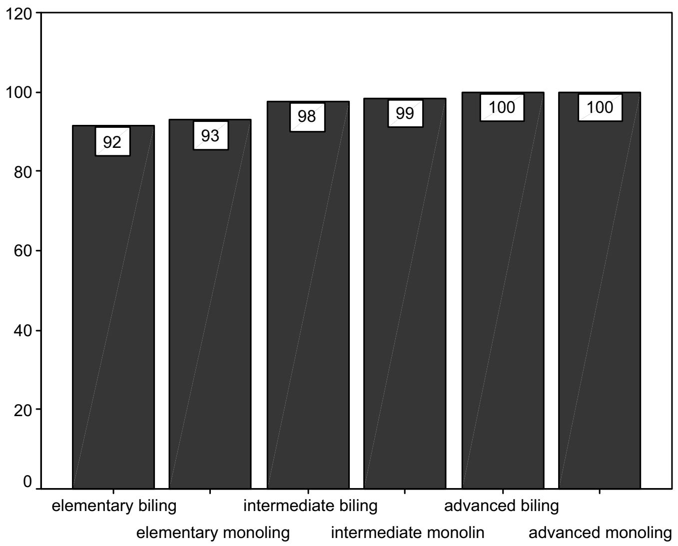


Figure 2. Mean percentages of oral translation task



Firgure 3. Written translation task: Mean percentages of yes/no questions.

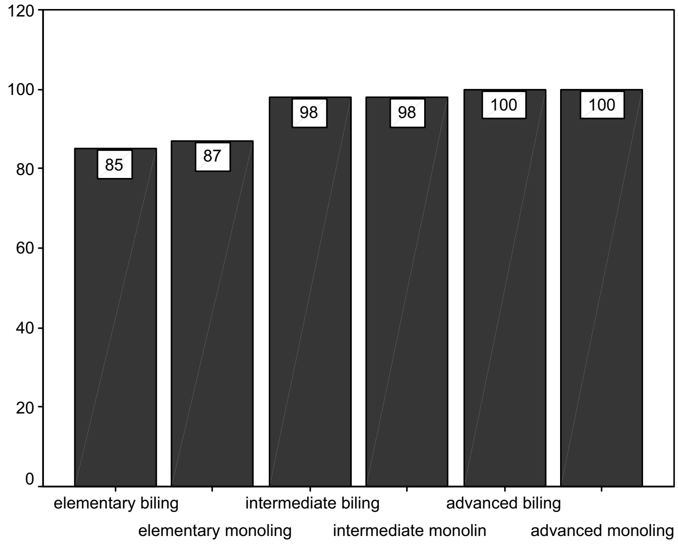


Figure 4. Oral translation task: mean percentages of yes/no questions.

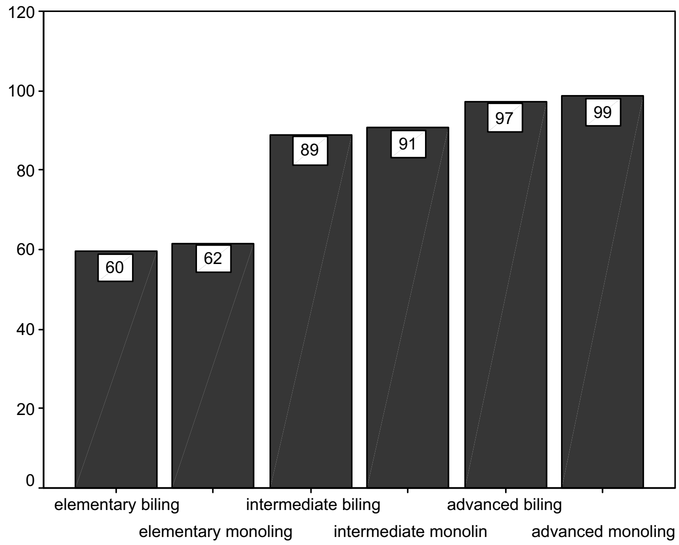


Figure 5.Written translation task: Mean percentages of wh-questions.

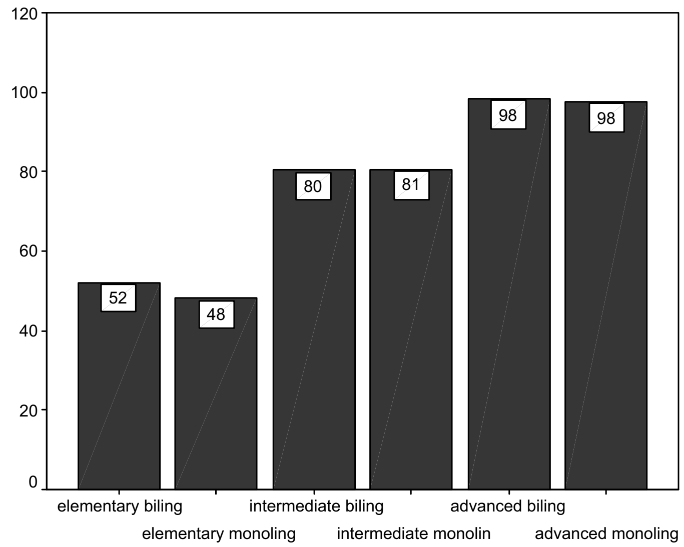


Figure 6. Oral translation task: the mean percentages of wh-questions

Appendix I

Table 1. One –way ANOVA & Scheffe test on the scores of written translation task

ANOVA

written translation task

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	32473.145	5	6494.629	415.585	.000
Within Groups	2156.617	138	15.628		
Total	34629.762	143			

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: written translation task

Scheffe

(I) proficiency level	(J) proficiency level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
elementary biling	elementary monoling	-2.1441	1.0207	.495
	intermediate biling	-27.9392*	1.0207	.000
	intermediate monoling	-29.6146*	1.0207	.000
	advanced biling	-35.8889*	1.3503	.000
	advanced monoling	-37.1476*	1.3503	.000
elementary monoling	elementary biling	2.1441	1.0207	.495
	intermediate biling	-25.7951*	1.0207	.000
	intermediate monoling	-27.4705*	1.0207	.000
	advanced biling	-33.7448*	1.3503	.000
	advanced monoling	-35.0035*	1.3503	.000
intermediate biling	elementary biling	27.9392*	1.0207	.000
	elementary monoling	25.7951*	1.0207	.000
	intermediate monoling	-1.6753	1.0207	.747
	advanced biling	-7.9497*	1.3503	.000
	advanced monoling	-9.2083*	1.3503	.000
intermediate monoling	elementary biling	29.6146*	1.0207	.000
	elementary monoling	27.4705*	1.0207	.000
	intermediate biling	1.6753	1.0207	.747
	advanced biling	-6.2743*	1.3503	.001
	advanced monoling	-7.5330*	1.3503	.000
advanced biling	elementary biling	35.8889*	1.3503	.000
	elementary monoling	33.7448*	1.3503	.000
	intermediate biling	7.9497*	1.3503	.000
	intermediate monoling	6.2743*	1.3503	.001
	advanced monoling	-1.2587	1.6139	.987
advanced monoling	elementary biling	37.1476*	1.3503	.000
	elementary monoling	35.0035*	1.3503	.000
	intermediate biling	9.2083*	1.3503	.000
	intermediate monoling	7.5330*	1.3503	.000
	advanced biling	1.2587	1.6139	.987

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 2. One way ANOVA and Scheffe test on the scores of oral translation task

ANOVA

oral translation task.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5064.169	5	1012.834	72.441	.000
Within Groups	335.557	24	13.982		
Total	5399.727	29			

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: oral translation task.
Scheffe

(I) proficiency level	(J) proficiency level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
elementary biling	elementary monoling	1.5313	2.3649	.994
	intermediate biling	-20.6146*	2.3649	.000
	intermediate monoling	-20.1667*	2.3649	.000
	advanced biling	-30.5729*	2.3649	.000
	advanced monoling	-30.1823*	2.3649	.000
elementary monoling	elementary biling	-1.5313	2.3649	.994
	intermediate biling	-22.1458*	2.3649	.000
	intermediate monoling	-21.6979*	2.3649	.000
	advanced biling	-32.1042*	2.3649	.000
	advanced monoling	-31.7135*	2.3649	.000
intermediate biling	elementary biling	20.6146*	2.3649	.000
	elementary monoling	22.1458*	2.3649	.000
	intermediate monoling	.4479	2.3649	1.000
	advanced biling	-9.9583*	2.3649	.015
	advanced monoling	-9.5677*	2.3649	.022
intermediate monoling	elementary biling	20.1667*	2.3649	.000
	elementary monoling	21.6979*	2.3649	.000
	intermediate biling	-.4479	2.3649	1.000
	advanced biling	-10.4063*	2.3649	.010
	advanced monoling	-10.0156*	2.3649	.015
advanced biling	elementary biling	30.5729*	2.3649	.000
	elementary monoling	32.1042*	2.3649	.000
	intermediate biling	9.9583*	2.3649	.015
	intermediate monoling	10.4063*	2.3649	.010
	advanced monoling	.3906	2.3649	1.000
advanced monoling	elementary biling	30.1823*	2.3649	.000
	elementary monoling	31.7135*	2.3649	.000
	intermediate biling	9.5677*	2.3649	.022
	intermediate monoling	10.0156*	2.3649	.015
	advanced biling	-.3906	2.3649	1.000

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 3.One-way ANOVA Scheffe test results of written yes/no questions

ANOVA

written translation of yes/no questions

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1532.222	5	306.444	10.756	.000
Within Groups	3931.667	138	28.490		
Total	5463.889	143			

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: written translation of yes/no questions
Scheffe

(I) proficiency level	(J) proficiency level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
elementary biling	elementary monoling	-1.5000	1.3782	.946
	intermediate biling	-6.1667*	1.3782	.002
	intermediate monoling	-7.0000*	1.3782	.000
	advanced biling	-8.5000*	1.8231	.001
	advanced monoling	-8.5000*	1.8231	.001
elementary monoling	elementary biling	1.5000	1.3782	.946
	intermediate biling	-4.6667*	1.3782	.049
	intermediate monoling	-5.5000*	1.3782	.009
	advanced biling	-7.0000*	1.8231	.015
	advanced monoling	-7.0000*	1.8231	.015
intermediate biling	elementary biling	6.1667*	1.3782	.002
	elementary monoling	4.6667*	1.3782	.049
	intermediate monoling	-.8333	1.3782	.996
	advanced biling	-2.3333	1.8231	.896
	advanced monoling	-2.3333	1.8231	.896
intermediate monoling	elementary biling	7.0000*	1.3782	.000
	elementary monoling	5.5000*	1.3782	.009
	intermediate biling	.8333	1.3782	.996
	advanced biling	-1.5000	1.8231	.984
	advanced monoling	-1.5000	1.8231	.984
advanced biling	elementary biling	8.5000*	1.8231	.001
	elementary monoling	7.0000*	1.8231	.015
	intermediate biling	2.3333	1.8231	.896
	intermediate monoling	1.5000	1.8231	.984
	advanced monoling	.0000	2.1791	1.000
advanced monoling	elementary biling	8.5000*	1.8231	.001
	elementary monoling	7.0000*	1.8231	.015
	intermediate biling	2.3333	1.8231	.896
	intermediate monoling	1.5000	1.8231	.984
	advanced biling	.0000	2.1791	1.000

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 4. One way ANOVA and Scheffe test on the scores of yes/no questions in oral translation task

ANOVA

oral translation of yes/no questions

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1206.667	5	241.333	13.470	.000
Within Groups	430.000	24	17.917		
Total	1636.667	29			

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: oral translation of yes/no questions

Scheffe

(I) proficiency level	(J) proficiency level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
elementary biling	elementary monoling	-1.0000	2.6771	1.000
	intermediate biling	-13.0000*	2.6771	.004
	intermediate monoling	-12.0000*	2.6771	.009
	advanced biling	-15.0000*	2.6771	.001
	advanced monoling	-15.0000*	2.6771	.001
elementary monoling	elementary biling	1.0000	2.6771	1.000
	intermediate biling	-12.0000*	2.6771	.009
	intermediate monoling	-11.0000*	2.6771	.019
	advanced biling	-14.0000*	2.6771	.002
	advanced monoling	-14.0000*	2.6771	.002
intermediate biling	elementary biling	13.0000*	2.6771	.004
	elementary monoling	12.0000*	2.6771	.009
	intermediate monoling	1.0000	2.6771	1.000
	advanced biling	-2.0000	2.6771	.989
	advanced monoling	-2.0000	2.6771	.989
intermediate monoling	elementary biling	12.0000*	2.6771	.009
	elementary monoling	11.0000*	2.6771	.019
	intermediate biling	-1.0000	2.6771	1.000
	advanced biling	-3.0000	2.6771	.935
	advanced monoling	-3.0000	2.6771	.935
advanced biling	elementary biling	15.0000*	2.6771	.001
	elementary monoling	14.0000*	2.6771	.002
	intermediate biling	2.0000	2.6771	.989
	intermediate monoling	3.0000	2.6771	.935
	advanced monoling	.0000	2.6771	1.000
advanced monoling	elementary biling	15.0000*	2.6771	.001
	elementary monoling	14.0000*	2.6771	.002
	intermediate biling	2.0000	2.6771	.989
	intermediate monoling	3.0000	2.6771	.935
	advanced biling	.0000	2.6771	1.000

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 5. One-way ANOVA & Scheffe results on the scores of wh-questions in written translation task

ANOVA

written translation of wh questions.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	35957.775	5	7191.555	383.090	.000
Within Groups	2590.605	138	18.773		
Total	38548.380	143			

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: written translation of wh questions.
Scheffe

(I) proficiency level	(J) proficiency level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
elementary biling	elementary monoling	-2.1870	1.1187	.577
	intermediate biling	-29.3907*	1.1187	.000
	intermediate monoling	-31.1222*	1.1187	.000
	advanced biling	-37.7148*	1.4799	.000
	advanced monoling	-39.0574*	1.4799	.000
elementary monoling	elementary biling	2.1870	1.1187	.577
	intermediate biling	-27.2037*	1.1187	.000
	intermediate monoling	-28.9352*	1.1187	.000
	advanced biling	-35.5278*	1.4799	.000
	advanced monoling	-36.8704*	1.4799	.000
intermediate biling	elementary biling	29.3907*	1.1187	.000
	elementary monoling	27.2037*	1.1187	.000
	intermediate monoling	-1.7315	1.1187	.791
	advanced biling	-8.3241*	1.4799	.000
	advanced monoling	-9.6667*	1.4799	.000
intermediate monoling	elementary biling	31.1222*	1.1187	.000
	elementary monoling	28.9352*	1.1187	.000
	intermediate biling	1.7315	1.1187	.791
	advanced biling	-6.5926*	1.4799	.002
	advanced monoling	-7.9352*	1.4799	.000
advanced biling	elementary biling	37.7148*	1.4799	.000
	elementary monoling	35.5278*	1.4799	.000
	intermediate biling	8.3241*	1.4799	.000
	intermediate monoling	6.5926*	1.4799	.002
	advanced monoling	-1.3426	1.7688	.989
advanced monoling	elementary biling	39.0574*	1.4799	.000
	elementary monoling	36.8704*	1.4799	.000
	intermediate biling	9.6667*	1.4799	.000
	intermediate monoling	7.9352*	1.4799	.000
	advanced biling	1.3426	1.7688	.989

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 6. One way ANOVA and Scheffe test on the scores of wh-questions in oral translation task

ANOVA

oral translation of wh-questions.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11735.254	5	2347.051	57.697	.000
Within Groups	976.291	24	40.679		
Total	12711.546	29			

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: oral translation of wh-questions.
Scheffe

(I) proficiency level	(J) proficiency level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
elementary biling	elementary monoling	4.0625	4.0338	.958
	intermediate biling	-28.2292*	4.0338	.000
	intermediate monoling	-28.3333*	4.0338	.000
	advanced biling	-46.1458*	4.0338	.000
	advanced monoling	-45.3646*	4.0338	.000
elementary monoling	elementary biling	-4.0625	4.0338	.958
	intermediate biling	-32.2917*	4.0338	.000
	intermediate monoling	-32.3958*	4.0338	.000
	advanced biling	-50.2083*	4.0338	.000
	advanced monoling	-49.4271*	4.0338	.000
intermediate biling	elementary biling	28.2292*	4.0338	.000
	elementary monoling	32.2917*	4.0338	.000
	intermediate monoling	-.1042	4.0338	1.000
	advanced biling	-17.9167*	4.0338	.009
	advanced monoling	-17.1354*	4.0338	.014
intermediate monoling	elementary biling	28.3333*	4.0338	.000
	elementary monoling	32.3958*	4.0338	.000
	intermediate biling	.1042	4.0338	1.000
	advanced biling	-17.8125*	4.0338	.010
	advanced monoling	-17.0313*	4.0338	.015
advanced biling	elementary biling	46.1458*	4.0338	.000
	elementary monoling	50.2083*	4.0338	.000
	intermediate biling	17.9167*	4.0338	.009
	intermediate monoling	17.8125*	4.0338	.010
	advanced monoling	.7813	4.0338	1.000
advanced monoling	elementary biling	45.3646*	4.0338	.000
	elementary monoling	49.4271*	4.0338	.000
	intermediate biling	17.1354*	4.0338	.014
	intermediate monoling	17.0313*	4.0338	.015
	advanced biling	-.7813	4.0338	1.000

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Appendix II.

A. Translation task: Sample items

Yes/no questions

1. آیا پروین تکالیفش را انجام داد ؟ هل أدَّت پروین تكاليفَها؟

Did Parvin do her homework?

2. آيا او در كارخانه كار مي كند؟ هل يَعمَلُ في المَصنَع ؟

Does he work in a factory?

Subject inanimate

3 . کی به دانشکده رفت؟ مَن ذَهَبَ الِی الکلیته؟? who went to college?

4.کی شیشه را شکست؟ مَن کَسَرَ الزُجاج؟ who broke the window?

Direct object animate

5. حسین به کی تلفن خواهد کرد ؟ مَن یتلفن حسین؟? whom will Hosein call

Indirect object

6. محمد به چه کسی نامه خواهد نوشت؟ من یکاتبه محمد؟

To whom will Mohammad write a letter?

7 .این لباس را برای چه کسی خریدی؟ لمن اشتریت هذا الثوب؟

For whom did you buy this dress?

Genitive object

8. جان تصویر چه کسی را می کشد؟ صورةُ مَن یَرسُم جان؟ Whose picture does John draw?

How

9.. خانم شریف انگلیسی را چگونه تدریس می‌کند؟ کیف تدرّس السیدة شریف الانکیزیة ؟

How does Mrs. Sharif teach English?

Oblique object

10. او راجع به چی صحبت خواهد کرد؟ هو عما یتحدث؟ what will he talk about?

11. او منتظر چه کسی است؟ من ينتَظِرُه؟? whom is he waiting for?

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Process Approach to Teaching Writing Applied in Different Teaching Models

Chunling Sun
North China Coal Medical University
Guoping Feng
Number 1 Middle School of Kuai Luan
Tangshan 063000, China

Abstract

English writing, as a basic language skill for second language learners, is being paid close attention to. How to achieve better results in English teaching and how to develop students' writing competence remain an arduous task for English teachers. Based on the review of the concerning literature from other researchers as well as a summery of the author's own experimental research, the author of this essay for the first time tries to give definitions of the process approach to writing, make a comparison between product and process approach to teaching writing and accordingly make suggestions about the basic principles of teaching writing with the application of the process approach. With this understanding of the process approach to writing, the author focuses on a discussion about the two classroom teaching models by using the process approach, namely teaching models with minimal control and maximal control to different English level students. Experimental study shows that the subjects were all making significant progress in their writing skill.

Keywords: English writing, Process approach, Product approach

I. Definition of process approach to teaching writing

Process approach to the teaching of English Writing has been advocated in contrast with the traditional product-oriented method of teaching writing, and has been generally accepted and applied by English teachers in their classroom teaching of English writing, though controversy occurs occasionally among researchers concerning which P is better, the process approach or the product method.

The controversy occurs mainly because there isn't yet a definite and universally accepted definition for the process approach to writing although some features for the approach have been discussed.. According to **Graham Stanley**, the process approach treats all writing as a creative act which requires time and positive feedback to be done well. In process writing, the teacher moves away from being someone who sets students a writing topic and receives the finished product for correction without any intervention in the writing process itself. **Vanessa Steele** defines the process approach as focusing more on the varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use; brainstorming, group discussion, re-writing. **Nunan** (1991) clearly states that the process approach focuses on the steps involved in creating a piece of work and the process writing allows for the fact that no text can be perfect, but that a writer will get closer to perfection by producing, reflecting on, discussing and reworking successive drafts of a text. **Fowler (1989)** acknowledges that process writing evolved as a reaction to the product approach, in that it met the need to match the writing processes inherent in writing in one's mother tongue, and consequently allow learners to express themselves better as individuals.

According to these above definitions as well as a summery of my own experimental research, I think that process approach to teaching writing should be a process including several stages, namely prewriting or invention activities (brainstorming, group discussion, assessing ideas,); drafting; seeking feedback from peers or the instructor; revising on the whole-text level (looking at the overall focus, reconsidering organization, deciding whether there is enough evidence, etc.); followed by revising at the paragraph or sentence level, proofreading, and "publishing" the final text. In essence, process approach to teaching writing focuses on the writing process rather than the final product.

II. Process Approach Versus Product Approach

Virtually all current composition theorists make a distinction between process-oriented and product-oriented writing. **James McCrimmon** sees it as the difference between writing as a way of knowing (process) and wring as a way of telling(product). **Donald Murray** sees it as the difference between internal and external revision (revising in order to clarify meaning for oneself vs. revising in order to clarify meaning for the reader.) **Linda Flowe**r sees it as the difference between writer-based and reader-based prose. **Nunan**(2001) clearly states how very different this "process" approach is from the traditional product-oriented approach. Whereas the product approach focuses on writing tasks in which the learner imitates, copies and transforms teacher supplied models, the process approach focuses on the steps involved in creating a piece of work. The primary goal of product writing is an error-free coherent text. Process writing allows for the fact that no text can be perfect, but that a writer will get closer to perfection by producing, reflecting on, discussing and reworking successive drafts of a text. Though these theorists differ in their explanations of the distinction between process- and product-oriented writing, there is one important point upon which they all agree: good product depends on good process.

III. Two classroom teaching models by using process approach:

Two teaching models are proposed, namely, the full open process teaching of writing, and close process teaching of writing. They are also called teaching models with minimal control and maximal control. This two teaching models are classified in corresponding to students to two different writing levels, including those of good writing skill, those of average writing skill. Students can also be divided into independent, average groups according to their different learning strategies. And in consideration of the students' affective factors, they can be classified into groups of extroversive, and fuzzy types.

1. Using minimal control teaching model to

The first group students with good writing skill, extroversive type, independent characteristics

1.1 Topic: News reports

1.2 Aims:

To develop students' abilities to organize information and construct it into a text.

To develop students' abilities to revise, redraft and improve their writing.

To develop students' abilities to construct questions.

1.3 Introduction:

During this lesson students will go through the process of developing ideas and collecting and organizing information. They will then use the information to create the first draft of an imaginary news article. They will then focus on some key areas of good writing and try to redraft their articles with these in mind.

1.4 Procedure:

1.4.1 Pre writing tasks

Rationale: This part of the lesson should give students the opportunity to collect information before writing the news report. This should reduce the amount of creativity needed during the actual writing.

1.4.1.1 Write up the headline:

Mystery Disappearance of English Woman teacher: Students suspected

1.4.1.2 Put the students in groups or pairs to try to predict the content of the story and what may have happened to the teacher.

1.4.1.3 Get the students to change groups and compare what they think may have happened.

Give out a pile of about 10 to 15 slips of paper. Tell the students to write a question about the story on each slip of paper and give each one to the teacher. (The teacher might want to put up some question words on the board to help promote them. i.e. Who….? What time…? How many…? etc.)

1.4.1.4 As the students give the teacher the slips of paper, the teacher should write very brief answers on them and give them back.

Tip: This works best if the students give each question to the teacher as soon as they write it and

The teacher writes his/her answer on the slip of paper and return it immediately. The answers the teacher gives them will help to prompt them to produce more questions.

If the teacher has a very large class this may not be possible and the teacher may want to stage this over more than one lesson so the teacher has time to write all the replies.

1.4.1.5 Stop when the students have either used up all their slips of paper or run out of questions.

1.4.1.6 Students then collect up the information they have on the slips of paper. Tell them they will use the information to compose a news report to go with the headline. Before they start writing the report it's better to decide what order they will put the information in.

Tip: A common order for newspaper reports of this kind is:

•headline

•General information about crime

·More details about what happened

•A description of any suspects or the criminals

•What police have done/are doing to try to solve the crime?

• (possible appeal for witnesses)

1.4.2 Writing Tasks

1.4.2.1 Once they have grouped the information, tell them to write the report and make sure to include all the information from their questions.

1.4.2.2 Once the students have written their reports, ask them to exchange them with another student and give out the Editor's checklist. The students then use this to check through each other's work and write on any comments or suggestions for improvement.

Editor's checklist:

Is the information grouped into logical paragraphs?

Are the paragraphs in a logical order?

Is there any unnecessary information?

Are there any parts that you can't understand?

Are a lot of the same words repeated?

Can more precise words be used?

Is there too much repetition of linkers like *and, but, then* etc?

Do all the verbs agree with their subjects? (e.g. She are/is ….)

Have articles (the, a, an) been used correctly?

Have the correct verb forms been used?

Is the punctuation correct?

Have all the words been spelt correctly?

1.4.2.3 They then give the checked report back to the original writer who makes any corrections or changes and produces a final draft.

Tip: Generally I've found that the process of drafting, adding comments and redrafting works best when done on a word processor as it is much easier for students to make changes to their text without having to rewrite the whole thing.

If your students don't have access to computers then you might consider spreading the redrafting over more than one lesson.

1.4.3. Possible follow up tasks

•Put the reports up on the walls around the class and get the students to look at them all and choose the one they think is best.

Or

•Collect up the students' slips of paper with their questions on and do some error correction work.

Or

Collect some short authentic news articles from either the internet or newspapers and tell the students to compare them with their own:

They should look for:

The way information is organized (how many paragraphs, what is the focus of each paragraph?)

The verb forms or structures used (present perfect, present simple, active or passive)

Ways in which the writer has made the writing more exciting (use of adverb, adjectives, variety of lexis)

Or

Give the students the following headline:

Mystery of the Disappearing Women Teacher Solved

Ask them to produce a report for the radio or TV on how the mystery was solved and what happened. They could even include interviews with the teacher and students involved. (The teacher could record this or video it if he/she has access to a camera.)

2. Using maximal control teaching model to

The second group students with average writing skill and learning strategies , fuzzy characteristics

2.1 Topic : Why People Take Drugs

2.2 Aims:

·To develop students' abilities to organize information and construct it into a text.

·To develop students' abilities to revise, redraft and improve their writing.

·To develop students' abilities to construct questions.

2.3 Procedure

2.3.1 Prewriting tasks:

2.3.1.1 Rationale: In this part of the lesson, the teacher needs to stimulate students' creativity, to get them think how to approach a writing topic. In this stage, the most important thing is the flow of ideas, and it is not always necessary that students actually produce more (if any) written work. If they do, then the teacher can contribute with advice on how to improve their initial ideas.

2.3.1.2 Write up the headline

Why People Take Drugs?

Tribble (1996) states that assigning tasks that pose real problems to the learner will keep their motivation high and create a sense of achievement. I have found this to be true in my own experience, and that by engaging learners in something that i) they are interested in, and ii) they can give positive input to, can create a truly active and interactive writing environment.

2.3.1.3 Group brainstorming on the given topic (Why people take drugs?)

As is well-known, getting started can be difficult, so students divided into groups quickly, work cooperatively and write down all the ideas that come to mind in connection with the given topic. According to my teaching experience, as little as 5 minutes can be effective.

Brainstorming involves thinking quickly and without inhibition, which can ultimately lead to an interesting piece of writing.

The teacher should remain in the background during this phase, only supplying language support when students need it, so as not to inhibit students in the production of their ideas.

·Evaluating ideas during brainstorming can be intimidating, and can have a negative effect, limiting the creativity the process is designed to promote.

2.3.1.4 Assessing ideas

Students are encouraged to extend their ideas into a mind map, spidergram or linear form.

It is in this stage that students can judge the quality and usefulness of their ideas.

A mind map or spidergram is also an organized display of information, which can be more easily converted into a draft.

·such graphics also make the (hierarchical) relationship of ideas more easily obvious, which will help students with the structure of their texts.

2.3.1.5 A model text:

To the lower level students in English, I think it is better to combine the process- and product-oriented approach to teaching writing. Of course, I believe that it is of great importance from the process-oriented approach to perform the above discussion stages in writing. Next, I tend to introduce a model text.

The reading of a model text, so important in a product-oriented approach to writing, is not so as to subjugate the students' ideas to their organization, but so as to make students aware that there is a particular way to express their ideas. In this way, students are given the form in order to enable them to adapt it to carry their own meaning. Ellis found evidence to suggest that "*focusing learners' attention on forms, and the meaning they realize the context of communication activities, results in successful language learning.*"

Focus on model text coherence

Coherence refers to the logical development of ideas within a text and it is an important subskill for students to be aware of. The teacher can highlight this in various ways, by focusing on the topic and function of each paragraph for example, or by examining how the writer has chosen to order his arguments. This focus will hopefully show students that if they are to convey their message successfully, they will have to make their text "reader friendly".

·Cohesion

Cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical connections between individual clauses. The grammatical links can be classified under three broad types:

- Referents (pronouns, the article "the", demonstratives)
- Ellipsis (leaving out of a words or phrases where they are unnecessary)
- Conjunction (a word which joins phrases or clauses together)

Pronouns, whether subject(he), object(him), possessive(his), relative(who), or reflexive(himself), are often underused or misused by students while performing a writing task, resulting in either confusion as to the reference or tedious repetition of a noun.

One way of raising awareness of the key function that pronouns play within a text is to ask students to circle all the pronouns, then to use arrows to connect them to their referent. This shows students that pronouns can be found by looking back or forwards in the text.

There are many other activities that can be used to focus on cohesion. For example, asking students to replace a sentence which is missing from each paragraph, or to replace the first sentence of each paragraph, matching clauses which have been separated or gapping conjunctions which students must replace from a selection.

2.3.1.6 Questioning :

In the process of group discussion, there must generate lots of questions about the topic. The teacher should try his/her best to give proper answers immediately which can help students focus upon audience as they consider what the reader needs to know. The answers to these questions will form the basis to the composition. At the same time, the teacher had better provide more guidance in student's developing ideas in a positive and encouraging way.

All of the above activities work best if carried out in groups as groupings make the tasks livelier and more enjoyable. Moreover, if students can work together, assisting each other, then the atmosphere of the writing class may be less intimidating, and perhaps students will not be afraid of the complexity of writing tasks.

2.3.2 Writing Production

This stage involves the learners in writing the first draft of their texts with a partner. This pair work will help students see that writing really is co-operative, a relationship between writer and reader. Usually, the writer has to imagine a reader, but co-operative writing provides each writer with a reader and makes the task more realistic and interactive.

2.3.2.1 Fast and collaborative writing:

The students write quickly on a topic for five or ten minutes without worrying about correct language or punctuation. Writing as quickly as possible, if they can't think of a word, they leave a space or write it in their own language. The important thing is to keep writing. Later this text is revised. At the same time, I find collaborative writing can be quite motivating. It enables the stronger students to help the weaker ones.

2.3.2.2 Whole class text construction, composing on the blackboard and parallel writing

These techniques have their foundation in product writing but are effective in providing a framework for lower level students to work from. These techniques can develop a sense of collective achievement, while eliminating the fear of being left to "go it alone", completely unguided.

2.3.2.3 Students consult each other and co-construct texts

During such an activity, the teacher should move around listening to their comments, providing feedback or answering questions on structure, lexical items, the validity of an argument, the order of presentation of the information, etc. therefore, I can keep track of their progress and work out a record of most frequent questions, doubts and inaccuracies for a future's error analysis' session.

2.3.2.4 Revision

- Self-editing

A good writer must learn how to evaluate their own language, how to improve through checking their own text, looking for errors. This way students will become better writers.

- Peer Editing

Students exchange their first drafts of a text and point out changes which are needed to help the reader(e.g. better organization, paragraph divisions, sentence variety, vocabulary choice). They can also act as each other's editors (spotting vocabulary repetitions, grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, etc). At the same time, students are required to provide written feedback to the student authors.

Peer editing is a useful tool for any level of learner, for example, to the intermediate level students, this can be used to assess how effectively an essay question has been answered.

- Whole class discussion of how a particular text might need adjustment according to the audience it is addressed to.

One technique I regularly employ is to ask my students to imagine that I am a small child, and to explain what they consider to be a straightforward topic (for example, Why People Take Drugs?) in words that a child would understand. I then ask them to explain the same topic to me, only this time they imagine I am a university professor, and ask them to adjust their language appropriately.

- Evaluation:

It takes a lot of time and efforts to write, and so it is only fair that student writing is responded to suitably. Positive comments can help build student confidence and create good feeling for the next writing class. Through my experience I've found that evaluation is most useful if it is given on the basis of what the learner has asked for. In my experience, learners still favor comments on the grammatical and lexical correctness of their work. In order to make this interactive activity, I use an error correction code, which serves to highlight the error but still requires the learners to reflect on what the error actually is. Sometimes I use some questions like "What do you mean here?" or, "Can you tell me more about this?".

- Final draft

Drafts are returned and improvement are made based upon peer feedback. Then the final draft is written. In addition, students can also exchange and read each others' work and perhaps even write a response or reply.

3. Conclusion

Experimental study shows that the two groups of students who received two different models of teaching writing were all making significant progress in their writing skill, while the control groups who as a whole class received full open process model of teaching made less progress in their writing skill except for some good students who scored almost as high.

It is concluded that the process approach to teaching writing can be and is ideally applied in different teaching models, and when we use the same process approach but different models of teaching writing to teach the different students, an optimal teaching effect can be realized.

References

Caifang Kong. (2005). Review on the Writing Theories of Foreign language in China. *Foreign Languages' Teaching and Research*.

Flower, L. (1985). *Problem-solving strategies for writing.* Second Edition. San Diego, Harcourt: Brace Jovanich.

Fowler W.S. (1989). Progressive Writing Skills. *Surry: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.*

Graham Stanley. (1993). *Process Writing,* British Council, Barcelona.

James McCrimmon, (1994). *Writing with a Purpose*. Houghton Mifflin co.

Lanzhen Cai. (2001). Application of Product Teaching on College English Writing. *Journal of the Foreign Language World*.

Liming Deng. (2003). Hints of Systematic Research of Process Teaching to College English Teaching. *Foreign Language Teaching.*

Murray, D. (1980). Writing as Process: How Writing Finds its Own Meaning. *In T.R. Donovan and B.W.MecClelland(eds),* English Approach in Teaching Writing.

Nunan, David. (1991). *Language Teaching Methodology.* A Textbook for Teachers. Prentice Hall.

Nunan, David. (2001). *Second English Teaching and Learning.* Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Tribble, C. Writing. (1996). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vanessa Steele. (1992). *Product and Process Writing:* A Comparison. Rowley: Newbury House.

Xinying Hu. (2003). Application of Process Teaching. *Journal of the Foreign Language World*.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Repositioning Recitation Input in College English Teaching

Qing Xu
College of Foreign Languages
Qingdao University of Science & Technology
69 Songling Road, Qingdao 266061, China
Tel: 86-532-8895-6018 E-mail: allyxq@sina.com

Abstract

This paper tries to discuss how recitation input helps overcome the negative influences on the basis of second language acquisition theory and confirms the important role that recitation input plays in improving college students' oral and written English.

Keywords: Recitation input, College English teaching, Communicative competence

1. Introduction

Recitation is a traditional teaching method in China which is widely used by learners of different levels and studied by some researchers. The theory of the second language acquisition suggests that recitation-input approach is one of the most effective approaches to improve students' oral and written English. The paper implies that with the application of modern teaching theory and teaching aid, recitation as the traditional language teaching method should be repositioned and put into proper application.

2. Language learning theories and related studies of recitation

Krashen's Input Hypothesis is the central part of an overall theory of second language acquisition. It claims that learners progress along the natural order by understanding input that contains structures a little bit beyond their current level of competence (Krashen, 1981) and it becomes comprehensible as a result of simplification and with the help of contextual and extra linguistic clues. This kind of comprehensive input can promote language acquisition, and improve learners' speaking and writing accuracy.

According to Behaviorist, the single paramount fact about language learning is that it concerns, not problem solving, but the formation and performance of habits. Learning was seen to take place inductively through "analogy" rather than "analysis". That is to say, language learning is not like the learning of science as we can not learn it well by asking a series of questions. Instead, we need to read more and recite more, allowing us to become more familiar with the language system, find the regularity belonging to the certain language and as a result, obtain a sense of the language.

Rod Ellis (1985) says that reciting is a process of consciousness and noticing. This process really helps the intake of knowledge. By reciting the whole passage, learners can get the sequence and possible permutations of a sentence stem. The learners will unconsciously learn to deal with day-to-day situations. They enable the learners to say the right thing at the right time in the right place. During the process of recitation, the students may read the articles silently first to make themselves familiar with the content and sentences. In other words, learners will have to read intentionally and extensively. This is to use a variety of interpersonal strategies, such as repeating the writer's words, recalling and practicing English words and phrases, creating new linguistic forms, substituting items in utterances, and expanding them and rehearsing utterances for overt social performance. The learners began to speak, using the single words, or memorized chunks.

Harry Bahrick (1984) states that how well people remember something depends on how deeply they process it. Repeating words as strings of sounds is low-level processing which results in poor retention; working out how words fit in the grammatical structure of the sentence is deeper and leads to better memorization; using the meanings of words together within the whole meaning of the sentence is the highest level of processing and ensures the best memorization.

3. Function of recitation

3.1 The improvement of English writing

Recitation can reduce the negative transfer of the mother tongue. Chinese and English belong to two different language families. The sentence structures and discourse order are totally different. Chinese students can not free themselves from the negative influence of L1 in learning English. Writing ability is an essential part of the learner's communicative competence. Presently, however, English writing teaching for non-English majors is very weak, which is mainly reflected by learners' substandard and inadequate writing output resulted from the currently unpleasant examination-oriented writing teaching and learning. When they write, they tend to think in Chinese first, and then just put what they think of into English word by word, sentence by sentence. So in their writing, there are a lot of Chinese-way English sentences. This has already greatly limited their development in the proficiency of English. The effective way to avoid negative transfer is to enlarge the students' input of authentic English and improve their monitor consciousness. The characteristics of recitation input are very similar to those of optimal language input in that recitation can increase learners' language input, reinforce their language sense, overcome negative transfer of one's mother tongue, reduce the anxiety in writing process and strengthen, to a great extent, the learner's memory power. Recitation is a kind of conscious input, through which the students can gradually accumulate the language knowledge and discourse organization skills, which are helpful in writing in the target language. The students can monitor the producing process and correct the Chinese-way English in their writing. After they keep practicing the method for a certain period of time, they can get rid of the negative influence of the L1 and write native-like English sentences. That is to say, if recitation is skillfully and tactfully integrated into writing teaching, it will be very effective to assist writing teaching and help improve learners' writing ability greatly.

3.2 The improvement of oral English

Due to the great linguistic interference among college students' learning English within a non-natural context, in view of their weakness and difficulties and the inadequacy of the English input, the input of recitation could serve as a practical measure to improve the oral communicative competence. Recitation reduces the learners' anxiety, the learning anxiety does harm to students. When students can quote a lot of sentences recited by them somewhere, this makes them become confident in themselves and more interested in learning English. Consequently, recitation can intensify the students' language input, improve their language sense for English and their communicative competence.

4. The selection of recitation materials

Recitation is not the laissez-faire activity of repeating the assigned text. The teacher can provide some methods to improve students' activities and interests by paying attention to the quantity and quality of recitation input. In other words, the teacher plays the role of controller in selecting the recitation materials. The criteria for the choice of the materials vary from person to person. The following are suggested guidelines:

A. The material should contain a different cultural topic (e.g., dating) so that students can learn more cultural background behind the language.

B. The material should contain idiomatic expressions and useful sentence structures.

C. The material should be composed of only two or three short paragraphs so that the workload is not too heavy.

Besides, students are always encouraged to choose the books or writers they are in favor of to read out of class. Students are instructed to find different kinds of materials in the library or from the Internet. The materials can be a novel, an essay, a short comment, a piece of news, an advertisement or anything they prefer to read. The styles of articles are various, the words and expressions they contact are of different language colors, and the information they obtain is of a great variety. The only requirement for the materials is that the article be written in authentic English by the native speakers. It is personal interest that triggers the students to begin their recitation. This kind of input may first enlarge the language scope and the cultural knowledge concerning the certain foreign language.

It is suggested that the teacher pay greater attention to fluency during the recitation activity. Instead of fluency, students should concentrate on accuracy during the memorization activity. Memorization and recitation involves more than just rote memorization. It is an integration of cognitive and linguistic activities as well as a technique that can be nicely adapted into an EFL class setting.

5. Different input strategies

The strategy of recitation is also widely used by learners of different levels and studied by some researchers. According to Rod Ellis (1985), input refers to the language that is addressed to the L2 learner either by a native speaker or by another L2 learner. Interaction consists of the discourse jointly constructed by the learner and his interlocutors; input, therefore, is the result of interaction. Stephen Krashen (1987) states, "The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to know. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production." He also says, "In the real world, conversations with sympathetic native speakers who are willing to help the acquirer understand are very helpful."

Long (1983) considers in detail how input is made comprehensible. One way is by the use of structures and vocabulary which the learner already knows. However, this type of input cannot foster development, because it supplies no new linguistic material. Another way is by a ‘here-and-now’ orientation, which enables the learner to make use of the linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts and his general knowledge to interpret language which he does not actually know (Rod Ellis, 1985, P157-158). When the learners are reading different language materials, they are often more likely to choose these articles which surpass their present knowledge of the target language, which are the materials containing ‘i+1’ to recite. But this is only sufficient input, just as Krashen said that comprehensible input is not a sufficient condition for second language acquisition, and only when input becomes intake that language acquisition takes place. When the learners finish reading a material, we don’t know what they have selected to proceed in the mind. Sometimes, the learners just keep the information in their mind for a period of time, and they forget soon the linguistic skills which appeared in the material. In order to make the learner have greater knowledge retention, a clear orientation should be assigned to them. With the demand of selection and recitation, the learners have to try their best to understand the materials using the knowledge they already know. As for the knowledge they have not mastered, learners may make use of the linguistic and extra-linguistic context in order to guess the meaning or bring their problems to the teacher for discussion. After they reach a full comprehension of the material, they will recite some paragraphs of the reading materials. The paragraphs chosen are surely a little more difficult than their present knowledge. And this kind of input will be effective and the ‘i+1’ knowledge will be guaranteed to become intake of the learners. This kind of acquisition helps us produce natural and accurate speech or writing.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, the writer reviews the related language learning theories and the studies of recitation and attempts to explore the positive effect of recitation, which is based on the theory of input hypothesis and accords with the cognitive process of human mind. It is believed that recitation input facilitates the acquisition of language chunk, enhances the language sense, inspires students' confidence in language learning and improves oral fluency and the ability of writing. Therefore, repositioning the role of recitation input in college English teaching is highly necessary.

References

Dawei Wang. (1997). On input. *Foreign Language World,* (4).

Garton, S. (2002). *Learner initiative in the language classroom*. ELT Journal, 56(1), 47-55.

Gordon, W.C. (1989). *Learning and memory*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Klatzky, R. L. (1984). *Memory and awareness*. New York: Freeman

Krashen, Stephen D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implication*s. New York: Longman.

Krashen, Stephen D. (1987). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Prentice-Hall International.

Krashen, Stephen D. (1988). *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Prentice-Hall International.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Writing Techniques in the English Love and Lyric Poems

Xiaoying Liu
XianYang Normal University
E-mail: xiaoliu1964@163.com

Fund Item: Key Science Research Item Sponsored by XianYang Normal University （*05XSYK110*）

Abstract

In the poetry creation, poets use many different writing techniques. This paper expounds the image expressions in British love poems and lyrics from four aspects: description, symbolism, figure of speech and personification.

Man has been singing for love since written language was invented. Love has been the eternal subject theme of poems and become perpetual singing. Many poets also worship nature and sing for nature. In order to express their feelings and emotions, poets at all times and in all countries pay much attention to using image expressions and creation in their poems. There are no poems without images. Words are carriers of images. Although poets are in different times, they have the similar writing techniques, we can still find the same or similar image expressions from different poems of different poets. This paper will analyze image expressions in British love poems and lyrical poems from four aspects --- description, symbolism, figure of speech and personification.

Keywords: Poet, Image expressing

I. Description

This kind of image expression is similar to the line drawing in traditional ink and brush style in painting. It strengthens the direct image expression through the senses. The purpose of this image expression is that the poets' feelings and emotions are perceived directly by means of objects. The British famous poet, P.B. Shelley wrote a poem---Love's Philosophy, where the author uses a series of descriptive images, such as boundless sea and sky, the sun, the moon and the stars, mountains and rivers, grass and trees. He shows that all living things in natural world depend on one another, which reflects the poet's subjective impressions."What are all these kissings worth./If thou kiss not me?"From these two sentences we can see the author's cordial love for his sweet heart.

In Shelley's another poem-"Music, When soft voices die", he also uses many descriptive images. Soft voices die, but music vibrates in the memory, sweet violets sicken, but their odors live within the sense. These two images exist in the poet's deep affection, which is just diverged from these two images. The tender singing will die one day. The beautiful flowers will wither at last, only love can last forever.

Christian Rossetti is a famous female poet in Britain. One of her short poems "Song" includes many descriptive images, for example, roses, laurel, an ivy branch, violets, bay, withered leaves, especially the use of "withered leaves" is very successful.

Oh roses for the flush of youth,/And laurel for the perfect prime,/

But pluck an ivy branch for me/ Groum old before my time/

Oh violets for the grave of youth,/And bay for those dead in their prime,/

Give me the withered leaves 1 chose/Before in the old time./

The poet sends "violets" to youth, and "laurel" to middle aged people, but leaves herself "the withered leaves". We can see the loss of love leaves agony in her mental from "the withered leaves". For her lover's happiness, she would rather endure the severe suffering from emotion all by herself. "The withered leaves" indicates her kind heartedness.

Robert Frost, a famous pastoral poet in England, creates different images by description in his poem--- Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening. The basic image of this poem is a snowy scene that the speaker views and a series of implicit questions that the scene and his own action as he moves at night. The speaker opens with a question: who owns the woods, the second and third stanza raise implicit questions and the final stanza gives the answer to the question why he stopped by the woods: he was attract by the dark beauty of the woods and by the snowy night. The author describes the dark beauty of the woods and the snowy night through a sequence of images. The images in the poem can be divided into two kinds: visual images (e.g. woods, house, village, harness bell, snow, lake) and auditory images (e.g. shake of bells, the sweep of easy winds and downy flake). They correspond to the sensory feelings of the poet as well as the readers, and therefore creative vividness.

II. Symbolism

The use of symbols represents real things, feelings, etc. The images created by symbolism are very complicated. The character of symbolism is to express the theme of the poem through implication and inspiring readers to associate something in their mind. In Lord Tennyson's famous poem---"Break, Break, Break," the author uses "gold gray stones Break" to symbolize the poet's broken heart.

Break, break, break, / At the foot of thy crags, O sea!

But the tender grace of a day that is dead / Will never come back to me.

In Shelley' s "the cloud" we can read between the eight lines in the first part that the cloud brings happiness to others and the world, since it, being as rain, brings fresh showers for the thirsting flowers, bears light shade for the leaves and shakes dews on the buds. But in the form of hail, it beats violently on the earth, making the green plain white and going away vividly in the following four lines, that the cloud could be changeable and could change the surroundings at the same time. It symbolizes that the evil society should be got rid of.

In the fifth part, the bow is described as the triumphal arch, hanging like a roof, changing all the storms and something like that and then bringing peace on earth. The million-colored bow indicates the sun shine again after the rain, which then symbolizes that a new scene replacing the old.

The short lyric poem To the Cuckoo by William Wordsworth, is most frequently anthologized and considered as a masterpiece of lyricism in English. As one of the most typical samples of lyrical balladry, this short verse express the poetic persona's intense but pure emotion of delight in hearing the "blessed bird's' echoing singing and his identification with the nature. In the poem, the cuckoo is poeticized and made eternal, as a symbol to bridge the time and space, the past and the present, nature and humanity, hope and reality, love and remembrance. The cuckoo is 'no bird' but everything of the persona's ideal "still longed foe" and of his keen desire to be in oneness with the nature.

III. Figures of speech

From the form of expression in poems, the figure of speech can be divided into two categories -simile and metaphor.

1. **Simile** - the use of comparison of one thing to another, also an expression making a comparison in the imagination between two things. In love poems writers often use a direct, obvious simile to specify the abstract love. The images structured in this way are vivid, distinct and true.

One of the famous love poems is R. Burns' "A RED. RED Rose". In the poem, Burns compares his sweetheart to "a red rose" and "sweet melody".

O my luve's like a red, red rose, / That's newly sprung in June;

O my lure's like the melodie, /That' s sweetly played in tune.

Burns also uses "the seas gang dry, the rocks melt wi' the sun" as a simile to express his heart will always remain loyal to his sweetheart.

C. G.Rossetti compares her love to"a singing Bird" "an apple tree", "a rainbow bell" in her poem" A Birthday".

My heart is like a singing bird / Whose nest is in a watered shoot./

My heart is like an apple tree/ Whose boughs are bent with thickest fruit/

My heart is like rainbow shell / That paddles in a halcyon sea./

These three similes express the poet's happiness and richness of the heart.

2. **Metaphor**

Metaphor is words to indicate something different from the literal meaning. An indirect and covert figure of speech is used to specify the abstract love. The character common to simile and metaphor is that both of them create an atmosphere through contrasts and comparing something in common of the two different things. The difference lies in that simile points out something in common of the two different things, while metaphor implies common of the subject and reference in the image. In one poem of Lord Tennyson "O Swallow, Swallow", the author expresses his love indirectly with the aid of swallow and creates images of a young man pursuing love and having honest quality. Although the title of the poem is "Swallow", yet in fact none of the sentences is used to write about the swallow.

In Spenser's poem "Amoretti". He compares his sweetheart's eyes to saphyres, her lips to rubies, her teeth to pearls etc.

to express his love feelings.

In the fourth part of P.B. Shelley's "The Cloud", the beauty of fog is myth-like. It's like a woolen carpet in the sky, on which a maiden, the moon, is strolling gently. Once she breaks the carpet, it will fall as dewdrops, glistening in the morning light and each of the dewdrops reflects the luster of the moon and the stars, which can be seam twinkling like golden bees only when the carpet is broken. The moon's gliding on the fleece-like floor, and her breaking the woof of the tent, the star's peeing, the strips of the sky's falling and its being paved with the moon and stars are all metaphors, appropriate and vivid, unfolding and enchanting scenery before our eyes.

IV. Personification

Personification is the representation of a thing or abstraction in the form of a person as in art. It is one of the simplest ways to make ideas concrete. Using personification in poetry writing. Readers can see how abstract notions are made human, how human qualities are given to abstractions, inanimate objects, and nonhuman beings so as to be familiarized and better understood. In other words, one's love is often invented to be a person or an object, and bestowed on people's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, voices, personality, interest and so on. In William Wordsworth"I Wandered Lonely as A Cloud." he uses the technique of personification. In the first stanza he sees"a crowd of golden daffodils/Fluttering and dancing in the breeze." In the second stanza the author endows the daffodils with pleasure of humanity by giving the rein to his imagination. Many daffodils stretched in never-ending line along the margin of a bay"just like" stars that shine and twinkle on the milky way. "This stanza has rich flavor of life as well as simple languages. The author not only describes the beauty of the daffodils but also regards them as something alive which has the same spirit and personality as himself.

In her poem---Because I could Not Stop for Death, Emily Dickinson describes death as a kind gentleman. She uses "kindly", "civility" objectifying death as a genteel and courtly driver, who is made to serve the end of "Immortality". That "kindly", "civility" is used for the depiction of Death shows the author's attitude towards death "Immorality" is also personified in this poem, which can be seen from "The Carriage held but just ourselves---And Immortality"

"The Miller's Daughter" was written by Lord Tennyson. In this poem the author also adopts the technique of personification. Life is bestowed on "jewel, girdle and necklace". "Jewel trembles at her ear"hid in riglets day and night," "touch her neck so warm and white."

The classification of the above four image expressions is relative, and rough, and it results from the convenience of observations and analyses. In the actual poem writing, these four techniques are often used at the same time and are not easy to be separated from one another.

References

An, Xiuhua & Zhu, Chaohui. (2007). *A B C to English Poetry.* Shanghai: Donghua University Publishing House.

Gang Sui. (2003). *Poetry and Fiction Writing in English: a Guidebook.* Beijing: People's Publishing House.

Luo. Xuanmin. (2004). *Appreciation of English and American Literature (Essay & Poetry).* Beijing: Qinghua University Publishing House.

Paul Procter. (1988). Longman Dictionary.

Wang, Zuoliang. (1993). *Selection of British Poems.* Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House.

Wu, Weiren. (1997). *History and Selected Readings in British Literature.* Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Autonomous Learning and Metacognitive Strategies Essentials in ESP Class

Parviz Ajideh
Tabriz University
Tabriz-Iran
E-mail: Parviz_333@yahoo.com

Abstract

The reform in teaching and curriculum involves not only in the teaching content, but more so in teachers' methodology, the students' learning strategies and the changed relationship between students and teachers in the classroom setting.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that what is needed for ESP is a different orientation to English study and to outline an approach which departs from that which is generally taken. Broadly, what is involved is a shift of the focus of attention from the grammatical to the communicative properties of language. This view that the difficulties which the students encounter arise not so much from a defective knowledge of the system of language but from unfamiliarity with English use is acceptable but not sufficient.

It is suggested that although specification of language needs is necessary for ESP course and it will be useful for selecting and grading materials, in teaching ESP learning strategies should play an important role. Accordingly, autonomous learning and metacognitive strategies are suggested as basic essentials for teaching and learning ESP.

Keywords: Autonomy, Cognition, Metacognition, Product, Process, ESP, Goal-oriented, Course design

1. Introduction

English for specific purposes (ESP) is a movement based on the proposition that all language teaching programs should be tailored to the specific learning and language use needs of identified groups of students

After the Second World War English became the accepted international language of technology, science, and commerce, it created a new generation of learners who knew specifically why they were learning the language. In fact there was a pre-determined goal in their learning English. Whereas English had previously decided its own destiny, it now became subject to needs, and demands of people other than language teachers. Dovey (2006) states courses which prepare students for the workplace in specific ways can be expected to have purposes quite different from those of discipline-based courses and can also be expected to introduce new questions.

ESP also became an important part of English –as-second language teaching in the 1970s and 1980s, probably as a direct result of the introduction of communicative teaching curricula. Its main drive was practical, driven by the increasing numbers of people around the world who needed English for clearly defined reasons such as reading academic textbooks or transacting business (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). It is suggested that ESP could easily be outlined based on the sorts of texts that learners need to become familiar with, or the needs-related nature of the teaching (Swales, 1985). The early analyses of ESP texts took the form of frequency counts of structures or verb forms, but such analyses only provided descriptions and had little or no explanatory force. These limitations, together with the increasing importance of the communicative aspects of language and an increasing interest in linguistic use rather than form, led to researchers using rhetorical or discourse analysis methods to discover the main characteristics of texts in different academic fields (e.g. Widdowson, 1979).

During the late 1970s ESP course designers started to carry out needs analysis of their students' future linguistic requirements. These needs analysis were often expressed in terms of notions and functions (Wilkins, 1976) and the most celebrated model of such a needs analysis are described by Munby (1978) in his communicative syllabus design in which he presented a system for devising appropriate syllabus specification from adequate profiles of communicative needs. These profiles included the purposes of communication, the communication settings, and the language skills, functions and structures required.

We can trace an acceptable work during 60s and 70s in teaching and learning English in Iran in corporation with the institutions in the U.K. or the U.S.A. Iran-America Society, and the British council were more active in offering general English courses. The major Iranian universities established scientific relations with the institutions in America and

England, for example Shiraz University with the University of Pennyselvania, Tehran University with the University of Illinios, and Tabriz University with British Council. These scientific ties helped for the emergence loosely defined ESP, a kind of English narrowed in scope to meet the specific needs of the students.

In early 1981 Curriculum development comities started functioning. The English committee asked different universities to compile textbooks with ESP flavor without providing them with any specific framework. In 1985 SAMT was responsible for compiling and publishing textbooks in different areas of specializations. Accordingly more than one hundred sub-technical and technical textbooks have been published. Without saying it is evident that ESP is not equal for producing sub-technical and technical textbooks. As Celce –Murcia (2001) mentions ESP practitioners approach course development must consider a multitude of factors, and some essential questions, before, and during, project initiation.

In this regard Yarmohammadi (2005) claims that language teaching in Iran does not follow any specific purpose. The first and the most important thing we have to embark on is to verify and operationalize the objectives of language teaching and learning in Iran.

2. Statement of Problem

As an ESP teacher at Tabriz University for twenty years this question whether an English teacher courses or the specialists from the field should teach ESP course does not leave me. Some students think that ESP is a new label for GPE and nothing else. For them this is invented by English teachers to make students interested in English programs. They believe that their instructors in their field will be more successful to teach ESP courses even not being familiar with English teaching and learning theories. For some others having knowledge in the field is not sufficient for an ESP Instructor, they should have a good command in general English and they should be familiar with the basic principles and teaching and learning theories.

2.1 Review and Discussion

To pave the way, it is better to have a brief look at some definitions and explanations by some specialists in the field to support the idea that ESP is not the same as EGP. One of the generally accepted definitions refers to Huthinson and Waters. What is the difference between the ESP and General English (EGP) approach? Hutchinson and Waters (1987:53) answer this quite simply, "… in theory nothing, in practice a great deal". This definition by Hutchinson and waters raises one important question. If in theory there is no difference between ESP and EGP, what is the theoretical justification for ESP? It seems that without a theoretical justification to ESP there will be no acceptable rational for such a course.

But Widdoson (1983) attempts to theorize ESP and this can be followed in his works under two interrelated headings: Learning purpose and Language use.For Widdowson GPE is no less specific and purposeful than ESP. What distinguishes them is the way in which purpose is defined, and the manner of its implementation. Based on this definition there are two interpretations from learning purpose. One might be regarded as objective- oriented learning and the other as aim-oriented one.In ESP Specification of objective is equivalent to aim that is a training operation and deals with development of restricted competence. Whereas, in GPE Specification of objective is not equivalent to aim but it leads to aim that is an educational operation and deals with development of general capacity. The following quotation (Widdowson, 1983) clarifies the point:

…ESP is essentially a training operation which seeks to provide learners with a restricted competence to enable them to cope with certain clearly defined tasks. These tasks continue the specific purposes which ESP course is designed to meet. The course, therefore, makes direct reference to eventual aims. GPE, on the other hand, is essentially an educational operation which seeks to provide learners with a general capacity to enable them to cope with undefined eventualities in the future. (p.6)

To suggest his model of language use, Widdowson (1983) criticizes the two models of idealization, registers analysis and needs analysis and suggests his own model of idealization.

1. Register analysis approach is a kind of idealization that involves the dissociation of linguistic forms from their communicative function in discourse. In fact the specification based on register analysis does acknowledge the pedagogically necessary distinction between aims and objectives. It rests on the assumption that a definition of objectives in terms of linguistic terms will provide for the subsequent satisfaction of communicative aims. That is to say that the imparting of linguistic competence will enable the learner to develop communicative capacity under his own steam. In this respect, it allows for learning to take place beyond the limits of the teaching input. So it is based on educational theory.

2. Needs analysis approach is a kind of idealization that seeks to retain the communicative value of linguistic elements and analyses language into its notional and functional. What this needs analysis approach seeks to do is to bring aims

into closer approximation to objectives. Here, findings that emerge from needs analysis characterize aims. This is, in fact, the orthodox view of ESP course design.

This idea can also be followed in methodology literature where ESP is considered as the natural product of Notional functional approach to language teaching. Richards and Rogers (2001) state that a notional functional syllabus would include not only elements of grammar and lexis but also specify the topics, notions, and concepts the learner needs to communicate about. The English for specific Purpose (ESP) movement likewise begins not from a structural theory of language but from a functional account of learner needs.

As it mentioned earlier, Widdowson challenges this orthodox view of ESP and he suggests a discourse approach to ESP. For him what we must look for is a model of language, using which does not simply atomize the user's behaviour into components of competence, but which accounts for the essential features of the discourse process. At the same time, such a model should provide us with the means of characterizing ESP at different points on the scale of specificity and consistent with the distinctions I have proposed in the preceding chapter. The model therefore has to lend support to the concepts of training and education, of competence and capacity, of aims and objectives, and so give us a theoretical basis for ESP (Widdowson 1983:34). For Widdowson the register analysis and needs analysis approach to ESP focus on systematic knowledge whereas in his suggested discourse process approach both systemic knowledge and schematic knowledge are involved.

Hutchinson and Water (1987) challenge this view and claim that ESP must be seen as an approach not as a product, ESP is not a particular kind of language or methodology, nor does it consist of a particular type of teaching material, it is an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need.

It seems that in the three approaches stated earlier (register analysis, needs analysis and discourse process approaches) the idea of what to learn plays an important role and how learn is not the main concern. The following quotation from Hutchinson and Waters (1987) is to support this idea.

…. But our concern in ESP is not with language use –although this will help to define the course objectives our concern is with language learning. We cannot simply assume that describing and exemplifying what people do with language will enable someone to learn it. If that were so, we need to do no more than read a grammar book and a dictionary in order to learn a language. A truly valid approach to ESP must be based on an understanding of the processes of language learning." (p.24)

There is a need to an attempt to seek possibilities of fostering learner autonomy in ESP course design in Iranian EFL teaching context. This importance can be followed by applying metacognitve strategies for ESP learning. In fact, an autonomous learner should be able to manage or regulate the process of learning which involves making decisions as to what to learn, how to learn, when to monitor, and in what way to evaluate success or failure of learning (Wenden 1987; Holec1987; cotteral 2000).

2. 2 Goal-oriented and Process-oriented Syllabuses

Generally speaking, the process of deciding what to teach is based on consideration of what the learner should most usefully be able to communicate in the foreign language. In ESP, According to Mackay and Mountford (1978) when needs are clear, learning aims can be defined in terms of these specific purposes to which the language will be put, whether it be reading scientific papers or communicating with technicians on an oil rig. The result is that almost immediately, teaching can be seen to be effective in that the learner begins to demonstrate communicative ability in the required area. What Mackay and Mountford suggest is only the realm of Goal-oriented syllabus and there is no place to processes-oriented one in such an interpretation of the learner needs.

We know goal-oriented approach focuses on the selection of language by reference to the ends of learning, but the process-oriented approach focuses on the presentation of language by reference to the means of learning and allows the ends to be achieved by the learner by exercising the ability he or she has acquired. The first approach assumes that the completion of a course of instruction marks the completion of learning and that all that is left for the student to do is to apply this ready-made knowledge. The second approach assumes that learning will continue beyond the completion of instruction since the aim of such instruction precisely is to develop a capacity to learn: it does not itself realize any special purpose but provides the learner with the potential for its realization.

In practice, syllabuses in which the selection and grading of items was carried out on a grammatical basis fell into disfavor because they failed adequacy to reflect changing views on the nature of language. In addition, there was sometimes a mismatch between what was taught and what was learned. Some SLA researchers have claimed that this mismatch is likely to occur when the grading of syllabus input is carried out according to grammatical rather than psycholinguistic principles, while others suggest that the very act of linguistically selecting and grading input will lead to distortion. Moreover it seemed that functional-notional principles would result in syllabuses which were radically different from those based on grammatical principles. However, in practice, the new syllabuses were rather similar to those they were intended to replace. In both syllabuses, the focus tended to be on the end products or results of the teaching / learning process.

According to Widdowson (1983) the absence of distinction between aims and objectives leads to an ambiguity in the expression “learner needs”. On the one hand, it can refer to what the learner has to do with the language once he has learned it: in this sense it has to do with aims. On the other hand, it can refer to what the learner has to do in order to learn: in this sense, it relates to pedagogic objectives.

If one follows a goal-oriented approach one needs to take one’s bearing from models of linguistic description, since these will define the units of course content. A process-oriented approach, on the other hand, can only be pursued by reference to some idea about how to learn. In this regard, according to Atay (2007) the interest in the strategies has paralleled a movement away from a dominantly teaching –oriented perspective to one that emphasis the learner's active role in the learning process. Thus, if ESP is an approach not as a product, it must be an approach to language learning. And here, Learning strategies and activities should play more important role than selecting and grading appropriate materials to meet the students' needs.

2. 3 Learner Autonomy

Holec (1987) defines Learner autonomy as the ability to take charge of one’s learning.

It is good for teachers introduce such key concepts as ”learner-centeredness” and Learner autonomy” and their theoretical underpinning, and stress the importance of learning how to learn so that students would be psychologically prepared and are likely to cooperate. As learner-centeredness is one of the tendencies that support autonomous language learning, students should be given a clear explanation as to what it means, how it is conducted, and what benefits could be gained through this approach. Aebersold and Field (1997) define the term” student-centered and describe its advantages as the following:

Courses in which the students have some degree of control over what goes on in the course and how it

occurs are considered to be student-centered………..Giving students some control over their learning process has many benefits: It makes them feel confident; it puts some of the decision making in their hands; it puts the responsibility for learning in their hands; and over the long term it builds independence and self-reliance so that they can read on their own without being dependent on teacher direction and supervision. It activates the students’ own learning spirals. (P, 37).

Even giving students’ freedom to choose materials is not only compatible to the theory, but also satisfies learners’ needs. A better understanding of the theory would stimulate learners’ interest and motivation to practice autonomous learning. Thus consciousness raising was chosen as the first measure to implement the innovation. To transfer the responsibility of selecting materials to learners is supported by (Hollec, 1987, Vitori, 1995), because it stimulates their interest, enhance the do-it-yourself ability. To my own experience engaging learners in activities of selecting, preparing and presenting materials could be considered creative because these activities involve problem–solving and decision –making.

2. 4 Cognitive Strategies

The term cognitive strategy refers to specific measures or steps that learners take in order to fulfill learning tasks (O’Malley and Chamot 1990). Literature in reading research has shown that cognitive strategy use can facilitate understanding and successful learners seem to be differentiated from less successful ones in terms of strategy use. Similarly learners who possess summarizing skills (Kintch and Van Dijk 1978) have improved comprehension on the texts and increased recalls.

2. 5 Monitoring

Monitoring refers to both learners’ identifying learning difficulties and pointing out shortcomings of the program so that decision could be made as to what to do about it (Rubin 1987). As the shift of responsibilities from the teacher to the learners takes place, it is important for the learner to do self-evaluation and provide feedback to the program in order to regulate learning process. Nunan (1997) suggests that monitoring plays an important role in informing the learner of the problems encountered during the course of learning. Thus the course should intend to raise learners’ consciousness to monitor their learning process.

2. 6 Metacognitive Strategies

One can probably figure out from analyzing the term itself, metacognition is cognition about cognition or thinking about thinking. Thinking can be of what the person knows and what the person is currently doing. Metacognition is deliberate, planned, intentional, goal directed and future-oriented mental processing that can be used to accomplish cognitive tasks (Flavell, 1971). Metacognition involves active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of cognitive processes to achieve cognitive goals. As metacognition involves an awareness of oneself as an actor , a deliberate storer and retriever of information, it may be reasonable to reserve the term metacognitive for conscious and deliberate thoughts that have other thoughts as their objects (Hacker, 1998).

According to Block (2004) metacognition can be defined as a reader's awareness of (1) what he or she is thinking about while reading, (2) what thinking processes he or she initiates to overcome literacy challenges, and(3) how a reader selects specific thinking processes to make meaning before, during, and after reading .

Auerbach and Paxton (1997), define metacognition as "knowledge of strategies for processing texts, the ability to monitor comprehension, and the ability to adjust strategies as needed" (pp. 240-41). Research studies (Duell, 1986) seem to confirm that as children get older they demonstrate more awareness of their thinking processes. Metacognition is relevant to work on cognitive styles and learning strategies in so far as the individual has some awareness of their thinking or learning processes.

Cognitive strategies differ from metacognitive strategies in that they are likely to be encapsulated within a subject area (e.g., EFL), whereas metacognitive strategies span multiple subject areas (Shraw, 1998).

Cognitive strategies are, for example, making a decision, translating, summarizing, linking with prior knowledge or experience, applying grammar rules and guessing meaning from texts (e.g., O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Metacognition refers to awareness and control of cognitive activities. Empirical studies show that successful learners differ from less successful ones in both the quantity and quality of cognitive and metacognitive strategy use (e.g., Oxford, 1989).

The literature of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension reveals that poor readers in general lack effective metacognitive strategies and have little awareness on how to approach to reading. They also have deficiencies in the use of metacognitive strategies to monitor for their understanding of texts In contrast, successful L2 readers know how to use appropriate strategies to enhance text comprehension (e.g., Pitts, 1983).

I have experienced metacognitive strategies with intermediate-level students in most of my ESP courses at Tabriz University, and in some cases I invited feedback from the students on their impressions and thoughts of the strategies covered during the terms. What follows are an indication of students' retrospective comments on the efficiency of these strategies at ESP class.

1. Now, I think my brain is more active in reading as if, I read with my brain rather than my eyes.

2. After previewing I can decide how I will deal with any particular text, and which other strategies I am going to follow to have better comprehension.

3. The strategies you applied made me conscious and active I used to read a text word for word until then, being afraid to misunderstand the contents. Now I'm trying to skip as many words as possible even when I am going to read about something not familiar, and I am going to deal with the text I have already had quite a few knowledge.

4. There are many positive aspects of using predictions. Firstly, we immediately thinking about the topics help us to understand contents of articles. Secondly, we can improve our reading speed by predicting the following contents. Thirdly, we can associate our knowledge we have concerning the topics and it can help to make our learning much easier.

5. Finding key words in any text was an interesting technique. I think relying on Key words is more helpful than relying on the structure in reading a text.

6. I think it is easier to ask question when I read something I have prior knowledge with because I have something to base in to ask question.

7. Now, I have a critical reading and I can use my background knowledge.

3. Conclusion

We conclude that ESP is an approach to language teaching which aims to meet the needs of particular learners. This means in principle that much of work done by ESP teachers is concerned with designing appropriate courses for various groups of learners. In fact, with ESP and content-based syllabuses, an obvious means of grading content is with reference to concepts associated with the subject in question

It seems reasonable enough to assume that a specification of language needs should define the language content of a course designed to meet such needs.Here "learner needs" is open to question. In fact two different interpretations may be extracted from learners needs. It may refer to terminal behavior, the ends of learning or it may refer to what the learner needs to do to actually acquire the language.

In recent year, some applied linguists have shifted focus from the outcomes of instruction, i.e. the knowledge and skills to be gained by the learner, to the processes through which knowledge and skills might be gained. Although specification of language needs is necessary for ESP course and it will be useful for selecting and grading materials, in teaching ESP, Learning strategies should play an important role. Accordingly, Autonomous learning and metacognitive strategies are suggested as the two basic essentials for teaching and learning ESP. Finally, if we limit teaching ESP to what to learn and forget how to learn, it will be safe to claim that familiarity with teaching and learning theories is not an essential for ESP teacher, otherwise it should be regarded as a sin qua non for ESP teacher.

References

Aebersold, J. A.M and M.L. Field. (1997). From Reader to Reading Teacher: Issues and Strategies for language classroom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Atay, D. (2007). Memory strategy instruction, contextual learning and ESP vocabulary recall. *Journal of English for Specific Purposes,* Volume 26, issue1.

Auerbach, E. R and Paxton, D. (1997). It's Not the English Thing": Bringing Reading Research Into ESL Classroom. *TESOL Quarterly,* 31,237-260.

Baker, L. and Brown, A. L. (1984). Metacognitive skills and reading. In P.D. Pearson (Ed.), *Handbook of Reading Research* Vol. 1, (pp. 353-394) New York: Longman.

Block, C. (2004). Teaching Comprehension: The Comprehension Process Approach, Texas Christian University, Pearson Education, Inc.

Brown, R. (2002). Straddling two worlds; Self-directed comprehension instruction for middle schoolers. In Block ,C, and Pressely, M. (eds.). *Comprehension Instruction.* Research Based Practice. NY; Guilford.

Celce-Murcia, Marianne. (2001). Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, *Heine and Heine, Thomson Learning.* U.S.A.

Collins, N.D. (1994). *Metacgnition and Reading to learn.* Eric Digest # 96.

Cotteral, S. (2000). Promoting learner autonomy through the curriculum; Principles of designing language courses. *ELT Journal 5*2/2; 109-117.

Dovey, Teresa. (2006). What purposes, specifically? Re-thinking purposes and specificity in the context of the new vocationalisn. *Journal of English for Specific Purposes,* Volume 25, issue 4.

Duell O.K. (1986). *Metacognitive skills. In G. Phye, and T. Andre* (Eds.), Cognitive Classroom Learning. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Flavell, J. H. (1971).First discussant's comments: what is memory development the development of? *Human Development* 14, 272-78.

Hacker, D. J. (1998). Definition and empirical foundations. In Hacker,D.J., Dunlosky. J. and Graesser,A.C., editors, *Metacognition in Educational Theory and Practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbraum, 1-24.

Holec, H. (1987). The learner as manager: managing learning or managing to learn? In Wenden, and Rubin (eds.). *Learner strategies in Language Learning.* Prentice hall international. UKO Ltd.

Hutchinson T. and Waters A. (1987). English for specific Purposes: A learning Centered Approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kintch, w. and Van Dijk, T.A. (1978). Toward a model of discourse comprehension and production. *Psychological Review* 85; 363-394.

Mackay, R. and Mountford, A. (1978). *English for Specific Purposes.* Longman group Ltd.

Munby, J. (1978). *Communicative Syllabus Design,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1997). Strategy training in the language classroom; An empirical investigation. *RELC Journal* 26: 56-81.

O'Malley, M.J. and Chamot, A.U. (1990). Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition. .Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford. R. (1989). The best and the worst: an exercise to tap perceptions of language –learning experiences and strategies. Foreign Language Annuals 22, 44-54.

Pitts, M. M. (1983). Comprehension monitoring: definition and practice. Journal of Reading . 26, 516-23.

Richards, J. and Rodgers, S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Rubin, J. (1987). Learner strategies: theoretical assumptions, research history and typology. In Wenden, and J. Rubin.(eds.). *Learner strategies in language Learning.* Prentice Hall International, (UK) Ltd.

Shraw, G. (1998). Promoting general metacognitive awareness. *Instructional Science* 26, 113-25.

Swales, J. (1985). Episodes in ESP, Perganon.

Victori, M. (1995). Enhancing metacognition in self-directed language learning. *System* 23/2; 223-234.

Voller, P. (1997). Does the teacher have a role in autonomous language learning. In B, P. and P. Voller (eds.0. *Autonomy and Independence in language learnin.* New York: Addison Wesely Longman Limited. pp. 181-191.

Wenden, A. (1987). *Learner Strategies in Language Learning.* Prentice Hall International (UK) Ltd.

Widdowson, H.G. (1983). *Learning Purpose and Language Use.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Widdowson, H.J. (1979). *Explorations in Applied Linguistics.* Oxford University Press.

Widdowson.H. G. (1984). *Explorations in Applied Linguistics,* Oxford University press.

Wilkins, D. (1976). *Notional Syllabuse.* London: Oxford University Press.

Yarmohammadi, Lotfollah. (2005). ESP in Iran from language planning perspective, *Proceedings of the First National ESP/ EAP Conference,* Volume 2. SAMT, Tehran.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Analysis of Chinese Students' Errors in College English Reading

Yuan Kong
Foreign Language Stafff Room, Jining Medical College
Rizhao University City
Rizhao 276826, China
Email: kongy_1116@163.com

Abstract

On the basis of the theories of psycholinguistic perspective in language teaching and communicative approach in language learning, this paper analyses briefly some tangible errors for the Chinese students in their reading in line with the author's own teaching experiences. The paper is an attempt at overcoming the obstacles existing between the text writers and the text readers and enabling the latter to become effective readers.

Keywords: Psycholinguistic, Communicative, Errors, Reading comprehension

1. Instruction

English reading has always been considered one of the most important parts of foreign language learning. Without reading, nothing can be done in the development of the competence in listening, speaking, writing and translating. Reading courses, or rather, intensive reading ones, fill up a large component of the curricula. Obviously, students and teacher should pay great attention to the importance of reading courses. And what is reading? How can Chinese students achieve proficient reading?

2. Theory of psycholinguistic perspective and communicative approach

As we know, the psycholinguistic model of EFT is a meaning-based model proposed by Goodman (1967) and Smith (1971). Goodman thinks that in the reading process the "reader reconstructs, as best as he can, a message which has been encoded by a writer as a graphic display" (Goodman, 1973). Smith says "···skill in reading actually depends on using the eyes as little as possible, ···as we become fluent readers we learn to rely more on what we already know, on what is behind the eyeballs, and less on the print on the page in front of us" (Smith, 1978). The psycholinguists assume that if the reader has the ability to select the productive language cues, he can decode, through his psycholinguistic processing, the message in the text, and share much of information which the writer intends to convey.

The communicative approach of EFL, Which prevails after World War Ⅱ, holds that "The primary goal of most foreign language learning is to develop the ability to use real and appropriate language to communicate and interact with others, and the goal of foreign language teaching is to extend the range of communicative situation in which the learners can perform with focus on meaning without being hindered by the attention he must pay to linguistic form." (Littlewood, 1981). In communicative teaching model, the class is students-centred, and communicative activities are performed between students and the teachers, students and students. But efficient communication still depends on successful decoding of the "meaning" of the discourses, that is, a listener must instantly make out what a speaker wants to get across. And communicative efficiency means that students should be able to do efficiently in all of the four skills. So reading competence can be considered as a communication between readers and writers, should also be brought into full consideration.

There should be something in common with both the psycholinguistic perspective of EFT and communicative approach of EFL: reading (and listening) should be regarded as an active psycholinguistic process; a text (or discourse) is assumed to have its potential meaning; and it's real meaning depends on the reader's (or listener's) interaction with the text (or discourse). The relationship between a writer and a reader may be represented in this simple flow chart:

Writer or speaker → Text or discourse (with message or meaning) →Reader or listener

This proceeding clearly shows that the purpose of reading is to try to get out of a text as much as possible the message that the writer has tried to put into it. However, we may find it vulnerable: the result of the readers' interaction will vary from one to another, and a reader does not necessarily achieve what the writer expects. There is much that remains to be explored with in the span between the writer and the reader: what constraints prevent the reader from sharing the message (meaning) with the writer? A teacher's role, I think, is to bridge the gap and help the students become efficient readers.

3. Some Tangible Errors in Reading Comprehension

The Chinese language is totally different from the English language. The former belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family and the latter to the Indo-European language family. Therefore, When Chinese learners attempt to understand a text in English, they face linguistic problems in various respects: spelling, gender, verb forms, tenses and word order. In addition to these, I'd like to discuss some other obstacles between writers and readers.

3.1 Lexical and syntactical errors

Words such as "imaginative" and "imaginary" and "respectable" are often misunderstood and misused by Chinese learners as in their mother tongue words have virtually no inflexions. In my classroom, however, I have found my students more liable to stumble over articles and prepositions. I believe the reason is that these particles are never used in the Chinese language and hence difficult to handle. For example, they may find it difficult to understand these two sentences:

I am never at a loss for a word, and he is never at a loss for the word.

A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.

The first speaker aims at "his" proficiency of wording and "my" casual choice of words, and the second speaker wants to tell that a man is no more necessary to a woman than a bicycle to a fish. The Chinese student might feel at a loss for the meaning because he or she often overlooks the confusing "small words" such as articles and prepositions. Students may be asked to distinguish varied shades of meanings when particles are used before the teacher offers his help.

Chinese is an analytic language and the relationship between the different parts of a sentence is based on reasoning. English, however, is a synthetic language and the relationship between the different parts is usually decided by analysis of those connecting words and the sentence structure. Naturally, in most cases the ambiguity can be cleared up when we look at the context, but sometimes even the context doesn't help. We have to make clear about "Which governs what" before we have a better understanding, especially those lengthy ones with complicated structures. Look at this sentence:

The start-up program for the reactor must not be commenced before completion and formal acceptance of fire precautions and associated installations by the competent authorities in question and by the insures or their representative.

For the Chinese students who are not used to the connecting words "of" "by" "for" etc. this sentence is really a challenge for them. A careful analysis based on common sense and grammatical knowledge can dissolve the mystery. The key to the problem lies in the two series of related phrases:

Completion of associated installations by the competent authorities in question

Formal acceptance of fire precautions by the insurers or their representative

Another example:

The president said at a press conference dominated by questions on yesterday's election results that he could not explain why the Republicans had suffered such a widespread defeat, which in the end would deprive the Republican Party of long-held superiority in the House.

It's not easy for a Chinese student to smooth out the complicated structure of this long sentence at first sight. In order to decode these graphic signs, a grammatical analysis is necessary, but this can be done by the students before or after class. Only when the students fail to present an acceptable explanation should the teacher do the job for them ("That-clause" is the object of the verb "said" and "which-clause" is used as an attribute modifying "defeat").

When the reader reconstructs meaning from the text, he has unavoidably to use the graphic symbols, syntactic structures and semantic systems of the language. The teacher's task is to point out possible difficulties for the students and guide them to attack the problems.

3.2 Meaning "between the lines"

And moreover, Chinese readers often get lost while reading paragraphs with implied meanings or meanings "between the lines". Suppose the students are asked to read the following paragraph:

"If you are interested in buying a pair of contact lenses, be prepared to pay $200 or more. Generally there are three main reasons why people want contact lenses. You may need them because the cornea of your eye is misshapen and ordinary glasses are not satisfactory. If so, you'll be in the group that comprises 1 to 2 per cent of contact lens wearers. But you may want them for a sport, avocation, or vocation. Perhaps you're a baseball player, a boxer, a swimmer, an aviator, an actor, or perhaps you're engaged in an industry where flying particles may endanger your eyes. If you get your contact lenses for one of these reasons, you are in the same group with about 20 per cent of the users. But if for some reasons, you feel that glasses are handicapping our appearance and you would rather have invisible glasses, you'll have lots of company. About 79 per cent of lens users hope to improve their looks."

The students are then asked to make a decision; which of the following can represent the writer's intention? A or B.

A. To give the reasons for people wearing contact lenses.

B. To say that man is sometimes vain.

In accordance with my experiences, many readers will prefer A because they can easily find enough evidence to support that decision. If we take the paragraph into further consideration however, we find that they have failed to notice the rational relationship between the users, that is, the writer never fails to mention the percentage of users when giving each reason. The majority of wearers seem to feel that contact lenses are more attractive than glasses. Although the writer purposely establishes his contextual relationship within the paragraph, it may still be difficult for the students to work out what he really means to transfer.

3.3 Anaphoric expressions

Anaphoric expression is another pitfall for Chinese students in their reading comprehension. According to Gui Shichun (1991), reference, substitution, ellipsis and lexical cohesion are often talked about under that topic of anaphora in Halliday's and Hasan's writings. By reference and substitution the author means the fact that a writer refers back or forward to a word, a fact, a sentence or whatever has been mentioned somewhere else in the text. Besides pronouns, almost all other parts of speech can be used as reference words. Usually these words follow closely the parts they refer to, but sometimes they appear far from the mentioned parts. Students should be able to identify the coreference, and, if necessary, they should be asked to search the adjacent text until they find the required referents. Here are some examples:

A. He gave her a letter. This gave her food for thought.

What made her think : the letter, or the fact that he gave it?

B. They all said the same.

The same as who, or what?

C. Perforated ceilings and plenums above same are equipped to make every room well – ventilated

The pronoun "same" refers to what?

D Therefore, confidences result in dishonor, and they are as dangerous for the

person to whom they are made as they are for the person who makes them..

What do the pronouns "they" "them" "who" "whom" stand for?

Dislike of needless repetition is the reason why the reference and substitution systems are used. For the same reason, a writer likes to omit rather than repeat certain kinds of information that he thinks a reader's common sense can readily supply from the context. This omission is called ellipsis

To deal with ellipsis, students must be aware that the information is incomplete and that they are able to retrieve what is left unsaid. Able students will resort to their non-visual knowledge and grammatical analysis to tackle the problem. But to a weak student, he may have trouble with the following two example sentences:

A. He told us where it was hidden and despite the disapproving glances of the others promised to show us the way.

B. The main point made by the first speaker and the man who followed him on the panel coincided.

Who promised to show us the way in sentence A? And what coincided in sentence B? The students could be asked to repair the omissions.

3.4 Different ways of thinking and expression

Chinese people and English native speakers have different ways of thinking and modes of expression, owing to their respective and unique social practice and geographic environments. In this connection arise the problems in our students' comprehension of their English texts: because we don't have their experiences, we don't know what it means, not only linguistically, but also emotionally and cognitively.

A case in point is the English way of negation. We often come across the statements which are affirmative in form but negative in content, or vice versa. "I know better" means" I don't think so", while" I couldn't feel better" is understood as "I'm feeling great". The following two sentences may also puzzle the Chinese readers:

You could have come at a better time.

I hope you're none the worse for that fall from your horse.

To Chinese students, English speaking people have a peculiar way of negation in the above two sentences. In my class only efficient readers can understand the first sentence as "You have come at a wrong time" and the second one as "I hope you didn't hurt by the fall from your horse."

Ambiguity sometimes arises when Chinese people and English speaking people look at things at different angles. Look at these sentences:

I was sitting behind a pint.

He was not the eldest son of his father for nothing.

In my class, not all students can understand the first sentence as "I was drinking beer" and the second one as "He was a capable eldest son of his father."

Influenced by their own idiomatic way of saying things, Chinese students have an inclination to mistake an English idiom for a Chinese one. My students are liable to be misled by the following expressions:

After the party, he footed the bill. (He did not tread on the bill.)

She laughed her head off. (She didn't hold someone up to ridicule.)

She was a walking skeleton. (She was not an utterly worthless person.)

The interference by the mother tongue is sometimes very strong. Whenever problems arise, teachers of English should give heed to rectification of the misunderstanding

3.5 Non -linguistic information

Reading needs both visual and non-visual information. "If a reader lacks non-visual information (what he has already known about the reading text, about the language, and about the world in general), his interpretation of the visual information will be severely limited, because what he can see is his brain's interpretation of the brain"(Smith, 1973). This is an interaction between thought and graphic designs. Therefore, in order to decode those graphic designs, a reader must be equipped with both the knowledge of language and of the world, just as Scott (1984) says "reading is essentially a 'top-down' process, whereby the reader samples the text visually, a teacher may take these two things into account: one is that the reading material should be readable for the Chinese students; the other is that the necessary prior knowledge should be provided in one way or another " . For example:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate (Shakespeare)

To a Chinese student's knowledge, spring is a pleasant season while summer is usually associated with unbearable heat. But in England, summer is mild and comfortable. Obviously some geographical knowledge should be introduced here.

Descriptions of figures, customs, geographical features, etc. can provide possible sources to explore. Usually background knowledge is imparted by the teacher, with students listening passively to the teacher's introduction. With a view to communicative processing, the teacher can leave this job to the students, if possible.

4. Conclusion

In this study I can quote several more restraints which hinders the Chinese students from efficient reading. However, my intention here is not to make an overall description of the known facts, but to bring our attention to some of the pitfalls, which particularly trap the Chinese students into misunderstanding.

To make the reading class more efficient, we have for many years incorporated some foreign language teaching techniques into the present framework. However, this does not mean to discard completely the traditional way or adopt an out-and-out new foreign approach. As we are teaching Chinese students inside of China, any teaching methodology deviating from the concrete situation is neither possible nor realistic. The correct attitude we should have is to adopt advanced foreign theories on the one hand, and build on the strengths already inherent in the present teaching framework on the other. In conclusion, since a reading class is by nature a text-based one, we should go into further study of the constraints existing between the students and their texts, so as to help them remove the impediments to the communication between writers and readers, and enable them to become effective readers.

References

Belyayev, B. V. (1963). *The psychology of Teaching Foreign Languages.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Brook, N. (1964). *Language and Language Learning*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and world.

Goodman, K. S. (1967). 'Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game'. *Journal of the Reading Specialist* 6/1.

Goodman, K. S. (1973). *Psycholinguistics and Reading*. New York.

Gui Shichun. (1991). *An outline of Experimental Psycholinguistics.* Hunan: Hunan Educational Press.

Holt, Rinehart & Winston. (1971). *Smith, F. Understanding Reading*. New York.

Holt, Rinehart & Winston. (1982). *Smith, F. Understanding Reading.* New York.

Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scott, M. et al. (1984). 'Using a "Standard Exercise" in Teaching Reading Comprehension'. *ELT Journal* 38/2.

Widdowson, H. C. (1979). *The communicative Approach and its Applications*. Oxford University Press.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

The Influence of the Intermediary System of Cognition on Vocabulary Acquisition for Chinese English-Majors

Yanyan Luo
School of Foreign Languages, Fuyang Teachers' College
Fuyang 236041, China
E-mail: luoyanyan0823@21cn.com

Abstract

In the article, the author tries to find out the main factors that affect the subject's vocabulary acquisition by an investigation. It is concluded that vocabulary acquisition models and strategies are something external, what really works upon vocabulary acquisition is the intermediary system of cognition including the knowledge structure and abilities structure of the subject. The richer the intermediary system is, the greater the subject's cognition will be, which will contribute greatly to the subject's vocabulary acquisition. Meanwhile, the components of the knowledge structure and abilities structure are explored, furthermore, it studies how the components as the intermediate means work upon vocabulary acquisition in an interactive manner.

Keywords: The intermediary system of cognition, Vocabulary acquisition, Knowledge structure, Abilities structure

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is a key aspect of language learning since it is a fundamental element of a language. Words "are basic building blocks of language"(Brown 1994: 365). Vocabulary acqisition always exists in the whole process of Second Language Acquition. Vocabulary learning was thought to be remembering word lists and vocabulary skills were regarded as necessary for understanding the grammatical structures of a language. The activity of vocabulary learning was viewed to be a natural and mechanical process. Teachers just let the students learn vocabulary by themselves. In general, students feel that words are very important and are eager to learn them. But in contrast, teachers tend to feel that words are easy to learn--while grammar is the challenge (Coady&Huckin, 2001:274). So how to teach and learn vocabulary efficiently is undoubtedly a very urgent problem. In this article we are trying to solve this problem from a cognitive perspective.

Much research has been done in this field in the last two decades. The contemporary study in this field can be dated back to 1980, when the British psychologist P. Meara published an article expounding the relevant research works on lexicon control, lexical memorization, lexical storage as well as vocabulary testing. For example, comprehensive studies concerning various vocabulary learning strategies have been conducted by Nattinger (1988), Cohen(1990),Nation(1990),Hatch and Brown(1995). Quite a number of strategies are described and examined. The relationship among reading, dictionary consult strategies and vocabulary learning has been examined by Li Xiaolong (1988), Summers(1988), Parry(1991), Luppescu and Day(1993). Yet results from different studies are not consistent .In addition, there are some researches focusing on the different vocabulary learning strategies between good and poor learners (Ahmed, 1989; Parreren, 1992; Gu, 1994 ,etc.). Most of these studies are confined to a specific method used to memorize words and try to prove that a specific method is the most effective one. However, students tend to adopt a variety of strategies while learning new words. Furthermore, most of them are conducted in the Western countries and almost all of the subjects involved are native speakers of other Indo-European languages. They belong to the same language family, while Chinese and English are of different language families. As Schmitt (1997: 205) stated, since strategies may be culture-specific, the same findings may not be observed with people from different cultural backgrounds and learning different languages. Different learners in different learning environments usually choose different learning strategies. Are the learning strategies employed by Chinese learners the same as those of Westerners? Will the strategies useful to Westerners still be effective for Chinese learners of English? Therefore, the vocabulary learning strategies of Chinese students are worth investigating.

Many scholars in China have conducted research in this area. In the early 1990s, few Chinese researchers have made contribution to the exploration of English vocabulary learning, However, they are either summarizing their teaching or learning experiences (e. g. Bu Yuan 1992: 14-19; Ren Cheng 1993: 22-23) or introducing the related theories by translating works of Western researchers (e. g. Nie Aimin 1996: 21-26). To make further exploration into vocabulary learning strategies, many empirical studies have been conducted in recent years. More comprehensive ones are those done by Gu and Johnson (1996: 643-679), Wang Wenyu (1998: 47-52), Wu Xia and Wang Qiang (1998: 53-57). In the study of Gu and Johnson (1996), 850sophomore non-English majors are investigated. Wu Xia and Wang Qiang conduct a research on the beliefs and strategies involved in the students' vocabulary learning processes with 202 sophomore non-English majors as their subjects, while these of Wang Wenyu are 25 English majors and 25 non-English majors only. So vocabulary learning beliefs and strategies adopted by some Chinese English majors and the main real factors that affect their vocabulary acquisition in Chinese environments are investigated in this study.

It is urgent to look into the problem of how we can help students with their vocabulary learning and obviously it is best to help students develop effective learning strategies in addition to teaching words. Despite the fact that many studies have been done in this area, previous researches on vocabulary learning strategies are far from adequacy in telling us what to do and there is still room to improve .Firstly, though studies of vocabulary learning have been influenced by theories in second language acquisition and in cognitive psychology, there has been little communication between them(Gardner et al, 1992).Secondly, recent research in vocabulary learning strategies has yielded conflicting findings in the effectiveness of mnemonic strategies, context strategies, dictionary strategies and so on .Most important of all, as we know, language is the result of interaction between the subjects and the objects, and the interaction between the subjects and the objects is working through an intermediary medium: *the intermediary system* from the cognitive viewpoint, their relationship is as follows: *subject---intermediary---object*. Studies on vocabulary learning strategies at home have been concentrated on patterns of vocabulary acquisition and pedagogy in teaching second language vocabulary but no such study has been done about how the intermediary system of cognition including the knowledge structure and abilities structure of the subject works upon the vocabulary acquisition. The author in the paper tries to explore the main factors affecting the vocabulary acquisition, give illustrations of the supporting evidence, and make concrete suggestions as to its implication for our English vocabulary instruction.

2. Reflection from an investigation

Most subjects who are first-year English-majors in Fuyang Teachers' College didn't do well in the vocabulary part in the final examination of the last semester .The vocabulary part test at the band-1 level was used to test students' receptive and productive knowledge. All words are mainly adopted from their newly-learned textbook---A New English Course. However, their achievements are not satisfactory. As a matter of fact, to most Chinese students, the first major problem they meet during English study is vocabulary learning, and vocabulary has long been their top concern as well as their big headache on which they spend a lot of time. In this sense, students at all levels, especially freshmen majoring in English, are in great need of guidance on how to learn vocabulary effectively and efficiently. It is necessary to explore what learning strategies they actually use and what factors affect their vocabulary acquisition in their English vocabulary learning process. The first college year is the initial stage, and it is the best chance for teachers to help students to form their best learning style in vocabulary acquisition.

Therefore, we aim to find out the main real factors that affect the subjects' vocabulary acquisition and the choice of strategies in order to establish the vocabulary learning strategies used by the EFL learners in Chinese colleges and the relationship between their learning strategies and outcomes. The results of the present study should be considered as better representing the whole situation in China. In order to establish a relatively satisfactory framework for this study, we make a slight revision of the classification of leaning strategies by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), who defined three main types of learning strategies: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social/affective strategies. In addition, we add beliefs on vocabulary learning and individual difference factors. 108 freshmen in one college (all English majors) are asked to do the questionnaire and the vocabulary knowledge test. By the methods of written questionnaires and vocabulary testing, it is found out that there exist many problems in English majors' Vocabulary learning. The purpose of the study is to investigate the overall pattern of vocabulary learning strategies employed by freshmen in Fuyang Teachers' College and to find the different strategies employed by high-proficiency students and low-proficiency students and the correlation between learning strategies uses and high learning proficiency. Great attention is given to the main factors working upon the choices of vocabulary learning strategies.The case study was expatiated in another of my paper (Yanyan Luo, 2006).

Results from the present study strongly suggest that metacognitive strategies are essential to the success of vocabulary learning. On the one hand, correlation analysis shows that it holds very strong correlation with both the quantity and the quality of vocabulary knowledge. On the other hand, the T test reveals that the high frequent use of metacognitive strategies makes good learners distinguish from poor learners. The metacognitive level is limited by one's abilities structure.

Besides, students should be encouraged to use contextualized strategies, because in certain context the pragmatic and discoursal knowledge of a word are provided and this will benefit the development of the quantity of vocabulary knowledge, What's more, a word can be easily remembered when it is put in meaningful context. When reading, students should also be encouraged to guess unknown words. Some students often stop to consult the dictionary when they meet new words .This prevents them from reading more and learning more words .So, it might he wise for the teacher to ask students to underline unknown words and encourage them to guess these words through some useful inferring techniques, e.g. guessing according to background knowledge, clues provided by immediate context and a wide context. Furthermore, learners should be encouraged to look up some important and frequent words in the dictionary and their attention should be directed to the meaning and usage of these words. Dictionaries enable learners to have an in-depth and concise understanding of words and thus benefit the quality of their vocabulary knowledge. Another suggestion is that the teacher should help students organize their vocabulary meaning-orientedly .Studies point out that words are stored also shows that good learners tend to group derivations together, while poor learners do not . So, students should be encouraged to put words into semantic networks. To a great extent, the choice of cognitive strategies is affected by one's knowledge structure. Lastly, the individual differences factors also work upon words learning a lot. Once students face difficulties in the learning process, teachers will help students to reduce anxiety, play aptitude and strengthen confidence.

It may be argued that since strategies for language learning are often used in combination and rarely used individually, the consideration of strategies as individual entities and the drawing of conclusions about the effectiveness of a certain particular strategy are both problematic. Up till now, the general conclusion in the field of second language acquisition has been that there is not single method that has proved to be effective in language acquisition for all learners across all contexts. No single strategy will be appropriate for all learners and for all tasks. Strategies are not inherently " good " or "effective", because one cannot deny that there are various contextual, teacher related, and learner related factors that come into play. Lexical–learning strategies and instructional approaches need to be applied, explored, and evaluated by individual learners and instructors on an ongoing basis. As Schmitt (1997) pointed out by the results of his study, "learners naturally mature into using different strategies" (Schmitt, 1997:25). It is also important for instructors to recognize that some strategies may be more effective for some learners than for others, and to encourage learners to find out what works best for them. Instructors should not unquestioningly accept any traditional or well-known technique, no matter how frequently used. In addition, the ultimate goal of teaching the students learning strategies is to encourage and cultivate the students to be autonomous learners. And therefore teachers are advised to help the students foster the habit of planning vocabulary leaning and getting some strategies to comment on and evaluate their own learning outcomes regularly.

We may enhance students' abilities of vocabulary acquisition once and for all, only constantly improve knowledge structure and abilities structure, and richen the intermediary system as far as possible. It is concluded that what really works upon vocabulary learning and the choice of strategies is the intermediary system of cognition including the knowledge structure and abilities structure of the subjects.

3. The intermediary system of cognition

As we know, language is the result of interaction between the subjects and the objects, so is vocabulary, and the interaction between the subjects and the objects is working through an intermediary medium: the intermediary system from the cognitive viewpoint, their relationship is as follows: subject---intermediary---object. As active factors, the role of subjects of cognition is to receive, change, organize and arrange information from objects. However, without the intermediary medium of cognition, objects couldn't be a part of the cognitive structure of subjects. The cognitive process of vocabulary acquisition shows that intermediary system plays a key role in the change of information between subjects and objects. When the intermediary system of cognition couldn't meet the demands of subjects&objects, subjects and objects can't exchange information between them, and it is impossible for objects to transfer information to subjects. Intermediary system plays a role of two-way medium in learning, and it stimulates subjects to carry out construction and regulation upon objects, and then it also conveys information from objects by itself. It is its two-way flow that makes subjects---objects to be a dynamic process.

The intermediary system of cognition internally consists of two correlated sub-systems (Chen,10): knowledge structure system and abilities structure system, and they directly affect the operation and practice of the intermediary system of cognition. We 'll make use of a table(Table 1) to show connotative factors of the intermediary system of cognition working upon objects in vocabulary acquisition.

Knowledge structure system is one of main factors which affect subjects' vocabulary learning." By the knowledge structure we mean that man forms the knowledge system in the specialized learning and application, especially in the process of thinking."(Wang, Yan:9). All kinds of knowledge acquired from books and social practice are methodically and orderly stored in the brain in the form of structure. With the demands of the activities' task, they can be activated and used at all times. In regard to knowledge structure in the process of vocabulary acquisition, it includes language knowledge (Here means vocabulary knowledge) and other correlated background knowledge. Language knowledge (vocabulary knowledge) comprises pronunciation, spelling, meaning, collocation, grammar, word-formation, context, metaphor, pragmatics, syntax etc. Other correlated background knowledge includes natural science, social science, modern science and technology, theory of learning strategies, common sense and social experience etc.

According to Brown and Payne (1994, Hatch, Brown: 2001), the steps of vocabulary acquisition are as follows: (1) having sources for encountering new words; (2) getting a clear image, either visual or auditory or both, (3) learning the meaning of the words, (4) making a strong memory connection between the forms and meanings of the words, and (5) using the words. The first three steps are foundations in the process of vocabulary acquisition, and the last two steps are critical. Information constantly enters our minds through our senses. Most of this information is almost immediately discarded, and we may never even be aware of much of it. Some is held in our memories for a short time and then forgotten. However, some information is retained much longer, perhaps for the rest of our lives. We can use a figure (Figure 1) to illustrate the sequence of information process.

Individuals differ, of course, in the capacity of their working memories to accomplish a given learning task. One of the main factors in enhancing this capacity is background knowledge. The more a person knows about something, the better able the person is to organize and absorb new information (Engle, Nations, & Cantor, 1990; Kuhara-Kojima&Hatano, 1991).It shows that subjects' prior knowledge really plays a very important role in the process of decoding. However, prior knowledge is not the only factor. Individuals also differ in their abilities to organize information and can be taught to consciously use strategies for making more efficient use of their working memory capacity (Levin & Levin, 1990; Peverly, 1991; Pressley & Harris, 1990). Strategies of this kind have already discussed in the previous chapter.

Abilities structure is the other important sub-system in the intermediary system of cognition. "Abilities are indispensable psychological characteristics of individual characters to accomplish a task successfully." (Meng, 44)They can be subdivided into cognitive abilities, operation abilities, social intercourse abilities. Words acquisition abilities belong in the field of cognitive abilities. Abilities structure in vocabulary acquisition is a series of synthesizes of psychological characteristics of individual characters. Vocabulary acquisition calls for various abilities.

It is obvious that there is a close relationship between knowledge and abilities. Knowledge is stored information in the brain, without it, abilities couldn't work; without abilities, knowledge is a waste resource. In the process of vocabulary acquisition, knowledge structure and abilities structure both restrict subjects' grasp on information from objects.

4. The intermediary system of cognition in vocabulary acquisition

On the basis of the above analysis, it is obvious to conclude that the knowledge structure and abilities structure of the subject play a very important role in the process of vocabulary acquisition. It is evident that the richer the intermediary system is, the greater the subjects' cognition will be, which will contribute greatly to the subjects' vocabulary acquisition. Subjects are far from only having vocabulary knowledge. Words are multi-level mixed objects, and it is impossible for subjects to master words just by common sense and simple knowledge. The exchange of information between subjects and objects demands that subjects should have good knowledge background and multi-functional abilities structure system. Without the intermediary role of these systems, subjects' thinking is bound to be limited to rudimentary meaning understanding, and they impossibly analyze and generalize objects' complicated information. One's cognition is always based on the already-known fruits and previous knowledge, that is to say, the known infers the unknown. Subjects' knowledge background, experience background, concept network system, inferring process and principle (thinking mode), emotion, mood, irrational factors make up a many-sided subjects' abilities structure system. Subjects use already-formed cognitive theory to assimilate vocabulary objects in order to make them adaptable mutually, and cognitive process consists of assimilation and development. If subjects and objects couldn't get well along with each other, and subjects would regulate again and revise the original cognitive structure, and then reconstruct a new structure, and then assimilate and development again to have subjects and objects adapt each other. Subjects may grasp various information implied in the mixed objects, only make active use of all kinds of cognitive abilities factors in the intermediary system and have them play a dynamic and mutual role flexibly and methodically.

Subjects' knowledge structure is a hardware factor of their abilities structure, and they restrict the full play of abilities. But knowledge does not totally mean abilities. If subjects could not apply such knowledge flexibly in objects, knowledge and experience would not be turned into subjects' abilities. Knowledge system and abilities system can both work in the two-way operation, in the practice, knowledge is conducive to abilities' play, and abilities also raise the efficiency of learning knowledge. As intermediary means, knowledge structure and abilities structure may improve subjects' perceptive ability and cognitive ability, most important of all, they can communicate information between subjects and objects in the dynamic way, and furthermore, they help subjects to grasp objects' profound meanings. It is the intermediary system of cognition that decides the choice of subjects' strategies, and conversely, the choice of subjects' strategies also reflect their intermediary system of cognition. Therefore, teachers should transfer knowledge of these kinds to the students. Although vocabulary learning to a large extent is the task of the individual, there is still much the teacher can do to help students learn vocabulary more successfully. Given the fact that subjects' intermediary system of cognition has relatively strong correlation with the vocabulary strategies choosing, the conclusion may be drawn that intermediary–based approaches to language teaching, which involve extensive instruction and active use of knowledge and abilities, supplemented by additional techniques for vocabulary learning, all promote vocabulary acquisition. Various strategies for vocabulary should be further explored and applied. As Oxford (1989) suggested, a very important concern in the choice of language-learning strategies may be the purpose for which a language is learned. The results of the present study show that the effectiveness of strategy is associated with high levels of achievement in vocabulary learning .So, Chinese EFL teachers should help the students recognize the power of consciously using vocabulary learning strategies and help them use more effective strategies to make learning quicker, easier and more effective and strategy training needs to be given more consideration and specific training methods need to be worked out for effective training. To solve the problem, teachers have to start with the intermediary system of cognition. Teachers should help students to understand the effect of intermediary system on vocabulary acquisition and strategies' choice.

5. Conclusion

The present study has presented a comprehensive picture of the intermediary system of cognition in English vocabulary learning possessed by some English majors in China. Language learning is generally an internal or mental process, and the present study has made some contribution to vocabulary acquisition research from a new angle of view. Vocabulary learning is a life-long process, and therefore, subjects' intermediary system of cognition and English vocabulary learning strategies deserve more attention and further research. We may enhance students' abilities of vocabulary acquisition once and for all, only constantly improve knowledge structure and abilities structure, and richen the intermediary system as far as possible. It is hoped that this paper may enlighten language learners and educators, so that language learning may be transformed into a less daunting endeavor.

References

Ahmed, O. (1989). *Vocabulary learning strategies*. In P. Meara (ed.) Beyond Words: Papers from the Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics Held at the University of Exter September.

Anderson, J. R. (1980). *Cognitive psychology and its implication* .San Francisco: Freeman.

Brown, H. D. (1994). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Carroll, J. B. (1991). Cognitive abilities in foreign language aptitude: then and now. In T. Parry and C. Stansfield (eds.), *Language aptitude reconsidered*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall. pp. 11-29.

Carter, R.A. (1987). *Vocabulary: Applied linguistic perspectives*. London: Allen& Unwin.

Coady, J. & Huckin, T. (1997). *Second language vocabulary acquisition*. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Cohen. A. D. (1990). *Language learning*. Boston: Heinle&Heinle Publisher.

Faerch,C. et al. (1984). *Learner language and language learning*. Avon: Multingual Matters.

Garnder, R. & Macintyre, P. 1992). A student's contributions to second language learning. Part 1:Cognitive variables. *Language Teaching*,25,211-220.

Gu Yongqi. (1994). Vocabulary learning strategies of good and poor Chinese EFL learners. *Language and Learning*, 3, 376-401.

Hatch, E. & Brown, C. (1995). *Vocabulary, semantics and language educations*. Cambridge: CUP.

Li Xiaolong. (1988). Effects of contextual cues on inferring and remembering meanings of new words. *Applied Linguistics*, 9,402-413.

Luppescu, S. & Day, R. (1993). Reading, dictionaries and vocabulary learning. *Language Learning*, 43/12,263-287.

Nation, I. (1990). *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. Boston: Heinle&Heinle Publishers. Ltd.

Nattinger, J. (1988). Some current trends in vocabulary teaching. In Carter and McCarthy (eds.). *Vocabulary and language teaching*. London: Longman.pp.62-82.

O'Malley, J. M. & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies and second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford, R. (1989). Use of language learning strategies: a synthesis of studies with implications for teacher training. *System*, 17, 235-247.

Parreren, P.C. (1992). Individual differences in vocabulary acquisition: a qualitative experiment in first phase of secondary education. In Arnaud&Bejoint (eds.), *Vocabulary and applied*.pp.94-101.

Parry, K. (1991). Building a vocabulary through academic reading. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25, 629-653.

Pressley, M., Levin, J. R., Kuiper, N. A.,Bryant, S. L. & Michene, S. (1982a). Mnemonic versus nonmnemonic vocabulary-learning strategies: Additional comparisons. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74,693-707.

Richards, J. (1985). *The context of language teaching* .Cambridge:CUP.

Robert, E. Slavin. (2004). *Educational psychology: Throry and practice*.Beijing:Beijing University.

Rod Ellis. (1997). *The study of second language acquisition*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Schmitt, N. (1997). Vocabulary learning strategies. In N. Schmitt & M. McCarthy (eds.). *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.199-227.

Summers, D. (1988). The role of dictionaries in language learning. In Carter and McCarthy (eds.). *Vocabulary and language teaching*. London: Longman.pp.111-125.

Xiaoxiang Chen. (2001). The Influence of the subject's intermediary system of cognition upon English reading comprehension. *Foreign Languages and their Teaching*,9,pp.27-34.

Yanyan Luo. (2006). The Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Freshmen Majoring in English. *Journal of Fuyang Teachers College(Social Science Edition)*, 3,pp.72-77.

Zhaolan Meng. (1994). *General Psychology*.Beijing:Beijing University Press.

Table 1. The intermediary system of cognition

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">the inter-mediary system of cognition</td><td rowspan="2">knowledge structure</td><td>language knowledge (vocabulary knowledge)</td><td>pronunciation,spelling. meaning, collocation, grammar,word-formation, context,metaphor,pragmatics,syntax etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>background knowledge</td><td>natural science,social science,modern science and technology,theory of learningstrategies,common sense,social experience etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">abilities structure</td><td>rational factors</td><td>memory,association,inference,omparing and grouping ,self-encouragement etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>irrational factors</td><td>emotion,mood etc.</td></tr>
</table>

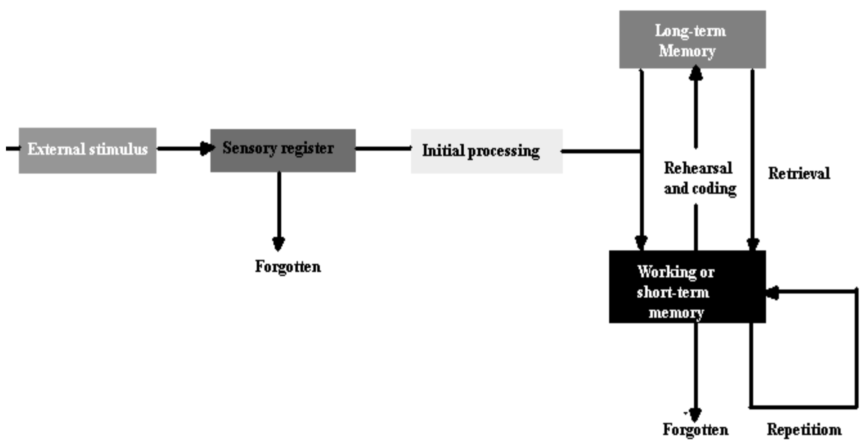


Figure 1. The sequence of information process

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 1
March 2009

Using Films in the Multimedia English Class

Youming Wang
Department of English languages
Capital Institute of Physical Education
Beijing 100192, China
E-mail: wangyouming9992@sina.com.cn

Abstract

With the great, constant renovation and development of various knowledge and economy, talents of compound, high quality and high skills are in urgent need in society; a new educational reform runs through the whole foreign teaching courses, including audio-visual course, speaking, reading, writing and translating courses. With the aid of computers, films (DVD, Mp3 etc.) play an important role in foreign language labs in China. More and more students are interested in not only for oral but also for the process of acquiring languages. Now students are becoming stronger and stronger in their curiosity for knowledge and comprehension for acquiring languages. Therefore, the foreign teachers are confronted with the great challenges: 1) How to make audio-visual classes become effective learning process instead of pure entertainment in class; 2) How to make students become active participants in class. 3) How to practice rehearse the kinds of listening and speaking in the classroom? 4) How to help students build confidence in dealing with the language? 5) How to design classroom procedures on students' listening and speaking abilities? So, the purpose of this paper is to introduce some useful and practical methods to build students' confidence in learning English; and also to exploit the design of films' class through multimedia.

Keywords: Films, Language acquiring, English teaching

1. Review of Literature & Introduction

To date, people have created many teaching methods for teaching non-native speakers English as second language. With the rapid improvement on learners' communicative abilities, researchers presently are not satisfied with these devices and begin to study new ways. In 1895, film was invented by Edison. Immediately, film was widely used in many different fields, such as science, literature and foreign teaching. In the western countries, a lot of linguists have paid more attention to this audio-visual method and studied it, which connects sound with pictures. This teaching method is very helpful and useful for beginners to understand language skills and to remember contexts or new and complex patterns and words. Many foreign teachers using the audio-lingual method have wished for some improvement or modification of the accepted methodology. Although teachers find the memorization and pattern practice exercises useful for the early stages, they feel a need to build a bridge from those highly structured activities to the freer, more creative use of the language at the intermediate and advanced levels. So Newton (1974. 31) pointed out: "a potential drawback of the audio-lingual method was its tendency to be dull and uninspiring (for both students and teachers), but the audio-visual method could make the drills more interesting by varying their forms, by providing a meaningful context, and by using visual aids. Resourceful teachers often succeeded in teaching process by such means." The use of film in teaching belongs to the audio-visual approach, which is an interesting and effective in college English. The change should be a great lash to the traditional grammar-oriented and book-centered teaching methods. According to Westrand (1965, 111): "the sound film is a more effective medium than tape for modeling a foreign language and the accompanying behavior patterns. The audio-visual methods will become more usable in language labs. Meanwhile, the showing of a film can usually be followed by audio exercises which use the sound track of the film and which prompt the recall of the visual component." In China, because of the influence of western educational methods, a lot of linguists have begun to study audio-visual methods. The teacher is becoming an audience or organizer, while the students are actor or actress on the stage. Wang Li, a famous linguist, believes that "the audio-visual method can train students sense of eye-sight, the sense of hearing, and the sense of movement (1979, 22)". Films, with their colors, movement and varying shapes, present new images to the mind and act as a great stimulus to the imagination, as film can show various parts of the world and the changes and development of form.

2. Discussions: Advantages and disadvantages of film strips in English Teaching

Compared with the traditional teaching-centered, book-centered, grammar-translation method, films on videos (or VCD, DVD, etc.) and computers are gradually regarded as a challenge for the routine language teaching, especially for the dominant intensive reading in classroom. The audio-visual approach certainly produces some active effects. First, with audio-visual environments clues, the students can never wait to be "fed" by teachers, they will try their best to move into the target languages, and to search for various different cultures, information such as how the native speakers behave and interact with each other ; their values on all things, customs, housing, clothing and even food. Owing to the rich contextual setting available, students can adopt spontaneous way of learning, learn to think and to widen their scope of knowledge outside of the textbooks which form the process of large new information receiving and intensified patterns. Second, on the part of teachers, in order to arouse students' interests and self-confidence in language learning, they can organize students to express new ideas, to generate their own creative languages in different contexts, to discuss and negotiate with each other through watching films, and making up text film and classroom film by themselves. Third, the interesting films produce more vivid and direct perceived through the senses, which strength students' a long memory and improve their comprehension. However, on the other hand, it is obvious that the audio-visual method has its own drawbacks. First of all, some films will normally last one hour, even two hours, that is to say, the audio-visual class will become a simple entertainment class, just watching films pleasurably rather than language learning process, so that the students lose their clear, exact directions. Maybe they will be led to failure in practice. Second, many equipments in the language labs don't work in the period of class frequently. Third, not all film strips on various topics with languages fit for students' level. Fourth, not all film strips can provide appropriate and accurate pictures of the target culture and language, which may easily lead to learners' misunderstanding of the cultures.

3. The selection of film strips

"Effective language teaching is responsive to the needs and interests of the individual learner. Effective language learning is an active process, in which the learner takes increasing responsibility for his or her progress (Mitchell 1994: 38f)." In order to motivate students to express their opinions freely and arouse their interests for learning languages in classroom, the first important step is to select the appropriate film strips for students' interest, participation, challenge and instruction, which must include variety of topics, viewpoints and literary styles. Therefore, the most important step for teachers is to take into account the learners' needs and the teacher's training purposes.

Teachers should take concrete measures to consider the objectives of the film class and then to involve themselves into the teaching practice of the course. Each course has its own features and particular teaching aims to follow, so different and distinct films will be extracted out of personal interest and teaching syllabus. Of course, teachers must spend time and energy finishing the hard task. Take *The woman Who Would Not Tell* (College English Book III Unit 3) for instance, in the first place, the teacher should introduce the background of the Civil War, the culture of the Yankee. So we can excerpt the certain chapter about the target culture from the film *GONE WITH THE WIND.* In the period class, the cultural features may be the most necessary point.

Meanwhile, the language of the film strips should be selected carefully, which is neither difficult nor easy. If the language is too difficult for students' comprehension, they will lose their confidences and interests in listening and understanding the characters and the patterns. Next, the duration of the film strips is another problem to be considered for teachers. The film is too long, the course will be involved in entertaining class; as a result, the students don't make full use of the hours study spontaneously with the target task which probably leads to the failure in achieving the planned, expected teaching effect. The last point, Chinese caption is avoided which is thought to interfere with the students' attempt to master the target language except for the situation in which some Chinese could be used to help the students understand complex English sentences and abstract concepts. Of course, there are many difficulties in face of both students and teachers. For students, it is very difficulty to obtain the meaning of the original film without any Chinese. For teachers, in order to make the film class successful, they have to endure great pressures from films' preparations and assignments to its guidance, inspects and exams etc. most of them are invisible and innumerable.

4. The ways of using films teaching

Films are a teaching medium of connecting watching with listening. Before class, teachers must have a general instructional design. This design mainly includes three aspects (1) what to study (2) which process and materials to use (3) how to know students' reaction? Instructional Design is such a process as figure 1:

Insert Figure 1 Here

The Instructional Design is put forwards by Jerolde E. Kemp (American). The purpose of the film teaching class is to help students to explore thematic subtleties in their classroom activities and to get much information of the target language. So in film teaching class, teachers should arrange in the following different ways: explanation to some key words and idioms and patterns related to the film; prediction of the plot of the film based on the given title; introduction of a general idea about the cultural background; discussion of the theme on the film; expression of the different opinions and performance of imitating the characters in pairs or in their groups. In the class, teachers should try their best to let students be in an imaginary and creative world. This can be conducted as following:

4.1 Explanation is the first step to direct the students' learning language in the class correctly. The key words and idioms are very important for them to understand the film about the text. For example, in the text "Going Home" taken from Unit Ten of Intensive Reading Book I<<*College English* >>, the teacher may guide the students to guess the key words related to the title and the given picture in the text. The words put forward by students concern the various feelings of the characters, the description of the home's environment and the reason of going home. In the meanwhile, they are asked to make up sentences or stories orally, using the words and idioms they have thought of. Through this kind of practice, the students have reviewed their known language knowledge and improved their communicative abilities and team-work spirits. In this case, teachers play the American pop song *Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree* which was very popular in the United States in the mid-nineteen seventies. There is certainly something in this story that appeals to the students. So teachers pick out more words and idioms from the film and the song which the students may not be familiar with, such as "approach, painfully, root stun, vanish, retreat, exclaim, come through" etc and require them to make up sentences and guess the story once again. After the repeated exercises, the students may have the preliminary understanding of the film. The practice of making up sentences and stories enlarges the students' vocabulary and gradually form their creativity together with ability to use the language. This classroom activity will fire the students' imagination and let them create a world or series of situations that might have been.

4.2 Prediction of the title and new vocabulary

In the step, teachers may play the Japanese film *Yellow Handkerchiefs* with no sound (only giving the tableau), which also borrowed the plot from the story. After finishing the film, the teachers should encourage his students to reason out those aspects of the film that contribute to our feeling that events portrayed are really taking place while watching the film. Have students compare their experience of space and time in their dreams and their experience of space and time in watching the film. Ask students to make judgments about the human conduct portrayed in the programs. Judgments might be guided by questions like the following: *Where were the young people going? How was Vingo dressed? Why were the young people on the bus interested in Vingo? What do you think the young people would have said to Vingo if there had been no handkerchiefs on the tree? What do you think of Vingo's wife?* In the upper elementary grader, such questions can be basis for more formalized student's debates. Teachers can divide students into groups and discuss the film and express their own opinions about the film.

4.3 Introduction of the cultures and civilization of the countries

Cultural awareness has been seen as a by-product of learning a language. In order to understand language fully and use it fluently, learner need not only linguistic, pragmatic, discourse and strategic competence but also socio-cultural and world knowledge, as some areas of language do reflect culture. This applies to the idiomatic level, as well as to syntax and morphology, but seems particularly important in relation to avoiding socio-pragmatic failure at discourse level, e.g. how to start and conduct conversations, turn-taking, turn-keeping and turn-giving, topic nomination, topic change, etc. Once again teachers are faced with fresh challenges. The need is to incorporate new style materials and activities to meet such demands. Thus teachers' task is to activate their schemes and help them to associate the new information they get from the films with their past knowledge. For instance, in the text "Going Home" <<*College English* Book I>>, teachers introduce this is a true story, which appeared in the New York Post in 1971 and give some general questions that will highlight the cultural issues from the film, e.g. why were the young people on the bus going to Florida? Here teachers illustrate the cultural background of the "Florida and the Sun Belt? The film has a subtropical climate and is ideal for a winter vacation. From November to March northerners and easterners come to lie on the warm, sandy beaches of Miami and the other resorts along the coast. And that is why the boys and girls in the film were so eager to leave the "grey", "cold" city of New York to vacation in Florida. Therefore, learners need to be aware of the cultural dimension of language. Culture learning "enables learners to see and manage the relationships between themselves and their own cultural beliefs, behaviors and meanings, as expressed in a foreign language". (Byram 1997: 12)

4.4 Discussion about the thematic issue of the film

The learning process is conceived of as one of learning through doing. Learning is more effective if the students are actively involved in the process. In this class activity, the film can be shown again with the sound track sent through one of the audio channels. These visual aids can be used "live" in the classroom. After viewing the whole film, we divide students into groups of four or five in each and discuss their previous prediction and the main ideas of the film and relationship between the theme and the title of the film. One representative from each group may report the result of their discussions. This method abandons the traditional teaching plan in China of simple language points about the text, but helps lead to the context directly. On the basis of students' independent thinking and analyzing, teachers, as a guide, join in the students' activities, use the obtained information to give value questions which endorse learners' curiosity, creativity. Thus teachers may organize students to discuss the plot and character. This activity may be very interesting to students because every student will have his or her own ideas about the plot and the relationship between the characters. Take the text "Going Home" as an example again, teachers may give some specific questions as guidance, namely, *why didn't Vingo's wife write to him for three and a half years? What do you think the young people would have said to Vingo if there had been no handkerchiefs on the tree? What do you think of Vingo's wife? What do you think of the ending of the story?* In animated discussion, there is no need to ask students to reach any agreement, they may make a compromise or just stick to their opinions. Through the students' discussion and comments, teachers may observe some problems: students may include some details and analyze the characters and summarize the main ideas, but they cannot understand the deep meaning of the story. In fact, the story describes the psychological changes of Vingo: from the moment when he was out of the prison, his wife accepted him immediately. Therefore, in teaching process, teachers should point out this key understanding so that students can use the language knowledge from the text to conclude and then fulfill the purpose of language production. Group discussion provides students with enough opportunities to practice, and learn how to use the target language.

4.5 Building confidence in listening and speaking

As we know, group discussion is a very good method to train students' abilities in listening and speaking, and their team spirits, however, not every student takes part in the activity. Many students are anxious about listening to a foreign language. Eastman (1991) suggests that "the reasons for this tendency include anxiety, the expectation that the listener needs to understand every word, transfer from a word-by-word reading comprehension strategy……". So we should make use of every chance of helping our students to develop confidence in dealing with a range of the films and speakers, and with variations in the speed of delivery. An important factor in the development of confidence is how to grade the tasks throughout a film. The first group is to do with the speaker, to make up dialogue according to the visual or printed materials; the second group is responsible for the content of the film and the language factors, the formal structure of the film, and the prior knowledge required to infer meaning; the third group is to do the listener, and the degree of response required; the fourth group is in charge of summarizing and analyzing the character which they are interested in. Therefore, in class, the teachers must make a judicious selection which involves a balance of these factors, for example, just picking out some basic information such as what the speakers are talking about and whether they agree and so on. In contrast, a monologue with simple language could require more detailed answers.

Confidence is also built through the most useful and simplest English. The learners might be encouraged to use the simple English. The following example <<*Family Album in USA*>> (P.152-163) provides a good way of guidelines to assist learners in listening to materials and encouraging them to be more responsible for their learning and independence.

Insert Figure 2 Here

Role-play of film In developing language skills, students inevitably develop skills which can be applied in order areas of learning. Imitation and dramatization are found to be a good way which offers advanced learners opportunities to present themselves in role-play. According to Johnstone (1988: 12) "the gradual introduction of information exchange based on role play and simulation......" The activity usually also has laboratory tapes, and textbooks. The most advanced photographic techniques are combined with excellent teaching presentations in some of these films. An important feature of these teaching films is that they involve the students both passively and actively. The students should be induced to respond, imitate and reply during the performance of the film, not merely watching it passively. This active involvement is the key to successful teaching films. For instance, in "Going Home" again, teachers may ask each pair to write a dialogue between Vingo and the girl by themselves, or the dialogue may alternatively be given through dictation. E.G.

G: (Brightly) We're going to Florida.

V: (Quietly) It is.

G: Want some wine?

V: (Smiling and taking a swig from the bottle) Thanks.

G: Are you married?

V: I don't know.

G: (Surprised) You don't know?

……

Teachers may give students five minutes or more to prepare the dialogue in class or after class. Another method is to give the students 5-10 minutes to discuss what might happen to Vingo when he got home. Students are encouraged to bring their imagination into full play. During the whole performing process, the teacher only act as a guide or a consultant offering help whenever needed. After students' performance, she or he comments on their activities and languages, so as to encourage them to do better. Of course, mistakes are inevitable, but they are taken as sources of feedback, which are beneficial to the future teaching. So Mitchell(1994: 38f)said " Learners trying their best to use the target language creatively and unpredictably are bound to make errors; this is a normal part of language learning , and constant correction is unnecessary, and even counterproductive." An ability to learn from one's mistakes is the important skills required for future continual language development.

The assessment of learners of a foreign language and the assessment techniques are overtaken by a series of events. Use of language and oral proficiency grow in status. The aims of examination in learning process is desirable and that there is a need for the inclusion of thought-provoking texts and contexts which allow students to perform tasks that make appropriate cognitive demands and emphases creativity, moving learners on from single-word and short-phrase transactions and interactions. So the ensuring examinations lead to learners being compelled to develop skills and to undergo different learning processes. Imitation, repetition and therefore exposure to the language become the buzz words. For the invisible part of the same curriculum, the scope of the invisible teaching such as materials, reference books and exercises, etc. should be basically laid down and unified; the forms and frequency of guidance should be set down; periodical tests or exams are necessary; and students should all be tested finally in form of drawing samples among the question stuffs which is level test. Or teachers demand students to summarize what they have learned on the film and text by speaking or by writing, and to exchange their own experience from learning practice, in order to better study and explore the potentiality of learning.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Audio-visual aids are the most effective means of making clear the meaning of the film or the text such as language points and cultures and so on. They also provide an excellent stimulus for oral work and strengthen the students' abilities to communicate in English. Visual forms make important events in students' lives. The color, shape and arrangement of objects in stories and in ads have a profound effect on behavior. Visual forms can shape and express the feelings of people of all cultures. Visual aids make it possible to provide the students with adequate information for answering questions without recourse to his native language. Teachers should help students become aware of the many ways.

The films teaching can make the students more independent and provide improved motivation for them. They can better understand the cultural background of the target language to be learned. The teacher will do less "live" presentation of factual material to classes of students, less drill, but more advisory, consultative, and corrective work with individual students. During the teaching, the machines are willing slaves, cheaper and more reliable than human beings. Therefore, in English class, teacher's primary role is the selection of materials and the creation of an appropriate atmosphere. Of course, the above-discussed methods or activities are not all inclusive to some extent, but students are fond of them, which encourage their imagination, creativity and a long memory. Meanwhile, students benefit a lot from communicative activities. Moreover, the potential of films teaching in foreign language must be endless. These practical suggestions on films teaching are worthy of our further discussion and research in the future.

References

A. Barbara Pilon. (1978). *Teaching Language Arts Creatively in the Elementary Grades.* America: New York Press

Arnheim Rudoliph. (1957). *Film As Art.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Eastman, J.K. (1991). "Learning to listen and comprehend" *The beginning stages System* 19/3: 179-88.

Edward M. Stack. (1971). *The Language Laboratory And modern Language Teaching.* London: Oxford University Press.

Elizabeth laird. (1977). *English In Education.* London: Oxford University Press.

Grittner Frank M. (1969). *Teaching Foreign Language.* New York: Harper & Row.

Jacobs lewis. (1969). *The Emergence of Film As Art.* New York: Hopskinson & Black.

Johnson Nicholas. (1970). *How To Talk Back To Your TV Set.* New York: Bantam Books.

Locke W.N. (1965). *The Modern Language Journal,* New York.

Newhall Beacement (1969). *The History Of Photography.* New York: Museum of Modern Art

Tricia Hedge. (2000). *Teaching and Learning In the language Classroom.* London: Oxford University Press.

Victor Lee. (1979). *Language Development.* London.

Webb. D. (1974). *Teaching Modern Languages.* London: Oxford University Press.

Wring C. (1976). *Development In Modern Language Teaching.* London: Open Books.

Figure 1.

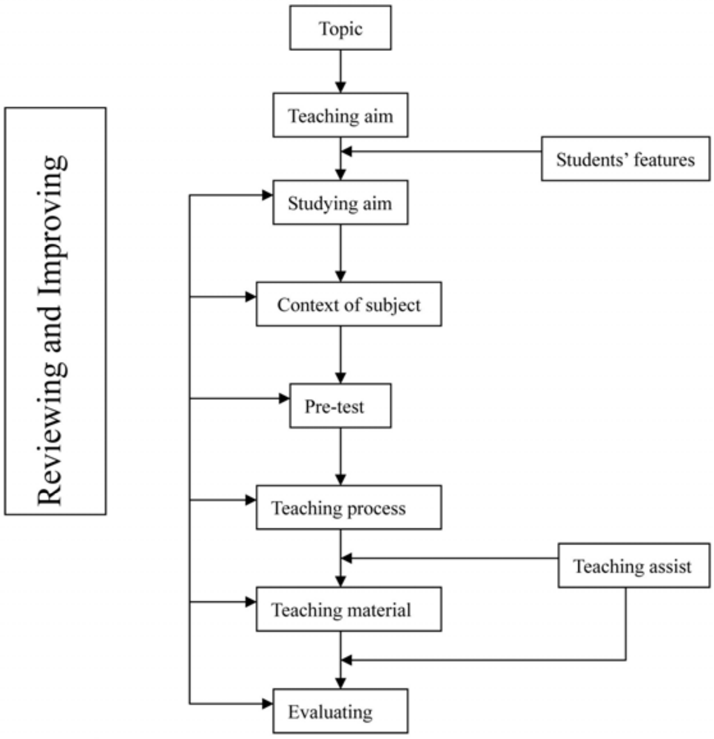


Figure 2.

Title: It's up to you.

Level: Moderate an below

Time: 40-50minutes

Aims: To show how speakers adapt what they say and their delivery (speed, vocabulary etc.) to their listeners; to listen carefully and imitate the monologues and make a transcript.

Materials: Film

Preparation: Cultural notes, Vocabulary and Difficult sentences five minutes of the film in printed English materials.

Process: 1. Play the film and ask the students to get a general idea of it.

2. Play the film again and ask the students whether they get the impression of the characters in the film. Ask the students the following questions about the film: why does Robbie feel excited and fearful? What adjectives can be used to describe Robbie and Phillip?

3. Ask the students to see the film again. This time, they should write down word for word what they heard. Give them a few minutes to compare their transcription with another partner to see if they wrote the same thing, and discuss any problems they had.

4. In pairs, they can make up a dialogue according to what they wrote, and then perform in class.

A journal archived in Library and Archives Canada
A journal indexed in Canadiana (The National Bibliography)
A journal indexed in AMICUS
A journal listed in Ulrich's
A journal listed in Journalseek
A journal included in Google Scholar
A journal included in LOCKSS
A journal included in PKP Open Archives Harvester
A peer-reviewed journal in English language teaching and education

English Language Teaching

Quarterly

Publisher Canadian Center of Science and Education
Address 4915 Bathurst St. Unit #209-309, Toronto, ON. M2R 1X9
Telephone 1-416-208-4027
Fax 1-416-208-4028
E-mail elt@ccsenet.org
Website www.ccsenet.org
Printer William Printing Inc.
Price CAD.$ 20.00

ISSN 1916-4742