ISSN 1916-4742 (Print)
ISSN 1916-4750 (Online)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Canadian Center of Science and Education

Editorial Board

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

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www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
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Beyond Technology in Computer Assisted Language Learning: Learners' Experiences

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Abstract

The present study is based on a previous pilot study (Gutiérrez-Colon, 2008) (Note). The present study aimed at widening the scope of the pilot study increasing the sample size in number of participants, degree courses and number of universities. This time, four Spanish universities were involved, and the number of participants was 197, who were registered in English Philology (N=72), Business Studies (N=36) and Mechanical Engineering (N=89). The data was organised into four main areas which describe the essential methodological teaching practices that are present and should not be avoided in blended virtual courses according to the interviewed students: a) Management of the subject, b) Students' perception of the subject, c) Design of the course and the documents, d) Feedback from the teacher. The results obtained indicate that teachers should modify their teaching habits and methodology when teaching online.

Keywords: CALL, Online courses, Teaching methodology, Pedagogical changes

1. Introduction

The origins of the present study are a set of impressions gathered during many years of online teaching, reading published literature on CALL and attending conference presentations. Even though the feasibility of online language teaching has now been by far demonstrated, there has been a lack of studies on the methodology of CALL from the students' point of view. That is, there has been a lack of studies that focus on pedagogical rather than structural issues (Hansson & Wennö, 2005: 280).

2. Technocentrism vs. pedagogy

According to Cabero (2006), there are two main historical errors which have caused online learning not to offer the good results that were expected in this environment. The first error is what has been called technocentrism, which is the belief that technology is more important than pedagogy. The second one is lack of experimentation. According to the author, we have not experienced enough all the possibilities that new technologies offer and we have just transformed the basic principles applied to face-to-face learning into online learning. This fact has many times led teachers to use the same methodology (with few adaptations) to two completely different teaching environments. This mismatch between the methodological approach and the specific learning environment has brought many different problems among teachers and students, which have sometimes even led to high numbers of student drop outs, frustrations, anxiety, fear and distress reflected in their work as well as in their feedback. Cushion (2006) gives us one clear example of how CALL is being studied and developed mainly as a subset of computing science, rather than from the point of view of a second language methodological approach. He argues that CALL can be reviewed as a subset of computer software engineering. According to his theory, CALL can profit from adapting some of the recent progress in software development theory.

Even though online environments for language teaching have existed for many years now, there are few studies conducted on the pedagogy of CALL centred in the role and feedback of the student. White (2006) claimed that from the pedagogical point of view, the studies on distance language learning have centred basically around four key themes:

course development, course evaluation, teaching roles and learner support. From all these four main fields of research, White states that teaching roles in distance language learning have, until recently, received scant attention (2006: 252). At the same time she states that although learner support is "an explicit feature of quality distance language education" (2006: 253), the published literature in this theme is less evident.

Therefore it seems that online teachers are most of the times more involved in the understanding and developing of the learning environment than in the observation of the students' reactions, feedback and their involvement, which should be one of the ultimate objectives of effective instructors.

In a very enlightening article, McAvinia (2006) distinguished between CALLers and *learning technologists*. For this researcher, lecturers, teachers, developers and researchers working within CALL may be called CALLers. *Learning technologists* are a group within higher education systems who support the implementation of a virtual learning environment (the word 'support' in this context refers to technical issues, training, pedagogical approaches, etc.) For McAvinia, there is a growing dialogue between researchers and practitioners in CALL and language teaching, and a potential strength is that they can present a stronger overall argument in favour of pedagogically-driven approaches to the use of technology for learning and teaching in higher education systems.

For all this, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

- Can learning increase depending on the methodological teaching practices?
- What attributes of online methodological teaching practices can meet student learning needs?

3. Research design

3.1 Previous research

The present study is based on a previous pilot study (Gutiérrez-Colon, 2008) which presented and analysed the answers of 63 students to a general opinion questionnaire about methodological teaching practices in blended virtual courses, that is to say, in courses which included face-to-face classes as well as virtual platforms such as Moodle or the virtual campus. The pilot study focused on two groups of students from the same Spanish university (*Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV), Tarragona*) and from two different degree courses, namely English Philology (N=32) and Mechanical Engineering (N=31). Both groups were registered in an English language blended virtual course and constituted two very different kinds of students from two distinct knowledge fields, which had an influence on their perception of virtual environments.

3.2 Research participants

The present study aimed at widening the scope of the pilot study and increased the sample size in number of participants, degree courses and number of universities. This time, four Spanish universities were involved, namely *Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Tarragona) (URV)*, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)*, *Universitat de Barcelona (UB)* and *Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC)* and the number of participants was 197, who were registered in English Philology (N=72), Business Studies (N=36) and Mechanical Engineering (N=89). They were all registered in blended virtual courses, as in the pilot study, where the use of e-mail, virtual campus and Moodle is part of the teaching of the course.

3.3 Research method

As stated above, the research instrument employed in the study was a questionnaire (see Appendix 1 – Table 1), which included a set of background questions (1) and nine more questions (2), both open and guided, directly related to the evaluation of virtual teaching and aimed at obtaining individual opinion answers and comments from students on each topic. The questions tackled essential issues of the teaching of virtual courses, such as whether the teacher encourages students' participation in the virtual class, whether students receive feedback and how long it takes/it should take to receive it, whether the design of the course and the documents is eye-catching and attractive or not and why, whether the virtual course is perceived as too cold or distant by the student and why, whether virtual teaching helps the students' learning processes or what could be added to a virtual course to encourage and improve the students' learning. The questionnaire also included a question (2.6) with a set of statements the students had to choose related to their learning process, teacher-student communication, student-student communication and the students' feelings when using virtual platforms. Finally, a question on further comments was also included so as to obtain further information not explicitly tackled in the previous questions.

Students answered the questionnaire either electronically or in class and their answers were transcribed separately according to the degree course they were studying. However, they were analysed together and no specific comparisons were made among them, for the purpose of the present study was to obtain a first general approximation to teaching practices in blended virtual courses on the basis of the opinions of students from science and arts knowledge fields. The data was organised into four main areas which describe the essential methodological teaching practices that are present and should/should not be avoided in blended virtual courses according to the interviewed students:

- Management of the subject.
- Students' perception of the subject.
- Design of the course and the documents.
- Feedback from the teacher.

These four areas and the results obtained will be described and analysed in the next section together with the results on the statements from question 2.6 in the questionnaire, which, as stated above, illustrate the participants' general opinion about how virtual courses affect their learning process, their relationship with other students and teachers and their feelings towards virtual environments.

4. Results and discussions

4.1 Management of the subject

The area "Management of the subject" refers to the way the teacher organises the virtual course and how she/he manages to encourage and motivate the students to participate in the virtual environment. Table 2 below illustrates the students' answers to whether they think the teacher promotes the use of the virtual class (i.e. question 2.1) according to university and degree course study. The percentages of the students who answered 'Yes' to the question "Does the teacher encourage students' participation in the virtual class?" are pretty high in all universities, being Business Studies students from UPC the ones who have the lower (i.e. 72.22%) percentage and Mechanical Engineering students from URV the ones who display the maximum percentage (i.e. 98.27%). The average students' opinion displays a remarkably high (i.e. 85.78%) percentage of "Yes", indicating that students generally think the teacher encourages participation in the virtual class.

Table 2: Question 2.1

Participants in the study highlighted several positive aspects of the management of the virtual subject as well as reasons why they thought they were encouraged to get involved in this virtual environment. This included the fact that the teacher regularly updated information in the virtual campus or Moodle, sent emails and notifications and posted the notes and readings for the course, homework exercises, extra exercises, online activities, mock exams, practical information and the course programme and keys to the exercises. Students also highlighted the importance of activating discussion forums in order to get motivated and the advantage that virtual environments offered for students to catch up with the course if they couldn't attend class regularly together with the fact that students could work on the subject at any convenient time or day. Yet students also acknowledged that the fact that participation in the virtual class was obligatory and part of the assessment was optional but gived an extra bonus to the final grade of the course was a clear motivating element.

At the same time, although the majority of students think that teachers encourage their participation in the virtual class, negative teaching practices regarding the management of the virtual subject are also mentioned in the questionnaire. Some teachers are not aware of the amount of workload and the amount of time that virtual materials for students imply on top of the face-to-face lectures and that creates unbalanced courses where the virtual part exceeds the regular course work and encourages lack of motivation. Some other teachers rely too much on the virtual component, where the student can find all course notes, exercises, and theoretical explanations so that face-to-face classes may become irrelevant. In fact, some students think that this should be the case and that blended virtual courses should become true virtual courses and would like to have all the course materials uploaded in the virtual platform. Some participants would also like to have more forums and chats and complain that they can only find practical information about the subject in the virtual platform but nothing that improves the student's learning process or the understanding of the topics covered in class. Some students even claim that the virtual subject looks exactly the same as the face-to-face class but with electronic documents and that there is no active learning that makes them improve their weak points or revise key concepts in the subject. In courses where students have established deadlines to hand in assignments electronically through the virtual class, they complain that these deadlines are too strict, in that if you cannot meet them, the system does not allow you to send your assignment any more.

A further issue that arose in the questionnaire and which is related to the area of management of the subject and also to feedback from the teacher (see section 4.4) is the fact that teachers themselves are not motivated to use virtual platforms and that they include a virtual component in their subjects because they have to. Some teachers just never use the virtual environment or forget to update information or post exercises or their keys and no clear guidance on the optional or compulsory use of the virtual class is given.

4.2 Students' perception of the subject

The area called "students' perception of the virtual subject" deals with issues such as whether students feel that the virtual subject is too cold or distant and whether they think that virtual learning helps them in their learning process. As for question 2.5 and as can be seen in Table 3, the majority of students in all degree courses and universities do not have

the impression that the subject is too cold, with a maximum "No" value of 84.00% in the case of English Philology students in UAB and with the exception of the students in the pilot study who mainly think that the subject is indeed distant, although they do not show extreme values. However, the general percentages also show that a bit more than two thirds of the students interviewed thought the virtual subject was not too cold.

Table 3: Question 2.5

A variety of reasons are given in the questionnaire which justify these results. The main reason why students consider the subject to be too cold is the lack of contact with the teacher. In the virtual class, communication exists only through the Internet and students cannot see the teacher when trying to resolve doubts or ask questions. This makes it difficult to solve doubts when they arise and some of them are too complex to explain in writing or in an email, so face-to-face tutorials are sometimes preferred. Students do not always get enough feedback, there is no effective monitoring on the part of the teacher or it takes too long to get a response. In short, the course is not really interactive and one often finds exercises or texts in the virtual campus but no explanations, which makes students feel literally lost in front of all the course materials. Some students point out that information is not transmitted in the same way as in class and that virtual environments are only useful for teachers, who save time in class, since half of the information is in the virtual campus and hence taken for granted.

Nevertheless, questionnaires also display many reasons why the majority of students do not consider virtual courses to be too cold. One of the most frequent reasons given by students is the fact that the virtual class is only a complement to the face-to-face class, where all the explanations and doubts are dealt with and that the two types of lectures are related to and complement each other. Some students even point out that without face-to-face classes they would not understand the content of the subject and that you can always clarify doubts during the teacher's office hours. However, students also emphasise that in the virtual class, feedback is fast, clear, concise and hence useful. It sometimes includes personal motivating comments, which makes students think they are not alone in their learning process. Virtual classes involve a lot of guidance and some of them even include real time online help. Some students say virtual courses are not cold, as they make communication between teachers and students easier and more fluent and some teachers get really involved in all the activities. Teachers become more accessible and studying through the Internet and participating in online tasks become easier and more attractive and comfortable. Finally, some other students indicate that it is not important whether a virtual course is cold or not, the essential necessary quality for a virtual course is being effective and providing quick feedback.

Regarding question 2.7 in the questionnaire, whether students think that virtual teaching helps them in their learning process, an overwhelmingly majority in all universities and degree courses respond positively, being the maximum value 96.00% in English Philology (UAB) and reaching a general percentage of 84.77%. Some other students believe that virtual teaching does not help them in their learning process, reaching a general percentage value of 13.70%. Results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Question 2.7

One of the factors that students consider determinant in helping them in their learning process is that virtual teaching implies more complementary exercises, more practice, more resources, more information, more links, more course notes, more summaries, more content and more accessibility, which helps students revise, clarify and widen the main points covered in the face-to-face class and hence consolidate their knowledge. If feedback is fast then communication between teachers and students improves and you can organise your time better, as you can work from home at your own rhythm and pace and with a free access to all the course information. The virtual class helps you be more constant and autonomous, since part of the student's learning lies on their own work. In short, students emphasise that virtual learning is a new, helpful and more dynamic tool to enhance their learning process.

Yet the small percentage of students who think that virtual teaching does not help them in their learning process believe that it is impersonal, it requires too much time on the part of the student and it does not motivate students. Sometimes information and exercises are not organised or structured and keys to the exercises are not assisted or complete enough. A lot of doubts and questions arise and they are not always solved. Students point out that they need the teacher's theoretical explanations and that it is in a face-to-face class where they really learn, not through virtual texts. Some other students also believe that virtual teaching saves time to teachers, who do not have to spend their time correcting exercises in a virtual class where all the activities have their corresponding keys. Many students consider that virtual learning does not help if it is not part of the compulsory assessment system and that non-virtual workload is enough. They feel overwhelmed with the huge amount of new extra material and do not have enough time to work on the subject or to prepare the final exam. Students interviewed also indicate that technical problems with the website or Internet connection demotivate them in their use of the virtual class.

As part of the "students' perception of the subject" area, students were asked what they thought should be included in the virtual subject to improve their learning (i.e. question 2.8). A great number of them think that teachers should get

more involved in the virtual class. E-mails should be answered, feedback should be reasonably fast, teachers should know how to use virtual platforms and improve their IT skills and should show interest in the students' knowledge and provide more guidance and instructions. Students also point out the need for an instant messaging system with an established timetable to solve doubts instantaneously, forums, more theoretical explanations, more extra material, exams from previous years, resolved exercises, chats, more links and online exercises with instant feedback. Some students suggest including more virtual bibliography, press articles, anonymous suggestion mailboxes, personal calendars, research exercises, self-assessment activities and optional exercises which are not assessed. Keys should not be posted at the same time as the exercises but some time later and information should be regularly updated. The format of virtual subjects should be renewed and simplified and students should collaborate in the construction of online materials. Technical problems should be kept to a minimum and more importantly, students emphasise that face-to-face classes and direct contact with teachers should be maintained in order to ensure the success of virtual classes.

4.3 Design of the documents

This section analyses the students' opinions on the design of the course materials and documents and whether these are attractive and clear to read for students or difficult and uncomfortable to read. Their opinions include comments on font type and size, use of colours, document or website layout, links, exercise instructions, document features or images, among others. As Table 5 below indicates, students from all universities and degree courses mainly think the design of the documents is eye-catching and comfortable to read, although the percentages only reach 80.00% or over on two occasions. English Philology (UB) students do not display such a contrast but similar percentages and the general percentage for "eye-catching" design reaches 78.17%, showing the tendency to consider the design of the course materials adequate and attractive.

Table 5: Question 2.3

Students who think the design of the documents is eye-catching and comfortable to handle emphasise aspects such as the use of simple, clear, large font types and neutral, unflashy or institutional colours. As for the layout of the document, students highlight the importance of a structured, clear, organised, attractive and understandable layout with adequate spacing and the use of visible and useful links. The instructions of the exercises are clear, concise and understandable and images are relevant to the text, attractive and illustrative. At the same time, students point out the fact that documents should preferably be in word or pdf format, easy to download and that the website should be easy to use.

Yet some other students emphasise bad methodological practices in relation to the design of the documents and course materials. The font type is often too small, dull and difficult to read and interlineal spacing is also too small and uncomfortable to deal with. Colours are sometimes too dull or too flashy, making the text almost unintelligible. The layout of the documents is at times confusing, difficult to grasp at first sight and boring, demotivating or old-fashioned and some links are outdated and difficult to find in the document or they might lead to nowhere. Exercise instructions are not clear enough, too long and hence difficult to understand and sometimes there are too many irrelevant images, which makes the document too slow.

4.4 Feedback from the teacher

Another important area of research when analysing methodological practices in virtual teaching platforms is "feedback from the teacher". It is one of the key aspects for virtual courses to succeed and students take for granted that it is guaranteed in a virtual course. Question 2.2 tackled the issue of whether students receive feedback from the exercises/activities/questions that they send or ask virtually. Table 6 shows that students generally receive feedback, with a general percentage value of 72.08%, except for students in English Philology (UB), 86.66% of whom claim that they do not receive any feedback. Students from English Philology (UAB) display very similar results (i.e. around 50.00%) on whether they receive or do not receive feedback from the teacher and hence they are not indicative of any tendency. What is clear is that of those who do not receive feedback, a 100% in almost all universities and degree courses would like to receive it.

Table 6: Question 2.2

Question 2.4a (Table 7) asked students whether they believed their teacher took too long to answer their questions or exercises virtually. Although the general percentages show that the majority of them do not think that the teacher takes too long (i.e. 56.34%), some of them believe they do (i.e. 21.82%) and more surprisingly, the same percentage of them (i.e. 21.82%) acknowledge that they just never send questions or exercises, which might indicate lack of interest and motivation on the part of students. More than half of English Philology (UB) students, who generally claimed in Question 2.2 that they did not receive any feedback, state that they never send any questions or exercises and 33.33% of them think that the teacher indeed takes too long to answer.

Table 7: Question 2.4a

Students were also asked about the maximum response time to send feedback. They were given four options, namely 24 hours, 48 hours, a week or "doesn't matter". Table 8 shows that students generally believe a response time of 24 to 48 hours should be the adequate option, with a tendency for more than half of the students interviewed (i.e. 53.29%) to prefer the 24 hour-option, except again for English Philology (UB) students who mainly think 48 hours is the expected response time. The "one week" option is clearly dispreferred as well as the "doesn't matter" one, clearly indicating that response time is indeed and logically important in virtual environments.

Table 8: Question 2.4b

Some of the qualitative comments students made in the questionnaire specifically raised the feedback question and were centred on its related negative methodological practices. Some students emphasised the fact that teachers take too long to respond to their messages and that some of them do not even take the time to answer or just send keys to the exercises without further explanations. This creates a lack of effective monitoring of their learning progress and hence there is not enough interaction between teacher and students, whose learning needs are not at all met and whose doubts may never be solved. A very illustrative point about this topic has been literally transcribed to exemplify the problem: "*It's been a week since I've been waiting for an answer to an e-mail with exam doubts. The exam is tomorrow".*

4.5 Participants' general opinion in percentages

The final issue in the results section focuses on the statements from question 2.6 in the questionnaire, which illustrate the participants' general opinion about whether virtual courses affect their learning process, their relationship with other students and teachers and their feelings towards virtual environments. Question 2.6 included ten statements about virtual courses and students were asked to tick as many of them as they thought reflected their opinion. As can be seen in Table 9, general percentages were calculated on this occasion, without considering the different universities or degree courses. More than half of the students (i.e. 61.42%) thought that virtual courses help their learning process, which was already shown in question 2.7 (see section 3.2) and nearly half of them (i.e. 43.15%) believe that virtual courses improve the teacher-student communication and acknowledge that they have felt stressed during a virtual course. Percentages are much lower in the other statements, only reaching 20.81% in "virtual courses improve the relationship among students". The remaining statements, which are all negative, reached no more than 18.27%, which indicates that the majority of students do not think that the learning process is hampered or that the teacher-student and/or student-student communication worsens. At the same time and although 43.15% of students admitted having felt stressed, only 16.75% have felt frustration and only 15.23% have felt alone during a virtual course. Figure 1 illustrates theses results graphically.

Table 9: Question 2.6

Figure 1: Graph illustrating the results from question 2.6

Having presented the results of the questionnaire, next sections are devoted to the general conclusions and further research.

5. Conclusions

This study created opportunities for students to give their opinion on what they thought could improve the online teaching methods, and therefore, foster the learning process. At the beginning of this paper we proposed two research questions (see section 2). The first question tried to find a connection between the rate of learning and the methodology of the teaching practice. According to this study, the more the teacher knows how to use the virtual environment from a methodological point of view, the better the students feel in the classroom and therefore the better the teacher facilitates their learning process. The second question tried to find the specific attributes that, according to the users of the virtual environment, could help their learning process. For this second question, the research findings show the following:

In the virtual campus:

- The information should be regularly updated.
- The teacher should play an active role when moderating the forums in order to keep an active discussion going on.
- In order to increase an active participation to the class' forum, the teacher should give an extra bonus to the final grade to the students who regularly send their contributions to the classroom.
- The teacher should clearly distinguish a virtual course from a blended course when calculating the amount of workload sent to the virtual class.
- The materials created for a virtual environment should have different characteristics from those created for a face-to-face class.
- All students' messages should be answered within a maximum period of 24 to 48 hours.

- *Warm up* activities are very useful and many times necessary. At the beginning of each course or even each lesson, the teacher should send a warm up activity. This is not only a starter for the activity, but also a way of 'connecting' with the students, a more relaxed way to be in contact with them and thus the students do not have the feeling of distance.
- Teachers should allow more informal communication among the students. This could be done by:

. allowing students to send informal messages to the forum

. opening a special space in the classroom for this type of communication

. sending a more relaxing message, with general information, after the deadline of the activities is over,

. prompting students to answer to a funny comment.

- The design of the classroom should be eye-catching, and the materials sent to the classroom should be perfectly organised, so their icons can be quickly found (and clicked) on the screen.
- There should be more complementary exercises, resources and information ready to be used from the beginning of the semester than in a face-to-face course. With these, we foster students' autonomy.
- Teachers should be used to working in the virtual environment they are using before starting the course.
- Keys to the exercises should be posted some time after the exercises. In this way, students can check their progress.
- The documents created should be well structured, with an attractive layout and with a font size and colour which are comfortable to read. The links should be really useful (otherwise it is a waste of time) and updated.
- The documents sent to our classroom should be easy to download. Usually a Word or pdf format is the best for this purpose.
- The instructions of the exercises should be short and clear. They should never be longer than a screen, so the student can scan and then read them (scrolling down the screen is always an uncomfortable action for a rather short activity). In the case of longer instructions, they should be divided into different sections.

6. Further research

This study shows the different aspects that a virtual teacher should take into account when creating and leading a virtual course. As we have stated at the beginning of this paper, there is lack of research conducted on the different methodological aspects to be taken into account when teaching a virtual course.

One of the innovative aspects of this study lies in the fact that it is based on the students' experiences and opinions. They are the real subjects and users of the virtual environment. Thus, we envisage the need to carry out further studies on a wider range of online practices but always listening to the students' voices. It is hoped that such a research study will help teachers to establish a clear understanding of the good practices to be carried out in a virtual course as well as identify inappropriate uses and designs of the learning environment.

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Notes

Note 1. Gutierrez-Colon, M. (2008). Frustration in virtual learning environments. In Handbook of research on e-learning methodologies for language acquisition, (Marriott, R. & Torres, P. Eds). Idea Group Publishing.

Appendix 1

Table 1. Questionnaire

1. Background information
2. Evaluation of virtual teaching
2.1. Do you think that the teacher promotes student participation in the virtual class?
2.2 Do you receive any feedback from the exercises/activities that you hand in virtually?
2.3 The design of the course or the exercises:
- is attractive for students?
- is difficult/uncomfortable to read?
2.4 a. Do you think that the teacher takes a long time to send you an answer?
b. What is the maximum period of time that the teacher should take to send the answer/feedback?
2.5 Do you feel that the virtual course in which you are enrolled is "too cold" or "too distant" for the student? Why?
2.6 Do you think that virtual courses
- help the learning process?
- hamper the learning process because the amount of content increases?
- hamper the learning process because the number of exercises increases?
- improve the teacher-student communication.
- make the teacher-student communication worse.
- improve the relationship among students.
- make the relationship among students worse.
During the course
- have you felt frustration?
- have you felt stress?
- have you felt alone because nobody helped you with your doubts?
2.7 In general, do you think that virtual learning helps you in your learning process? Why?
2.8 In order to facilitate the students' learning process, is there anything that you think should be included in the virtual subject?
2.9 Would you like to add anything else?
(From Gutiérrez-Colon, 2008)

Table 2. Question 2.1

Does the teacher encourage students' participation in the virtual class?			
Degree courses	**Yes**	**No**	**N/R**
Business Studies (UPC)	72.22% (26/36)	27.77% (10/36)	0
English Philology (UB)	86.66% (13/15)	13.33% (2/15)	0
English Philology (UAB)	88.00% (22/25)	8.00% (2/25)	4.00% (1/25)
Mechanical Engineering (URV)	98.27% (57/58)	1.72% (1/58)	0
English Philology + Mechanical Engineering (Pilot Study) (URV)	80.95% (51/63)	12.69% (8/63)	6.34% (4/63)
General percentages	85.78% (169/197)	11.67% (23/197)	2.53% (5/197)

Table 3. Question 2.5

Do you feel that the virtual course in which you are enrolled is "too cold" or "too distant" for the student?			
Degree courses	**Yes**	**No**	**N/R**
Business Studies (UPC)	8.33% (3/36)	80.55% (29/36)	11.11% (4/36)
English Philology (UB)	33.33% (5/15)	60.00% (9/15)	6.66% (1/15)
English Philology (UAB)	16.00% (4/25)	84.00% (21/25)	0
Mechanical Engineering (URV)	24.13% (14/58)	65.51% (38/58)	10.34% (6/58)
English Philology + Mechanical Engineering (Pilot Study) (URV)	58.73% (37/63)	41.26% (26/63)	0
General percentages	31.97% (63/197)	62.43% (123/197)	5.58% (11/197)

Table 4. Question 2.7

In general, do you think that virtual teaching helps you in your learning process? Why?			
Degree courses	**Yes**	**No**	**N/R**
Business Studies (UPC)	94.44% (34/36)	2.77% (1/36)	2.77% (1/36)
English Philology (UB)	80.00% (12/15)	20.00% (3/15)	0
English Philology (UAB)	96.00% (24/25)	4.00% (1/25)	0
Mechanical Engineering (URV)	79.31% (46/58)	18.96% (11/58)	1.72% (1/58)
English Philology + Mechanical Engineering (Pilot Study) (URV)	80.95% (51/63)	17.46% (11/63)	1.58% (1/63)
General percentages	84.77% (167/197)	13.70% (27/197)	1.52% (3/197)

Table 5. Question 2.3

Do you think the design of the course materials and the documents is eye-catching for students or difficult/uncomfortable to read?			
Degree courses	**Eye-catching Comfortable**	**Non-eye-catching Uncomfortable**	**N/R**
Business Studies (UPC)	88.88% (32/36)	11.11% (4/36)	0
English Philology (UB)	53.33% (8/15)	46.66% (7/15)	0
English Philology (UAB)	80.00% (20/25)	16.00% (4/25)	4.00% (1/25)
Mechanical Engineering (URV)	75.86% (44/58)	24.13% (14/58)	0
English Philology + Mechanical Engineering (Pilot Study) (URV)	79.36% (50/63)	11.11% (7/63)	9.52% (6/63)
General percentages	78.17% (154/197)	18.27% (36/197)	3.55% (7/197)

Table 6. Question 2.2

Do you receive any feedback from the exercises/activities that you hand in virtually?			
Degree courses	**Receive feedback**	**Don't receive feedback**	**Would like to receive feedback**
Business Studies (UPC)	75.00% (27/36)	25.00% (9/36)	100% (9/9)
English Philology (UB)	13.33% (2/15)	86.66% (13/15)	100% (13/13)
English Philology (UAB)	52.00% (13/25)	48.00% (12/25)	91.66% (11/12)
Mechanical Engineering (URV)	96.55% (56/58)	3.44% (2/58)	100% (2/2)
English Philology + Mechanical Engineering (Pilot Study) (URV)	69.84% (44/63)	30.15% (19/63)	100% (19/19)
General percentages	72.08% (142/197)	27.91% (55/197)	98.18% (54/55)

Table 7. Question 2.4a

Do you think that the teacher takes a long time to send you an answer?			
Degree courses	**Yes**	**No**	**Never send questions/exercises**
Business Studies (UPC)	11.11% (4/36)	75.00% (27/36)	13.88% (5/36)
English Philology (UB)	33.33% (5/15)	13.33% (2/15)	53.33% (8/15)
English Philology (UAB)	16.00% (4/25)	72.00% (18/25)	12.00% (3/25)
Mechanical Engineering (URV)	24.13% (14/58)	53.44% (31/58)	22.41% (13/58)
English Philology + Mechanical Engineering (Pilot Study) (URV)	25.39% (16/63)	52.38% (33/63)	22.22% (14/63)
General percentages	21.82% (43/197)	56.34% (111/197)	21.82% (43/197)

Table 8. Question 2.4b

What is the maximum period of time that the teacher should take to send feedback?				
Degree courses	**24h**	**48h**	**1 week**	**Doesn't matter**
Business Studies (UPC)	55.55% (20/36)	38.88% (14/36)	0	5.55% (2/36)
English Philology (UB)	20.00% (3/15)	66.66% (10/15)	6.66% (1/15)	6.66% (1/15)
English Philology (UAB)	52.00% (13/25)	44.00% (11/25)	0	4.00% (1/25)
Mechanical Engineering (URV)	58.62% (34/58)	37.93% (22/58)	1.72% (1/58)	1.72% (1/58)
English Philology + Mechanical Engineering (Pilot Study) (URV)	55.55% (35/63)	36.50% (23/63)	4.76% (3/63)	3.17% (2/63)
General percentages	53.29% (105/197)	40.60% (80/197)	2.53% (5/197)	3.55% (7/197)

Table 9. Question 2.6

Do you think that virtual courses…	**/197**	**%**
1 - help the learning process?	121	61.42%
2 - hamper the learning process because the amount of content increases?	28	14.21%
3 - hamper the learning process because the number of exercises increases?	33	16.75%
4 - improve the teacher-student communication?	85	43.15%
5 - make the teacher-student communication worse?	36	18.27%
6 - improve the relationship among students?	41	20.81%
7 - make the relationship among students worse?	24	12.18%
During the course…	**/197**	**%**
8 - have you felt frustration?	33	16.75%
9 - have you felt stress?	85	43.15%
10 - have you felt alone because nobody helped you with your doubts?	30	15.23%

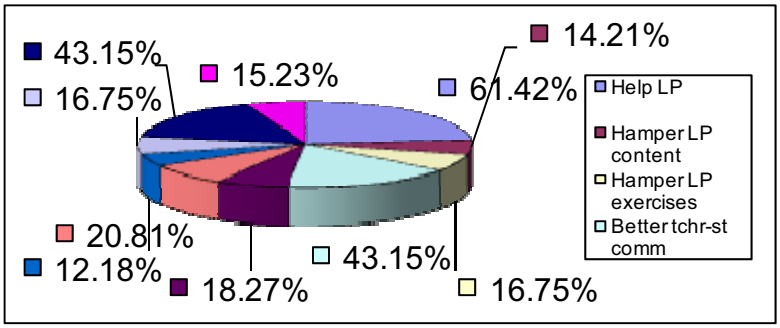

Figure 1. Graph illustrating the results from question 2.6

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Textbook Representation of Prepositions

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Abstract

This article presents a corpus-based investigation on English prepositions which are presented in three English language textbooks used by lower secondary schools in Malaysia. The aims were to find out the distributions of prepositions, its frequency order in comparison with the British National Corpus (BNC) and the differences in terms of their co-occurrence with other parts of speech. The findings showed that there is a difference between the textbook corpus and the BNC in terms of the frequency order of certain prepositions and there are similarities and differences in terms of their co-occurrence with other parts of speech. This study indicates the textbook corpus is essential in the study of prepositions and the results can guide teachers in deciding how best to supplement the text with activities that will give learners exposure to target grammar item that is not sufficiently presented in the textbook.

Keywords: Preposition, Corpus, Textbooks

1. Introduction

As part of the grammatical system, prepositions seem to occur everywhere in speaking and writing (Morenberg, 1997). However, it is difficult to learn to use prepositions correctly as most of them have several different functions and there are not many rules to help in choosing which prepositions to use correctly (Swan, 1988). ESL learners still struggle with prepositions long after they have achieved a high level of proficiency in English. Even proficient English speakers exhibit variable performance with regard to which prepositions they use for a particular meaning (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

The teaching of grammar has always been an important concern and there are several methods and approaches which have been proposed in the teaching of grammar specifically and in the teaching of English as a Foreign and Second language generally. In Malaysia, the English language is taught as a second language and in schools, the English Language Syllabuses are skills based syllabuses advocating the communicative approach to English Language Teaching. The emphasis is on the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and communicative ability (Rajaretnam & Nalliah, 1999).

The syllabus of the Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM) or the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum for English language as outlined by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) of the Ministry Of Education Malaysia (MoE) emphasizes that the teaching of grammar is to be incorporated into the four language skills and should be taught in context and in a meaningful way. It should not be taught in isolation or as discrete items as far as possible. The grammar items to be taught are listed in the syllabus.

Malaysian schools use prescribed textbooks provided by the Textbook Bureau of the Ministry of Education Malaysia in their English language classes (Mukundan, 2004). English is generally taught using these government issued textbooks which have been prepared according to the national English language syllabus guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education (Murugesan, 2003).

Hence, as textbooks are used as core resources in classrooms, it is important to look at how the grammar items are presented in these textbooks. This study specifies its focus on identifying prepositions, as listed in the syllabus, which are presented in the textbooks used by schools in Malaysia.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate English prepositions which are presented in the English Language textbooks used by lower secondary schools in Malaysia, which are Form One, Form Two and Form Three.

1.1 Research Questions

In view of the objective mentioned above, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the distributions of prepositions in the English Language textbooks of Form One, Two and Three?

2) What is the order of prepositions in the English Language textbooks of Form One, Two and Three in comparison with the BNC?

3) What are the differences in the use of prepositions identified in the English Language textbooks of Form One, Two and Three?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Prepositions and the English language

Prepositions are grammatical words or function words that mainly contribute to the grammatical structure of the sentence (Thornbury, 2002). Most of the common English prepositions, such as *at*, *in*, and *for*, are simple, that is, consist of one word, whereas other prepositions, consisting of more than one word, such as *along with*, *away from*, *out of*, are called complex prepositions (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1989). Klammer et al. (2004) has listed 60 simple prepositions and 39 complex prepositions in *Analyzing English Grammar*.

In the English Language, prepositions are presented in three dimensions, namely, the form, meaning and use. Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) review the phrase structure rule for a prepositional phrase to make several observations about the form of prepositions. It is stated, also, one of the greatest learning challenges presented by prepositions is their meaning, for instance, the problem with giving an abstract definition to ESL/EFL students is that the definition is often more difficult to comprehend and apply than the form itself. Additionally, there are issues of use as well concerning prepositions. There appear to be instances where more than one preposition with the same meaning is acceptable in a given context, for example, in a time period: *It happened in/during 1998.*

A preposition is a relationship word that expresses a connection to place, time, possession, accompaniment or comparison. (Kosur, 2008). However, most prepositions have several different functions (Swan, 1988). Byrd and Benson (2001) define prepositions are often used to create adverbial modifiers to give information about place or time.

Many of the words described as prepositions can also be used as other parts of speech. Whether or not a word is a preposition depends on how it is used in a sentence. Biber et. al (1999) highlights the overlap issue between prepositions and other word classes such as noun, adjective and adverb in *The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (LGSWE).

On the other hand, English prepositions do not have a neat set of rules governing their use. These rules are often complex, and may not be able to ensure accuracy (Wahlen, 2001). The nature and complexity of prepositions have consequently led to problems with prepositions for ESL teachers and learners.

2.2 Prepositions and the Malay language

There are differences between the use of prepositions in the English language and in the first language of the ESL users. For instance, in a Malaysian context, it is quite relevant to compare the prepositions in the English language and Malay in an attempt to determine whether there would be difficulties in learning or acquiring English prepositions faced by students whose mother tongue as well as medium of instruction is Malay. The following comparison between the two languages has been outlined in Sudhakaran (2008) based on Othman (1993, 1985).

The preposition '*in*' (*dalam*), where in the case of Malay, '*in*' is used before nouns that relate to objects such as a picture, story, mirror, while '*into*' (*di dalam*) is used before a noun that indicates content or denote filling an area or space like a room, river, or a container. In the English Language, '*in*' has a wider application, since it is also used in other situations too, for example, *'in anger'*, *'in aid of'*; whereas *'into'*, too, can be used in a wider context like *'into despair'*, *'into anger'*.

The preposition *'from'* (*dari, daripada*) in Malay has been split into two separate forms; one form to be used before nouns indicating places or direction, for example, *dari Melaka* (from Melaka), *dari angkasa lepas* (*from outer space*), *dari utara* (*from the north*); the other *daripada* is used before nouns related to resources, for example, *daripada emas* (*from gold*), *daripada kayu* (*from wood*), *daripada cermin* (*from glass*), or before nouns related to people, for example, *daripada Ali* (*from Ali*), *daripada kakaknya* (*from his sister*). However, here there is a distinct difference; while *daripada* is also used for resources in Malay as in the examples above, in English, the preposition '*of*' is used instead,

for example, in '*made of gold*', '*of wood*' or '*of glass*'. However, there are instances of a similar usage too, for example, '*made from the bark of the tree*'.

In Malay, the preposition *pada* ('*at*') is used for names of objects or things that have a 'surface', for example*, pada mukanya* (*at his face*), *pada kulit buah* (*at the skin of the fruit*), *pada pintu* (*at the door*), *pada langsir pintu* (*at the door curtain*), as well as to denote time, for example, *pada pukul lima* (*at five o'clock*), *pada pagi* (*at morning*). Here too, there are differences between the two languages. In some of the examples above, the appropriate preposition in English would be '*on*' – *pada mukanya* (*on his face*), *pada kulit buah* (*on the skin of the fruit*), *pada pintu* (*on the door*), *pada langsir pintu* (*on the door curtain*), whereas *'at the door'* in English would indicate a different meaning that somebody is outside the door. The usage of '*at*' for time (as indicated by the clock) is the same for both languages, but with respect to the time of the day, in English, different prepositions can be used as follows; *'at dawn', 'in the morning', 'at noon', 'in the afternoon',* and *'at night'*.

Hence, it can be seen that there are some differences in the use of prepositions between English language and Malay. While some of these differences are evident and distinct, others are subtler, and depend to a large extent on the nuances of meaning implied in the context of use of the specific prepositions Sudhakaran (2008). Consequently, these add problems to ESL teachers and learners due to prepositions not used as they are used in the first language of the ESL users.

2.3 Studies on prepositions

Many studies on the forms of prepositions (O'Dowd, 1994, Frodeson and Eyring, 1997), meanings of prepositions (Fillmore, 1968, Hudson, 1979, Lakoff, 1987, Burgman, 1981, Parker, 1993, Heitzman, 1993, Thompson, 1992, Taylor, 1993, Dirven, 1993) and use of prepositions (Kennedy, 1991, Lindstromberg, 1996, Todaka, 1996) have been used and described in grammar books, particularly in Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999).

These studies may have made it more obvious why prepositions cause such difficulty for ESL/EFL students. While learning the various meanings and meaning extensions of prepositions is perhaps the greatest challenge, a pedagogical strategy that enables students to pay attention to their co-occurrence, collocational, and discourse behaviour in addition will no doubt facilitate learners' acquisition of these difficult lexico-grammatical forms (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

One of the earlier studies made by Takahaski (1969) has stated one of the most difficult problems a student of English as a Second Language faces is the understanding of the functions and the use of English prepositions. Most learning is dependent on memorization and getting used to the usage. Takahaski further expressed his dissatisfaction with the idea of the correct understanding and usage of certain prepositions involves intuitions. Instead, he believed that if the correct understanding and usage of these prepositions involves intuition, then few who learn English as a Second Language can gain mastery of them.

Other studies have looked into the acquisition patterns of different types of prepositions (Johnston and Slobin, 1979, Conner and Chapman, 1985, Tomasello, 1987), studies on the frequent use of prepositions (Johnston and Slobin, 1979, Johnston, 1984, Furrow, Murray and Furrow, 1985/1986) and also studies on the frequency of errors for the English prepositions (Durkin, 1981, Leikin, 1998, Abkarian, 1983). All these studies on prepositions had used children at different age levels as their subjects.

Abdulkarim (2008) has stated in his study, prepositions are so significant for communication and they play such an important role, however, the systemic study of prepositions has been scarcely investigated both in linguistics and methodology.

A corpus-related study compared the LOB corpus and the Nijmegan corpus (de Haan, 1992). The ten most frequent prepositions in the LOB corpus are presented in a decreasing order, together with the ten most frequent prepositions in the written part of the Nijmegan corpus. There are very few differences between the two corpora as far as the frequency and distribution of prepositions are concerned.

2.4 Prepositions in the KBSM syllabus

As indicated in the KBSM syllabus, English prepositions that are listed to be taught in the lower secondary schools include prepositions of place *(in, on, near, under, in front of, by)*, prepositions of time *(at, on, by, before, after)* and prepositions of direction *(to, from)* for the Form One KBSM syllabus. This list of prepositions is the same for Form Two and Three with an addition of prepositions *at* and *between* for prepositions of place and an addition for the preposition of quantity, *of*.

3. Methodology

This corpus-based study looks at a corpus of three lower secondary school English language textbooks used by schools in Malaysia, the British National Corpus and utilizes a computer software WordSmith Tools version 4.0. According to

Kennedy (1991), it is important to study the "linguistic ecology" of prepositions. One way to do so is to use computer corpora.

3.1 Corpus-based analysis

In this study, two corpora, namely, the British National Corpus (BNC) and the English textbook corpus will be used and compared to find out the frequency occurrence of prepositions. Three corpus-related studies by Kennedy (1987), Holmes (1988) and Mindt (1992) have similar methodologies using sample textbooks and standard English corpora and carried out a comparative study between the two. Kennedy has researched ways of expressing quantification and frequency in ESL textbooks, Holmes examined ways of expressing doubt and certainty in ESL textbooks while Mindt looked into the future time expressions in German textbooks. Most researches in this area found that there are discrepancies or considerable differences between what textbooks are teaching and how native speakers actually use language as evidenced in the corpora. The implication being in the area of materials development particularly that of textbook writing (Tan, 2001).

3.1.1 British National Corpus

One of the corpora used in this study is the British National Corpus (BNC). The British National Corpus is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources designed to represent a wide cross-section of current British English, both spoken and written (accessible from, http://www.natc orp.ox.ac.uk/). In this study, the frequency for both spoken and written will be used in order to compare with the textbook corpus used in this study to find out the similarities and the differences in the frequency order of prepositions. It does not have the intention of comparing it with how native speakers actually use language as in Kennedy (1987), Holmes (1988) and Mindt (1992).

3.1.2 English Textbook Corpus

In order to compare the frequency occurrence of prepositions, the textbook corpus is also needed. This lower secondary textbook corpus consists of 153,889 running words. The corpus created for this investigation consisted of the lower secondary Malaysian English textbooks used in Form One, Two and Three English classes. In the judgment of the authors, the material included in the corpus comprised what would typically be thought of as the core instructional material for teaching, that which most teachers could reasonably be expected to cover when using the textbook for one year in each class.

3.2 WordSmith Tools 4.0

WordSmith Tools are integrated programmes that look at how words behave in a text. Oxford University Press uses the tools for the lexicographic work in preparing dictionaries. These tools are also useful for language teachers, students and researchers in investigating language patterns. There are three analysis tools, that of, WordList, Concord and KeyWords. For the purpose of this study, the WordList tool was used to find out the frequency occurrence of the prepositions as suggested by the KBSM syllabus within and across the three textbooks. The Concord tool was used for detailed analysis on concordance entries for each preposition. This is to find out the differences in the use of prepositions in terms of categories and in terms of their co-occurrence with other parts of speech.

4. Results and Discussion

The presentation of the results of the analysis and the discussion will follow the order of research questions stated earlier.

4.1 What are the distributions of prepositions in the English Language textbooks of Form One, Two and Three? (RQ 1)

These are the prepositions that are required to be taught at the lower secondary level based on the KBSM syllabus. The prepositions found in the English Language textbooks of Form One, Two and Three are presented in a decreasing order: *to*, *of*, *in*, *on*, *from*, *at*, *by*, *after*, *before*, *between*, *near*, *under*, *behind* and *in front of* (Table 1). The preposition *to* has appeared in Form One, 1,136 times and the frequency increased in the Form Two and Form Three English Language textbooks. The increasing frequency occurrences have also appeared for the prepositions *in*, *before*, *near* and *under*. However, with the other prepositions, *of*, *at*, *between* and *behind*, they began with a higher frequency for Form One and lower frequency occurrences in Form Two and slightly higher in Form Three compared with either Form One or Form Two. The other prepositions with decreasing frequency occurrences from Form One to Form Three textbooks were the prepositions *on* and *after*. The prepositions *from*, *by* and *in front of* have dwindling frequency occurrences as they appeared in the English Language textbooks of Form One, Two and Three.

4.2 What is the order of prepositions in the English Language textbooks of Form One, Two and Three in comparison with the BNC? (RQ 2)

In order to answer this research question, a comparison between the British National Corpus (BNC) and the textbook corpus was made.

The order of prepositions as presented based on the BNC (accessible from Word Frequencies in Written and Spoken English (WFWSE) in http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/bncfreq/flists.html) is quite different compared to the order of prepositions in Form One, Two and Three textbooks (Table 2). In the textbook corpus, for instance, *to* comes first before *of* and *in*. The preposition *from* appears before *at* and *by*. The preposition *before* appears after the preposition *after* and before *between* and *near*. The prepositions in the textbook corpus which were in the same order as in the BNC were *on*, *at*, *after* and *in front of*. The prepositions *on* and *by* have shown a difference in the frequency order between the BNC and the textbook corpus. The preposition *on* is placed higher than *by*. This has made the prepositions *at* and *from* to be in between *on* and *by*.

This study has revealed that for certain prepositions, the frequency order does not quite agree between the textbook corpus and the BNC. The reason for that is unknown but it might have to do with the content of the corpora. This study consists of texts from textbooks whereas the BNC consists of all kinds of written texts, for example, "extracts from regional and national newspapers, specialist periodicals and journals of all ages and interests, academic books and popular fiction, published and unpublished letters and memoranda, school and university essays" (accessible from, http://www.natc orp.ox.ac.uk/).

4.3 What are the differences in the use of prepositions identified in the English Language textbooks of Form One, Two and Three? (RQ 2)

4.3.1 Differences in terms of categories of prepositions

The first part of this research question looks at the differences for the same prepositions which are used differently in different categories and the differences are observed in terms of frequency occurrence.

As stated in the KBSM syllabus, the prepositions *on*, *at* and *by* need to be taught as prepositions of place and time (Table 3 and Table 4). In terms of its frequency of occurrence, *on* is mostly used for place, with 292 occurrences and has appeared mostly in the Form Two textbook whereas in the time category, there appears to be 62 occurrences and mostly in Form One. However, *by* is used with time more, with 17 occurrences, than with place, which counts for 9 occurrences.

The preposition *at* is also used with both prepositions of place and time. *At* is used more with place than with time, with 126 occurrences. The preposition *at* is used with time, with 72 occurrences for all three textbooks, Form One, Form Two and Form Three.

4.3.2 Differences in terms of the co-occurrence with other parts of speech

The second part of this research question looks at the differences in the use of prepositions for each category in terms of the co-occurrence with other parts of speech.

In order to answer this part, first, the prepositions which are presented far lesser than the others based on each category are looked into. Second, in the case of prepositions of directions, both *to* and *from* are looked into for the purpose of comparisons.

Prepositions of place

In the category of prepositions of place, *in* has the highest frequency of 1,234 as opposed to *behind*, with 7 occurrences, *in front of*, with 10 occurrences, and *by*, with 8 occurrences and *between* with only 3 (Table 5).

The prepositions of place *behind*, *in front of*, *by* and *between* may express the relative position of two objects or groups of objects (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1989).

Behind is used with article (the) + adjective (flood) + noun (wall) as in

bursts its banks, the water will stay behind the flood wall. Straightening the

It is also used with object pronoun (me) as in

victims at the moment. As you can see behind me, the volunteers (4) (distribute)

Besides, it is also used with possessive adjective (my, our) + noun (back, house)

hands with the rascal. I put both hands behind my back. This was Rupert's

We were shocked. Part of the hill behind our house had been washed

Both verbs (stay, see) and nouns (hands, hill) precede *behind* in these instances.

In front of is used with article (a, the) + noun (television, playground) as in

people who spend too much time in front of the television may become

in front of next to/by Sufian's house is in front of a playground but behind a row

In front of is also used with possessive adjective (their, her) + noun (computers, house) as in

Some teenagers would rather sit in front of their computers and television
noisy. There are frequent traffic jams in front of her house. 4 Fairoz lives in a

It is also used with object pronoun (me, him) as in

The Prisoner of Zenda The Castle was in front of me. It looked more than ever
of the hill. I can see only the rooftops in front of me. The houses by the side of
His servants set his breakfast in front of him. But when Midas touched

The nouns (time, traffic jams, rooftops, breakfast) and the verbs (is, sit, was) precede *in front of*.

By is used with article (a, the) + noun (sea, seaside, waterfall) as in

house. 4 Fairoz lives in a fishing village by the sea. , The house is on stilts. It
describe the hobby. A B My aunt lives by the seaside. She collects unusual
of beautiful flowers. We had a picnic by the waterfall and played in the cool

Both nouns (village, picnic) and the verb (lives) precede *by*.

By is also used with article (a, the) + adjective (large) + noun (window) as in

they find a lot of food. They stand by a large window and peer into the

In this case, the verb (stand) precedes *by*.

The prepositions of place, *behind*, *in front of* and *by* reveal the use of articles, nouns and verbs with these prepositions. Besides, there are also instances in which possessive adjective, object pronoun and adjective being used.

Being the least presented one, as it appears in the concordance, *between* is used with article (the) + noun (tower and cannibals) as in *between* the tower and *between* the cannibals and it is also used with article (the) and possessive noun (whale's teeth) as in *between* the whale's teeth. Besides, article (the) + noun (spaces and road) precede *between* as in, the spaces *between* and the road *between*. The reflexive pronoun (himself) also precedes *between* as in, places himself *between*

that it can pass through the spaces between the whale's teeth and into its
of the river are underwater. The road between the tower and the hill is also
He is thankful. He places himself between the cannibals and their victim.

Even if this preposition is not required to be taught in Form One, it is the least favorable as there is only one time occurrence to show it as a preposition of place. In the concordance, it is used with possessive adjective (her) + noun (parents) as in *her parents.* The verb (sit) precedes *between* as in, to sit *between*.

watching television. Zalina prefers to sit between her parents. Zuraidah's cat

As such *between* should be taught along with articles, possessive adjective, possessive noun, nouns as well as reflexive pronoun and verb.

Preposition of time

In the category of prepositions of time, the preposition of time *after* is the highest, 83, as opposed to *by* with 17 (Table 6).

When speaking of time, *by* usually means 'before or at' (Lindstromberg, 1998). *By* means 'no later than' for time (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). *By* also specifies commencement point (Swan, 1988).

The preposition of time *by* is clearer when the time point is given. In fact, the recurring combinations centre around time of the day.

exhibits but we 10 ... to leave the place by 6.00 p.m. Say it right Read these
a specific time ▪ Complete your work by 2.00 p.m. 'before' means earlier than
because I can think best at that time. By 1.00 p.m., I feel drowsy and begin to
her family. She usually goes to bed by 11.00 p.m. Chapter 8 (Text 1) Dr
before going out to play in the evening. By 6.30 p.m. she has to be home. She

Salt, Natural flavour B RM4.10 c D Use by:30.11.20__ Store in cool place H I 1

Mantin and returning on the same day by 6 p.m. Forty students and three

However, there is a very minimal finding on the preposition of time *by* used with days, dates, months, years and also *by* that specifies commencement point.

said that (2) have to hand in our project by Tuesday or we w\ lose marks. The

Please inform the Secretary by 18 June 20_ _, if you cannot attend

that river. It should be completed by next month. The government will build

continues, rainforests will disappear by the year 2030. Let's Explore Read the

of the world's people will live in cities by 2030. 2 There will be more and more

In the concordance, nouns precede *by* the most as in place *by*, work *by*, bed *by*, day *by*, project *by*, Secretary *by* and cities *by* whereas verbs present the least as in use *by*, completed *by* and disappear *by*. The use of *by* as preposition of time also marks the beginning of a sentence as in *By* 1.00 p.m. and *By* 6.30 p.m.

As such, the preposition of time *by* should be taught along with noun, verb and its presentation at the beginning of a sentence.

Prepositions of direction

The preposition of direction *to* has a higher frequency occurrence, 177 as compared to *from* with 67 (Table 7). Literally, *to* and *from* has its meanings of starting point and destination (Swan, 1988).

In simple directions from one place to another *to* and *from* are used with article (a, the) + noun (court, shops, shore, factories, school, sinking ship, roof) as in

I'd love to but I'm too lazy to cycle to the court every evening. There are a

into the past tense. 1 We run to the shops. 2 They fry eggs for dinner.

the water. He tells the old man to swim to the shore. Crusoe and Xury sail away

waste. Industrial waste comes from factories. It includes toxic or

and hit him as he was walking home from school. The driver of the car said

boat picked up the crew of sailors from the sinking ship. 5 Our school lost

In modern houses, the rainwater flows from the roof, into the gutter,2 and down

In a number of common expressions, article is dropped after a preposition (Swan, 1988).

has been disturbing you on the way to school. 5 You wish to collect

asked Mrs. Horsefall. "You go by train from Kuala Lumpur," said Captain

Sufian wants to go back to school from Taman Midah. Give him the

We were worried. Quickly, we rushed to Wanis Fashion House, which was. the

There is also an instance in which *to* is used with article (the) + possessive noun (mechanic's workshop) as in

car couldn't start and we had to push it to the mechanic's workshop. It was just

In most instances, articles and nouns are used with *to* and *from* for simple directions with minimal instances on possessive nouns and omission of articles in common expressions. Both nouns (home, sailors, way, train, school) and verbs (run, swim, comes, flows, rushed) precede *to* and *from*.

There are cases where *from* and *to* are used in the same sentence.

Two months ago, as I was walking from the bus-stop to school, a few boys

visitors are encouraged to walk from the front gate to the main building.

it turned to gold. He quickly ran from bush to bush and turned them into

yesterday evening, Sarimah was going from her house to the stationery shop.

take turns to drive my brother and me from one tuition class to another. Life is

to from up down out of into We walked to the shop from the school. I walked up

to from up down out of into We walked to the shop from the school. I walked up

Dear Justin, Here are the directions to the community hall from SMK Gunung

In these cases, verbs (walked, ran, go, encouraged) precede *from* and followed by an article (the) or a possessive adjective (her) or an adjective (tuition) before nouns (bus-stop, front gate, bush, house, class, shop, community).

As such, the prepositions of direction *to* and *from* should be taught along with noun, verb, article, possessive adjective and adjective.

5. Conclusion

The findings have shown several insights in this study. Firstly, the order of prepositions found in the English Language textbooks of Form One, Two and Three has revealed how many times they are used in the textbooks and either directly or indirectly students have been exposed with those prepositions in varying degrees. This is important as learning of prepositions takes place because the frequency of occurrence of individual words or phrases is in itself significant (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). In ESL environment, students need to be exposed to the language as much as possible to gain sufficient input and exposure. For instance, the use of prepositions *behind* and *in front of* with only less than 10 for each in Form One and Form Two textbooks is not enough for exposure to students. Even in vocabulary studies, repetition of words is very important to ensure acquisition of new vocabulary (Mukundan & Anealka, 2007). One kind of repetition that is important is repetition of encounters with a word. It has been estimated that, when reading, words stand a good chance of being remembered if they have been met at least seven times over spaced intervals (Thornbury, 2002).

Secondly, this study has revealed that for certain prepositions, the frequency order does not quite agree between the textbook corpus and the BNC. There have been criticisms against the frequency order. Howarth (1998) and Widdowson (1990) questioned the pedagogical usefulness of frequency lists generated by corpora as they feel frequency does not indicate any significance especially in the area of problematic processing of language. Thornbury (2004) has noted that in terms of frequency, it is not always the case that the most frequently occurring items are the most useful and in terms of an item's teachability, despite being among the most frequently used words in the language, their formal presentation is usually delayed until a relatively advanced level. However, according to Mahlberg (2007), frequency is relative, and an important factor in corpus work is comparison. Frequencies of individual words have to be seen in relation to words in their contexts. Even though function words are very frequent and can co-occur in a variety of texts, we can still identify collocational tendencies and see how frequent words have their own patterns.

Thirdly, this study has also revealed the importance of the differences for the same prepositions which are used differently in different categories in terms of frequency occurrence. In this study, prepositions *on*, *at* and *by* are presented in the categories of prepositions of place and time. This contributes to the difficulty to learn to use prepositions correctly as most of them have several different functions (Swan, 1988).

Fourthly, this study has also shown the differences in the use of prepositions for each category in terms of the co-occurrence with other parts of speech. The focus was on those prepositions which are presented less based on categories as it is in the judgement of the author that these prepositions are less exposed to the students by the textbooks and thus, they need to be highlighted in order to give more exposure to students in terms of 'what is usual and typical'. A major focus of corpus linguistics is therefore to describe what is usual and typical (Stubbs, 2007). In this study, other parts of speech co-occur with these prepositions in English textbooks, namely, articles, nouns, verbs, possessive nouns, reflexive pronouns, object pronouns, possessive adjective and adjectives. Having examined the KBSM syllabus, most of them are items listed to be taught to Form One, Form Two and Form Three students in Malaysian lower secondary schools, however, there are also grammar items that are not listed, namely, possessive nouns, object pronouns, reflexive pronouns in Form One, Form Two and Form Three KBSM syllabus and possessive adjectives in Form Two and Form Three KBSM syllabus.

6. Recommendations

The results of this corpus-based study could be used as guidelines to provide recommendations on the teaching of English. As Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1994) have suggested, "corpus-based research sheds new light on some of our most basic assumptions about English grammar, and as a result it offers the possibility of more effective and appropriate pedagogical applications."

While studies have shown why prepositions cause such difficulty for ESL/EFL students, a pedagogical strategy that enables students to pay attention to their co-occurrence, will no doubt facilitate learners' acquisition of these difficult lexico-grammatical forms (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

Teaching suggestions can be adopted from Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999). For instance, in teaching the form of prepositions, at the beginning and intermediate levels, it probably suffices to make sure that when new verbs or

adjectives are introduced, any prepositions that occur with them are also taught. The meaning of prepositions can be taught using a matrix, such as the one adopted from Quirk et al. (1985). To associate forms and meanings, there is a children's game that affords practice with prepositions however, they may not be appropriate for older learners. The use of maps and pictures can also aid students with several groups of prepositions that are frequently confused by learners. Kennedy (1991) encourages to help students learn about prepositions by learning about "the company they keep." Advanced learners could be assigned to explore the collocations of particular prepositions in a variety of texts.

However, ESL teachers should be able to plan strategies and select or adapt appropriate teaching materials to be used in teaching prepositions. All the prepositions stipulated in the syllabus must be introduced and taught repetitively in a structured way according to its functions to enhance students' understanding. As it has been emphasized the teaching of grammar is to be incorporated into the four language skills and should be taught in context and in a meaningful way. Hence, it may be then that we shouldn't teach certain prepositions in isolation but rather to teach them as in relation to their occurrence with other words (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

Other than using grammar books, internet sources, dictionaries and the textbooks, teachers may consider using a concordancer. A concordancer is a computer program which is used to find the occurrences of every single word or phrase in a text (Sinclair, 1991). Teachers could also retrieve concordance entries from the accessible website and prepare exercises for their students. The concordancer and concordancing is one example where "the technology can be used to promote autonomous learning." Such an approach may help in the "empowerment of students' (Butler, 1990). Students may be able to learn and recognize the typical uses of prepositions better if they are asked to detect the pattern on their own. Their sensitivity to the language can be developed if they are encouraged to discover the patterns of use in prepositions.

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Table 1. Distributions of prepositions in Form One, Two and Three textbooks

	Prepositions	Total	F1	F2	F3
1	to	3,921	1,136	1,202	1,583
2	of	2,722	1,895	750	752
3	in	1,760	693	869	998
4	on	920	265	334	321
5	from	589	183	158	248
6	at	546	194	170	182
7	by	391	116	148	127
8	after	189	86	52	51
9	before	111	24	42	45
10	between	53	21	15	17
11	near	53	10	23	20
12	under	23	15	16	21
13	behind	23	6	4	13
14	in front of	15	4	1	10

Table 2. Comparisons of preposition order in the BNC and in the English Language textbooks of Form One, Two and Three

	Prepositions in the BNC	Prepositions in the textbook
1	of	to
2	in	of
3	to	in
4	on	on
5	by	from
6	at	at
7	from	by
8	after	after
9	between	before
10	under	between
11	before	near
12	behind	under
13	near	behind
14	in front of	in front of

Table 3. Frequency counts for *on*, *by* and *at* as prepositions of place

Prepositions	Total	F1	F2	F3
on	292	75	115	102
by	8	2	4	2
at	126	Not listed in the KBSM	64	62

Table 4. Frequency counts for *on*, *by* and *at* as prepositions of time

Prepositions	Total	F1	F2	F3
at	72	41	21	10
on	62	29	19	14
by	17	5	8	4

Table 5. Frequency Counts of Prepositions of Place

Prepositions	Total	F1	F2	F3
in	1,234	358	452	414
on	292	75	115	102
near	24	8	19	7
under	22	5	10	7
behind	7	2	1	4
by	8	2	4	2
in front of	10	3	1	6
at	126	Not listed in the KBSM	64	62
between	3	Not listed in the KBSM	1	2

Table 6. Frequency Counts of Prepositions of Time

Prepositions	Total	F1	F2	F3
at	72	41	21	10
on	62	29	19	14
by	17	5	8	4
before	49	15	23	21
after	83	20	34	29

Table 7. Frequency Counts of Prepositions of Direction

Prepositions	Total	F1	F2	F3
to	177	51	84	42
from	67	24	24	19

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

A Survey Study of Autonomous Learning by Chinese Non-English Major Post-graduates

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Abstract

This thesis reports a survey study of the autonomous L2 learning by 100 first-year non-English-major Chinese post-graduates via the instruments of a questionnaire and semi-structured interview after the questionnaire. It attends to address the following research question: To what extent do Chinese postgraduate students conduct autonomous L2 learning? It was found that the overall degree of the postgraduates' autonomous English learning is not so satisfactory as expected. Much needs to be done in order to have a deeper insight into the essence of the learner autonomy and make contributions to the realization of learner autonomy for postgraduates.

Keywords: Autonomous learning, Survey, Non-English major post-graduates

1. Introduction

The factor which prompted me to do a research on autonomous L2 learning by Chinese postgraduates is my observation in person that although the autonomous L2 learning has been required by the curriculum and highly highlighted by both researchers and practitioners, it is a path seldom treaded by many of the Non-English major postgraduates. Being a would-be researcher, non-English postgraduates are required to improve on their English competence via autonomous learning, and they have already been equipped with the essential linguistic groundwork as well as more free time to deal with the autonomous L2 learning. Yet we don't how to what extent they are able to conduct autonomous L2 learning. Such an observation ensured me of the need to conduct the present study.

2. Literature review

At first, it is a necessity to explore the basic concepts of learner autonomy by reviewing the major definitions and features of learner autonomy.

2.1 Definitions of Learner Autonomy

Holec (1981) defines autonomous learning as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". And he elaborates this basic definition as follows: determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition (rhythm, time, place, etc.) and evaluating what has been acquired.

Little (1991) argues that "Essentially, autonomy is a capacity---for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts."

From the above definitions, we should make clear that Learner autonomy is learners' capacity that is exercised and displayed during the process of autonomous learning, while autonomous learning is an act of learning whereby motives learners consciously make best decisions about their own learning. Learning alone is often seen as a necessary element of autonomous learning.

2.2 Individual differences in English learning

It is obvious that not all the students are successful learners in English because of such individual differences as their linguistic competence, learning motivations, different learning styles and different learning strategies.

2.2.1 Learner beliefs

Learner beliefs (Richardson, 1996), are "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true".

Corder (1967) said, "Given motivation, anyone can learn a language." The phrase brings out the importance of motivation and the way it can overcome unfavorable circumstances in other aspects of language learning.

Self-confidence also plays an important role in language learning. All things being equal, the self-confident person

tends to be a more successful learner, because such people have the advantage of not fearing rejection and are therefore more likely to put themselves in learning situations and do so repeatedly.

2.2.2 Learning strategies

Almost every student is using his or her preferred learning strategies consciously or unconsciously in the procedure of English learning. Learning strategy is firmly believed to be the key to promoting AEL (Wenden 1985, cited in Brown 1987:84). When students are inhibited from using their favorite strategy, it is impossible for them to learn language efficiently.

(1)Cognitive Strategies

According to O'Malley (1990: 44), cognitive strategies "operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning. "Learners may use any or all of the following cognitive strategies (Cook, 1993:1 143-115):

(2) Meta-cognitive Strategies

According to Wenden (1998:34), "meta-cognitive knowledge includes all facts learners acquire about their own cognitive processes as they are applied and used to gain knowledge and acquire skills in varied situations". In a sense, "they are strategies about learning rather than learning strategies themselves" (Cook, 1993:114).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research questions

The present study intends to address the following research question about to what extent do Chinese postgraduate students conduct autonomous L2 learning, which will be discussed from the following five aspects.

1). What are their beliefs in autonomous L2 learning?

2). Can they determine their objectives of autonomous L2 learning?

3). Can they implement the strategies of autonomous L2 learning?

4). Can they monitor their process of autonomous L2 learning?

5). Can they evaluate the efficacy of their autonomous L2 learning?

3.2 Subjects

The subjects of the present study are the 100 first-year non-English postgraduates from Jiangsu University. All of them have passed TEM 4/6, and postgraduate students are faced with more academic reading and writing in English, which should be done with their own efforts via AL.

3.3 Instruments

The quantitative data in this research were collected from one revised questionnaire. The theoretical foundations of the revised questionnaire are based on Xu Jinfen. et al (2004) definition of the English learning autonomy in the English teaching context in China, Schunk D.H & Zimmerman B. J.'s (1994) ideas on major research framework of learner autonomy and Littlewood's (1996) opinions on components of autonomy.

Insert Table 3.1 here!

3.4 Interview

After the questionnaire investigation, interviews were conducted to add a qualitative research support the whole investigation, from which the qualitative data of the research were acquired.

3.5 Data collection and Data analysis

Data were collected during regular class time over a one-week span, which could be roughly divided into three phases. Phase one was the treatment for the students. In this phase, the students were required to understand the purpose of the author's survey. Phase two was answering the questionnaires. Phase three was in the process of the interviews.

The questionnaire measures the degree of non-major English postgraduates' L2 learning on a five-point Likert Scale, which ranges from 1 to 5. Postgraduates were asked to judge whether the statements were true for them. They could write A, B, C, D or E according to their own specific case. They got 5 points to 1 point for each A to each E.

As is stated previously, the qualitative data come from the semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed by the research. The transcription was analyzed to find in-depth understanding of the subjects' beliefs and behaviors of their autonomous L2 learning.

4. Results and Discussions

This chapter provides the results of the study mainly from the descriptive analyses of students' autonomous English learning competence.

As shown in Table 4.1, the mean value of the responses to these five areas was below the medium level. Among them, the average mean of the postgraduates' beliefs in autonomous L2 learning was the highest (Mean=3.39). The average mean of the postgraduates' competence of evaluating the autonomous L2 learning was the lowest(Mean=3.10).

Insert Table 4.1 here!

In order to gain a better understanding of postgraduates' autonomous L2 learning situation, these five specific areas are examined respectively in the following tables.

4.1 Believing in autonomous L2 learning

Table 4.2 illustrates the frequencies, means and standard deviations of their beliefs in autonomous L2 learning.

Insert Table 4.2 here

As seen in Item 1, in response to the question “clear idea of the postgraduates’ teachers aims” (Item 1), and almost 33 students could have a clear idea of the teachers’ teaching aims, and almost one out of five students were not sure about it, since the mean score was rather low (3.29). While considering whether they can have clear idea of the purpose of class activities set by the teachers in class (Item 2), only 44 students agreed with it, yet 36 students gave neutral answers together with 34 disagreements, the mean score was 3.30. Responses to item 3 shows that a majority of postgraduates realize the importance of making the teacher’s aims and purposes their own (Item 3, Mean=4.03).

From Table 4.2, we know that most of students are not used to judging the teaching efficiency (Item 5, Mean=3.27), which may be illustrated by the following statements made by the subjects in the interview:

I'm not fully aware of the teachers’ objectives in class. I can not identify the difference the purpose of L2 learning between college and graduate school (subject 9)

I am not used to judging what my English teachers told and just do what the teachers ask.(subject 2)

The results in Table 4.2 leave instructors a most deep thinking question. In classroom, the role of teacher should not be a leader, but a facilitator—to help, to mediate, to encourage students to learn. There is a Chinese saying, "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime". In classroom teaching, the teacher should make his aims clearly understood by students, and use different strategies to make students fully and actively involved in the classroom activity.

Therefore, the teacher should have their own training about the teaching strategies, enforcing the importance of the aim of education.

4.2 Determining the objectives of autonomous L2 learning

Table 4.3 indicates the frequencies, means and standard deviations of determining the learning objectives.

Insert Table 4.3 here

As listed in Table 4.1, the overall average mean in this area was only 3.33 which indicated that a large number of postgraduates were incapable of determining their own postgraduates’ English learning objectives because their learning habits are still affected by their habits of being college students. Based on the table 4.3, Specifically, it showed that the majority of postgraduates couldn’t have a clear schedule for English autonomous learning after class (Item 5, Mean=3.31), which is their biggest obstacle in this area. As a postgraduate, the practical use of English in their majors, such as reading major literatures and paper writing in English, is particularly essential and crucial to them. However, the result of the research in this respect is far away from being satisfactory. It showed that not many postgraduates can have a clear idea of the demands for reading literature about their majors (item 8, Mean=3.12), and only 34 postgraduates have clear idea of finishing their paper in English (item 9, Mean=3.33) and only 20 of them have a clear idea of demands for communicating with foreign experts (item 10, Mean=3.08)

The followings are the interviews' main response to some interview questions:

In my research, I am used to reading Chinese articles and publishing my findings in Chinese journals firstly. I hardly want to publish my papers in foreign journals (subject 6)

I hardly participate the international conference, as a result, I have no chance to communicate with those foreign experts.(subject 15)

The results from Table 4.3 indicated that it is not so satisfactory for the majority of postgraduates in English autonomous L 2 learning. In particular, there is a long way to go in the practical impact of English on their majors’ research. The main reason for this is impacted by the traditional language learning style. For years, Students are left with very little or no choice in learning English but to pass the diverse exams. Affected by this fact, the students don't have their own English learning plan besides assignments of the teachers and can't manage their time of autonomous L2 learning properly. As a result, they fail to change the role when they become postgraduates.

Affected by the traditions of teacher-centeredness, students have long been exposed to traditional and authoritative learning environments so that they are accustomed to passiveness and dependence. Consequently, they begin to believe that to be a learner is to be dependent on a teacher, textbook and formal course. Meanwhile, the traditional curricula tend to only focus on imparting knowledge to students, which in some ways restraint students' initiative in language learning.

All in all, the traditional education system and the testing system in China are neither required, valued nor nurtured in the independence and autonomy learning. We postgraduates had best change the role in autonomous L2 learning.

4.3 Defining their contents of autonomous L2 learning

Insert Table 4.4 here

From the table 4.4, it was found in the survey that most of postgraduates have a comparatively good performance of selecting the proper reading (Item 12, Mean=3.62;). In contrast, they have poor performance in the selecting communication and translating strategies (Item 13, Mean=3.12; Item 15, Mean=3.09 respectively)

Some postgraduates in the interview said in the followings:

In translating English into Chinese or Chinese into English, I hardly realize the differences in these two languages. Some translating skills can not be adopted consciously.(subject 4)

Besides, many postgraduates (22 disagreement and 45 neutral answers) were found not be able to do well in implementing the writing strategies (Item 14, Mean=3.36). The following is their response when asked they were not capable of using the writing strategies even if the traditional language testing system in China emphasized students' writing skills.

I find writing so troublesome; I disgust writing although there is writing task in the exam.(subject 3)

I found that I have nothing to say in writing. In my daily learning English, I am used to doing reading comprehension. (subject 13)

Finally the Item 11 indicated that students were not able to do well in implementing listening strategies with the average mean being 3.33. Comments in the qualitative study shed light on the use of it:

The listening material of the textbook is boring, so in listening classes of multimedia classrooms, I prefer watching English movies to practicing. (subject 19)

In a few words, learning how to learn is necessary in the modern society. The main task for instructors is to create opportunities for students making them in actual use. As far as communicating and translating strategies are concerned, most students seldom have the opportunity to communicate with foreigners. The English knowledge from textbooks should not neglect the competence of communication and translating.

4.4 Monitoring the process of autonomous L2 learning

Insert Table 4.5 here

From Table 4.5, it was not difficult to notice that we can see that some students (52) often evaluate the learning strategies to find out the ineffective ones and improve them (Item 21, Mean=3.43). However, they could not monitor the use of learning strategies well, especially the writing and communicating strategies, and the average means of them were at a lower level (Item 19, Mean=3.32; Item 16, Mean=3.18 respectively). Comparatively, the item (18) of reading strategies reflects a higher degree (3.53). Here are the general opinions of the interviewees:

I don't know how to monitor the use of learning strategies well, especially the communication, translating and writing strategies.(subject 24)

After four years of learning English in college, some postgraduates realize the importance of the English learning strategies in a real sense, however, it does not seem to reach the ideal situation in this respect since there is lack of strategies training. As for postgraduates, most of them have a certain foundation in L2 learning, it is not so important to impart knowledge into them as to enrich the ability of monitoring the use of strategies, and the full use after each strategy introduced is preferred. The lack of learning strategies can not only delay the process of learning, but cause the interests of learning. Hence, it is very urgent to equip learning strategies with students.

4.5 Evaluating the efficacy of their autonomous L2 learning

Insert Table 4.6 here

The students were found not willing to have a cooperative learning (Item 22, Mean=2.70 and Item 23, Mean=2.64). This may be attested by the following remarks made by the students in the interview:

Sometimes we have cooperative activities in class, but most of us don't enjoy them. For we think they are meaningless, dull and a waste of time. We gain little from such activities. (subject 11)

A considerably large number of postgraduates were found able to actively read the research papers in English (Item 25, Mean=3.42). Unfortunately, most of them were passive in finishing their research papers in English (Item 26, Mean=2.69). As some of interviewees have mentioned in the interview:

In publishing my research papers, the Chinese journals are my first choices, for I have some difficulties in writing my papers in English. (subject 2)

In addition, they were able to notice the language errors during language learning and found out the reasons for them (Item 27, Mean=3.31).

From Table 4.6, we can draw a conclusion that postgraduates are generally incompetent to evaluate their autonomous L2 learning. As a result, we English teachers should create more opportunities for cooperative learning, and hold more English activities for them to practice their English. Teachers try to foster their communicative ability, while students prefer giving response together. When writing compositions, some students can consciously apply the newly got knowledge into practice and make use of the available learning sources.

5. Conclusion

Base on the survey study, it was found that the overall degree of the postgraduates' autonomous English learning is not so satisfactory as expected. They have no very definite motivation and objectives of autonomous L2 learning in the stage of being postgraduates. What is more, they fail to be aware of the significance and the role of English in their major research. Meanwhile, most of postgraduates are so passive in cooperative learning and English activities, such as exchanging with foreign experts and paper writing in English in the foreign journals.

All in all, much needs to be done in order to have a deeper insight into the essence of the learner autonomy and make contributions to the realization of learner autonomy for postgraduates.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 English Majors' Autonomy Competence Questionnaire

Your choices should be from A to E. A means completely true with me; B means usually true with me; C means sometimes true with me; D means not usually true with me and E means never true with me at all.

1. I have a clear idea of the postgraduates' teachers' teaching aims.

2. I have a clear idea of the purpose of class activities set by the teachers in class.

3. I think I can successfully make the teachers' aims and purposes their own

4. I always correctly judge the teaching efficiency.
5. I am able to have clear schedule of English autonomous learning after class
6. I am able to plan the study time well for English learning.
7. I have clear idea of the demands for spoken and written abilities for the postgraduates.
8. I have a clear idea of demands for reading literature about my major.
9. I have a clear idea of demands for paper writing in English
10. I have a clear idea of demands for communicating with foreign experts orally.
11. I can implement appropriate listening strategies consciously in listening.
12. I can implement appropriate reading strategies consciously in reading
13. I can implement appropriate communicating strategies consciously in a conversation
14. I can implement appropriate writing strategies consciously in writing.
15. I can implement appropriate translating strategies consciously in translating.
16. I can monitor the use of communication consciously and critically in a conversation
17. I can monitor the use of listening strategies consciously and critically in listening exercise.
18. I can monitor the use of reading strategies consciously and critically in reading exercise
19. I can monitor the use of writing strategies consciously and critically in writing exercise
20. I can monitor the use of translating strategies consciously and critically in translating exercise.
21. I am able to use other more appropriate strategies after I had identified the strategies were not appropriate.
22. I actively look for opportunities to practice English with my classmates after class.
23. I actively look for opportunities to practice English with my teachers or foreigners after class.
24. I actively look for opportunities to participate in a variety of English activities after class.
25. I actively read my research papers in English.
26. I actively finish my research papers in English.
27. I am able to find out the reasons for language errors and take measures to correct them

Appendix 2 Interview

1. I am aware of the teachers' objectives in class and different purpose of L2 learning between college and graduate school.
2. In research I prefer Chinese journals to English ones.
3. I like to exchange foreign experts in my research field.
4. In translating I can have a definite idea of the difference between English and Chinese.
5. I like writing in English.
6. I know how to monitor the use of learning strategies well. especially the communication, translating and writing strategies.
7. I would like to cooperate with others to learn English.

Table 3.2. The categories of the questionnaire items

Category	Total items	Item number in the questionnaire
Beliefs in autonomous learning	4	1,2,3,4
Determining the objectives	6	5,6,7,8,9,10
Implementing the learning strategies	5	11,12,13,14,15
Monitoring the process of autonomous L2 learning	6	16,17,18,19,20,21
Evaluating the efficacy of autonomous L2 learning	7	22,23,24,25,26,27,28

Table 4.1. Average mean of all categories of overall picture of the postgraduates' AL

		N	Mean	SD
Average mean of all the 5 categories		100	3.35	.44
Category 1	Believing in autonomous L2 learning	100	3.39	.50
Category 2	Determining the learning objectives	100	3.33	.46
Category 3	Implementing the strategies	100	3.58	.38
Category4	Monitoring the process	100	3.36	.43
Category 5	Evaluating the efficacy	100	3.10	.41

Table 4.2 Average means of their beliefs in autonomous L2 learning

Items	content	Measuring level					Mean	S.D
		5	4	3	2	1		
1	Clear idea of the postgraduates' teachers teaching aims	1	32	35	19	13	3.29	.913
2	Clear idea of the purpose of class activities set by the teachers in class.	5	39	36	20	12	3.30	.807
3	Knowing the importance of making the teachers' aims and purposes their own.	31	52	9	4	4	4.03	.936
4	Correctly judging the teaching efficiency	4	22	39	25	10	3.27	.885

Table 4.3 Average means of determining the objectives of autonomous L2 learning

Items	Content	Measuring level					Mean	S.D
		5	4	3	2	1		
5	Having clear schedule of English autonomous learning after class	8	30	37	23	2	3.31	.895
6	Being able to plan the study time well	5	45	30	16	4	3.32	.723
7	Clear idea of the demands for written and spoken abilities	3	31	49	10	7	3.24	.817
8	Clear idea of demands for reading literature about my major	5	30	45	13	7	3.12	.896
9	Clear idea of demands for paper writing in English	4	30	51	10	5	3.33	.711
10	Clear idea of demands for communicating with foreign experts orally	5	15	55	18	7	3.08	.849

Table 4.4. Average mean of implementing appropriate learning strategies

Items	Content	Measuring level					Mean	S.D
		5	4	3	2	1		
11	Implementing appropriate listening strategies consciously in listening	5	40	49	4	2	3.33	.714
12	Implementing appropriate reading strategies consciously in reading	3	59	31	5	2	3.62	.647
13	Implementing appropriate communication strategies consciously in a conversation	2	21	62	10	5	3.12	.755
14	Implementing appropriate writing strategies consciously in writing	3	30	45	18	4	3.36	.753
15	Implementing appropriate translating strategies consciously in translating	5	40	45	8	2	3.09	.753

Table 4.5. Average means of the monitoring their process

Items	Content	Measuring level					Mean	S.D
		5	4	3	2	1		
16	Monitoring the use of communication consciously and critically in a conversation	1	31	53	9	6	3.18	.743
17	Monitoring the use of listening strategies consciously and critically in listening exercise	2	39	49	7	3	3.30	..659
18	Monitoring the use of reading strategies consciously and critically in reading exercise.	3	57	31	7	1	3.53	.731
19	Monitoring the use of writing strategies consciously and critically in writing exercise.	4	46	41	7	2	3.32	.700
20	Monitoring the use of translating strategies consciously and critically in translating	3	47	40	9	1	3.30	.666
21	Often evaluating the learning strategies to find out the ineffective ones and improve them	10	42	35	10	3	3.43	.949

Table 4.6 Average means of evaluating the efficacy of their autonomous L 2 learning

Items	Content	Measuring level					Mean	S.D
		5	4	3	2	1		
22	Actively looking for opportunities to practice English with my classmates out of class	2	5	59	30	4	2.70	.717
23	Actively looking for opportunities to practice English with my teachers or foreigners out of class	0	11	49	33	7	2.64	.772
24	Actively looking for opportunities to participate in a variety of English activities out of class	0	10	45	38	7	2.59	.753
25	Actively reading the research papers in English	6	49	37	6	2	3.42	.780
26	Actively finishing my research papers in English	2	18	60	16	4	2.69	.798
27	Being able to find out the reasons for language errors and take measures to correct errors	4	43	45	6	2	3.31	.812

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

On Chinese Loan Words from English Language

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Abstract

In the recent twenty years, with China's reform and opening policy to the outside world, there is a sharp increase in English loan words in Chinese. On the one hand, it demonstrates that China's soft power has been booming up. But on the other hand, some language pollution in the meanwhile is caused by non-standard use of loan words in Chinese. This paper probes into some basic concepts of language borrowing as well as some phenomena and reasons of the language pollution through many analysis and examples in order to rectify, regulate and guide the use of English loan words with the prior translation strategy, defending the purity of the Chinese language.

Keywords: Chinese loan words, Language borrowing, Language pollution, Purity of Chinese

Introduction

Nowadays, with the rapid development of human society and the expansion of political, economic and cultural exchanges among different nations, we have more and more opportunities to communicate with the other countries and understand their cultures. The tide of globalization and the intercultural communication make us live in a global village. Intercultural communication is obviously becoming the inevitable tendency we have to face.

Language is not only the most significant tool for human communication, but also the carrier of human civilization and reflection of social reality. Recently there is a heat of learning English in China, at the same time a number of foreign languages file into our country. Therefore, language borrowing has become a very common phenomenon in language development. "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). In the process of communicating with westerners, the borrowing words from English will be the inevitable and important in China. Now we may find a lot of such borrowing words from English everywhere in China, such as soap opera, supermarket, AIDS, rock& roll, disco, break dance, party and so on.

At present there are about 6000 different languages on our planet, and every one of them has a vocabulary containing many thousands of words. "Whenever and wherever there are contacts of any sort between the speakers of different languages, speakers will make use of words from other languages to refer to things, processes, and the ways of behavior, organization, or thinking for which words or phrases were not available or convenient in their own language hitherto"(Robins, 1996:354). "Everybody is in a position to learn some of the words used by their neighbors, and very frequently people take a liking to some of their neighbors' words and take those words over into their own language"(Trask, 2000:18). These words are termed borrowings, or loanwords which may cover every aspect of human life, including politics, economy, military, culture, art, science, religion and so on. Therefore, we must admit that borrowing from English in Chinese is increasingly unprecedented.

As the English words in China become quite popular among Chinese (especially youngsters) and enriching our Chinese language, some scholars begin to worry about the purity of Chinese—our national language because to some extent, some language pollution has been caused by non-standard use of borrowing. However, at the same time, some scholars can not agree with this opinion. They carry out a series of heated debates, but at last they still can not reach an agreement, which may raise several serious questions deserving our consideration. So how should we look at our national language—Chinese? Shall we accept the existence of the foreign words in Chinese?

This paper probes into the inevitability of language borrowing, such as geography, politics, economy, culture, military as well as some phenomena and reasons of language pollution through lots of analysis and examples in order to advocate the proper use of English borrowings in our modern China.

1. Background

1.1 Concepts and early theories on language borrowing

According to dictionaries, "loan word" can be defined in many ways. For example, Webster's New World College Dictionary, third edition defines it as "a word of one language taken into another and naturalized"(Neufeldt, 1995); "a

word in one language that has been borrowed or taken over from another Language" is the definition in Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language(Krevisky and Jordan, 1996), and "a word taken into one language from another" in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English.(Summers, 1993). Besides, in Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics, loan word is defined as "Borrowing is a word or phrase which has been taken from one language and used in another language. When a single word is borrowed, it is called a loan word."(Richards, 2000). Through history, there are always arguments over the definition of loan word. Some linguists such as Gao Mingkai (1958), Wangli (1988) suggested this term should only refer to phonetic loans; some such as Lv Shuxiang (1942) would rather conclude that borrowings mean both phonetic loans and translated loans.

The writer agrees with the inference that all imported or coined words for new objects, ideas and experiences can be named "loan words", which include hybrid, phonetic and semantic loans. Saussure (2001) pointed out in his lectures that languages have no natural boundaries and there exists "intercourse" between languages and importation of foreign languages in the development of any language. Although he did not make further illustrations about language importation as his real purpose was to demonstrate geographical diversity and coexistence of languages without merging, the statements can presumably be considered as one of the earliest and authoritative arguments on language borrowing in linguistic perspective.

Sapir (2001) pointed out that the simplest kind of influence that one language may exert on another is the "borrowing" of words. When there is cultural borrowing there is always the likelihood that the associated words may be borrowed too. For example, when Christianity was introduced into England, a number of associated words, such as bishop and angel, found their way into English. The process has continued uninterruptedly down to the present day, each cultural wave bringing to the language a new deposit of loanwords.

1.2 English Loan Words in Chinese

Shi Youwei (2000:192) analysised the classification of loan words in the book " Loan Words in Chinese" and pointed out that the English loan words used in Chinese concerning every aspect of social life are found in the field of politics, arts and literature, philosophy, economics, mathematics, physics and chemistry, society, culture, education, publication and sports, religion, law, military science, botany and biology, psychology, physiology, geology and geography, building, machinery and communication, textile, clothing and daily necessities, language, foreign affairs.

1) Politics

Downing street, Whitehouse,Whig,Utopia

2) Arts and Literature

romance, waltz, club, ballet, jazz, tango,cartoon,guitar,model,saxophone

3) Philosophy

science,cynicism,logic

4) Economics

Wall Street,title,Gini coefficient,Bear market,Bull market,Engel curve,trust

5) Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry

aspirin, calorie, cocaine,nylon,nicotine,vitamine,Vaseline,iodine

6) Society, Culture, Education, Publication and Sports

Olympic,Marathon,Ping-pong,lemon,golf,parker,Gypsy,Nike

7) Religion

amen,Mummy,angel,Moslem,Jehovah,Koran,Eden,Christianity,missal,Satan

8) Law

lawyer,bylaw

9) Military Science

rifle,Gatling gun,cannon,tank

10) Botany and Biology

coca,sardine,lemon,Golf,mango

11) Psychology, Physiology, Geology and Geography

tissue,hysteria,Jurassic period,lymph

12) Building, Machinery and Communication

bus,taxi,microphone,Gothic,jeep,engine

13) Textile, Clothing and Daily Necessities

sofa,flannel,T-shirt,jacket,cigar

14) Language, Foreign Affairs and Others

modern,tip,Uncle Sam,milkshake,humor

So from the examples above we can see that along with the foreign influence on Chinese politics, economics, literature, art, philosophy, science, technology, education, daily life, and many spheres of the Chinese society, foreign languages greatly influenced the Chinese language accordingly.

Generally speaking, perhaps we can classify them into several kinds in terms of areas.

1) On daily life: e.g. green food, Kentucky, toast, Mc Donald's, hot dog, miniskirt, bikini, shampoo, sauna,AIDS

2) On entertainment: e.g. jazz, talk show, soap opera, rock and roll, disco, party, yo-yo, rally, golf, fans, karaoke

3) On morality and ideology: e.g. generation gap, bachelor mother, DINK family, Hippies, cool, streaking, white-collar

4) On science: e.g. colonel, gene, silicon valley, software, hi-tech park, radar, hacker, cyber bar, e-mail, test-tube baby, laser

1.3 The necessity and restriction of language borrowing

1.3.1 External factors inducing language borrowing

External factors in the intercourse between different languages are essential impetus to language borrowing, without which no language can borrow from another. "The intercourse may be friendly or hostile. It may move on the humdrum plane of business and trade relations or it may consist of a borrowing or interchange of spiritual goods---art, science, religion (Sapir, 1921)." That is to say, language borrowing is normally under the influence of external factors such as geographical neighbourhood, politics, economy, culture, military, and other activities between different countries.

1.3.2 Restriction of internal factors on language borrowing

The history of language borrowing in the world shows that borrowing activity between languages is normally restricted by internal factors like morphological form or writing style, phonological pattern and grammatical structure. These internal factors will at least influence the borrowing scale and borrowing manner. Languages of the same writing style usually borrow more easily from each other than those of different styles.

For example, English can easily borrow from Latin, Greek and French in bulk but from Chinese and Japanese only in a comparatively much smaller scale. The reason is not only geographical but also linguistic, because the former group are letter languages while the latter ideographic. Modern Chinese could borrow over one thousand new terms from Japanese with ease because basically the two languages have the same writing style and the borrowed are easily assimilated. Nevertheless, it should be noted that "the ability of the so-called 'homogeneous' languages to receive borrowing depends not on the linguistic structures of the language, but on the politico-social position of the speakers" (Kiparsky, qtd. in Thomason and Kaufman, 1988).

1.3.3 Major ways of lexical borrowing from English to Chinese

According to the translative means of loan words, most Chinese scholars divide English borrowings into six categories:

1) Transliteration

This is to use Chinese characters to imitate the pronunciation of foreign words, thus producing some new words, such as "coffee", "tank", "radar", "sofa", "salon", "model" and "copy", etc.

2) Transliteration plus a word indicating meaning

This way is to add a word indicating the attribute of the original word to the imitation of the whole word's pronunciation and thus readers will be clear of its nature at the first glance, such as the words "beer", "cigar ", "samba " and "golf", "car ", "neon ", "ballet ", etc.

3) Semi-transliteration

This way is to borrow the foreign words both phonetically and semantically, e.g. "ice cream", "Wall Street", "Marxism", "Hacker", "TOEFL", "Pepsi Cola", "Benz", "Shampoo"

4) Free translation

It is one of the most important ways. It can be further divided into two categories: the first is the ordinary meaning translation in which the original words are taken as a whole and new words are created according to their whole original meaning, such as "train", "Esperanto", "Symphony" and "violin"; the second is the "meaning translation with

imitation" in which the original word structures are retained and new words are formed by combination of Chinese characters, each indicating the meaning of one part in the original words, such as "honeymoon", "football" and "steamboat", etc.

5) Image translation

It is also named as "shape translation" in which the shapes of certain Chinese characters and the images of certain objects are utilized in translation. For example, in those words, such as "I steel", "Z iron", and "Zigzag", the shapes of some characters are ingeniously made use of, and for some other words, such as "peaked cap" and "bow-tie", they are endowed with certain images when entering the Chinese language.

6) Complete loan translation

a. Words borrowed from English directly adding Chinese noun, e.g. "Zhang sir", "ni hao Happy", "B chao", "Web site"

b. Complete letter abbreviation, e.g. "WTO", "EU", "APEC", "OPEC", "IQ", "MTV", "CEO", "MBA", "ATM"

2. Language pollution in Chinese

2.1 Definition of language pollution in Chinese

In the writer's opinion, language pollution refers to the incorrect or non-standard usage of foreign language which may bring about misunderstanding and inconvenience in the native language.

2.2 Phenomena of borrowing language pollution

Based on different reasons and phenomena, we can classify the borrowing language pollution into six categories:

1) Use non-standard translation of loan words, e.g. Kentucky, ice cream, laser. Another case is that Tianmu Zhonglu, a road near Shanghai Railway Station, is spelled three different ways on the street signs. Signs that read Tianmu Zhonglu, Tianmu C. Rd and Tianmu Zhong Rd can be found within several hundreds metres. (Zhong means 'middle' or 'central' in Chinese.)

2) Use unmeaningful transliteration of loan words, e.g. pass, cracker from which people cannot identify clearly.

3) Excessively pursue seemingly western names or terms. For example, it is unnecessary to use a lot of abbreviation of Pinyin in China , such as WBZX coming from Wu Bi Zi Xing, TJ(Tian Jin), GB(Guo Ji), BT(Bian Tai), MM(pretty girl), PSC from Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi, RMB(Chinese currency), etc. There is a case in point, in 2003, one passenger misunderstood the English abbreviation "PVG" (It means "Pu Dong Airport") without any Chinese translation on the airplane ticket, and missed his airplane, causing a loss. At last, he got his compensation from the airport.

4) Use some taboos, four-letter-words or joking words like shit (××), bastard in modern novels, movies and Internet.

5) Add English words in the daily conversation to show the person owns a fashionable style and decent background.

6) Chinglish. If you come across a store with a sign that reads "Sex Shop" or "Adult Shop," don't worry, there are no pornographic products sold on the shelf, it is just a store selling sex health-care medicine or appliances. There is another more ridiculous example, a foreigner was invited to a wedding and there is a line of English greeting in the invitation: "Harmonious Union Lusting a Hundred (It perhaps means "Bai Nian Hao He")". But "lust" in the Holy Bible is one of human's seven original sins. Though the new couple believed their love would last forever, the word 'lust' made them the subject of much laughter.

3. How to rectify, regulate and guide the use of loan words

In order to defend the purity of the Chinese language, we should take some rules into account to rectify, regulate and guide the use of English loan words.

3.1 Consider the restriction of internal factors between different styles like in English and in Chinese

Language borrowing in the world shows that borrowing activity between languages is normally restricted by internal factors like morphological form or writing style, phonological pattern and grammatical structure. These internal factors will at least influence the borrowing scale and borrowing manner. For example, English is letter language while Chinese is ideographic language. So when we borrow some words between diverse languages especially those of different styles like in English and in Chinese, we should get rid of the language pollution mentioned above.

3.2 Consider the ways of translation

Standardization puts emphasis on the common language of all the people, while purity focuses more on keeping the inherent characteristics and advantages of Chinese language. Therefore, in most cases, traditional Chinese terms are more likely to be accepted than the seemingly English words.

Li Xingjian (Li, qtd. in Shi, 2004), the president of Chinese Newspapers and Periodicals Association, pointed out: "We must advocate to use standard and understandable loan words in our own language. If free translation of some loan words has been established by usage, we should try our best to use free translation rather than transliteration, e.g. WTO, CEO, etc. If we cannot find a proper free translation, we should use transliteration rather than letter abbreviation. If letter abbreviation must be used, we should add to Chinese meaning behind it. But it is unnecessary to use some abbreviation like HSK (Chinese Language Level Examination) and GB (International Standard) which are simply made up by Bopomofo (Pinyin zi mu)."

3.3 Consider the cultural psychology of the Chinese people

When we borrow words from other languages, except the internal rules we must abide by, we should consider national cultural psychology. That is to say, we should adapt the loan words to our culture and conventions. For example, "love" is a favorable word in Chinese. If we translate the loan word "AIDS" into "Ai zhi bin", "Ai zi bin", it gives people a kind of irony and satiric feeling. So "Ai zi bin" is comparatively better. For another instance, when many foreign brands are brought into China's market, they usually have their own Chinese names which are beautiful both phonetically and semantically such as Shu Fu Jia (Safeguard), Nai Ke(Nike), Wei Ta Ming(Vitamin), Gao Lu Jie(Golgate), Ke Kou Ke Le(Coca-Cola), etc.

Conclusion

The preceding study has mainly discussed the language borrowing activities between English and Chinese and some general principles about language borrowing. It is clearly shown that, whether spontaneous or induced, borrowing is one of the important influences on language. "Loanwords" have become an integral part of almost every language and they have contributed greatly to the clarification and richness of native languages.

Language borrowing is usually the natural outcome of language contact and a significant part of language promotion. As a matter of fact, although the direction and scale are different from time to time, language borrowing is prevalent around the world. With the rapid progress of science and technology, especially with the increase of international communication and universal application of internet, languages borrow from each other at an unprecedented rate. Most languages, if not all, manage to widen their vocabularies by borrowing words from other languages. More and more loanwords get established in the native languages; even take the place of the indigenous language. This is the linguistic phenomenon taking place all the time everywhere.

But along with the rapid process of integrating languages together, we should keep alert about the non-standard use of language borrowing and advocate the good use of language borrowing, bringing about the purity of our language as well as the prosperity of our native languages and cultures.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Investigating Mediations in Student Activities in an English Immersion Context in Mainland China

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the role of mediation in the learning process from a sociocultural perspective, activity theory in particular. This study was carried out in a primary English immersion school within the CCUEI Programs in Mainland China. Data were collected mainly through observations and interviews, which were then supplemented by field notes. Techniques of discourse analysis were used to analyze the data. The recorded peer talk presents an emic picture of what occurred during children's interactions. Research findings show that mediation includes task, teacher talk, peer talk, subject content, semiotic artifacts and other semiotic tools. Peer talk as well as linguistic resources constitutes an important resource aside from teacher talk, where the subject content serves as an important mediational tool in the activity and the content-based immersion programs, while offering students opportunities of using the language in meaningful interactions. The results offer insights to both students and teachers about language learning and about pedagogy and professional education respectively.

Keywords: Immersion, Interaction, Mediation, Peer talk

1. Introduction

Mediation has long been of interest to researchers. Vygotsky (1978) took human action as the unit of analysis, and stated that the human mind is mediated. He identified two mediational tools that people employ in the development of higher cognition: physical tools and symbolic tools among which language plays a major role. My study aims to investigate whether there are other mediational tools students employ in their learning activities to develop their English spoken language proficiency in Mainland China.

In Mainland China English language teaching has experienced great changes. Recently a new English language curriculum has stipulated English as a compulsory subject starting from at least grade three in primary schools. Primary school English teachers face many challenges including limited English language proficiency (Yu, 2001; Zou, 1998), a lack of systematic in-service training, and few active researchers at this level (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001; Hu, 2002a, 2002b). The China-Canada-United States Collaborative English Immersion (CCUEI) Program, the first and the most influential immersion program in Mainland China, serves the purpose of improving English language teaching at the preschool and primary levels. The typical characteristic of English immersion programs is the teaching of the English language, subject content, and culture through the medium of English without the use of the students' first language (Francis & Reyhner, 2002; Reyhner, 1998). The aim of this project was to increase children's confidence in English language learning, to enhance their English language proficiency, to ensure the development of the students' content-based learning to a satisfactory level and to better the students' understanding of Western culture while fully developing the students' L1 (Chinese) and maintaining their knowledge of Chinese culture and identity (Qiang, 2000; Qiang & Zhao, 2000).

Many studies have been carried out on CCUEI (Fang, Wang, & Siegel, 2001; Pei, 1998; Qiang, 2000; Qiang & Zhao, 2001; Zhang & Pei, 2005; Zhao & Qiang, 2002), and nearly all of them focus on the outcome-oriented effectiveness of immersion. But there are very few research reports on what is occurring in the language learning process, and how the learners appropriate the English language. This research aims to address the following questions:

1) What are the mediations students employ in peer learning processes?

2) How do the mediations function in peer learning?

2. Mediation and Activity

According to Lantolf and Thorne (2006), mediation refers to "the process through which humans deploy culturally constructed artifacts, concepts, and activities to regulate (i.e. gain voluntary control over and transform) the material world or their own and each other's social and mental activities" (p. 79). This means that the human mind is mediated through social interactions by semiotic tools, especially language, and mediation is the setting up of connection of the

self to the outside world (Vygotsky, 1978). Human beings use symbolic tools (not only physical tools) to mediate and regulate their relationship with others and themselves, and change the nature of these relationships. Mediation results in children's internalization of language, knowledge and culture, which is "the reconstruction on the inner, psychological plane of the socially mediated external forms of goal–directed activity" and "anchored in the social activity" (Lantolf, 2000, p.13).

Tasks and activities have long been the interest of researchers engaged in second language teaching and learning. Tasks and activities serve as means to elicit language use from learners which are employed by both teachers and researchers (Ellis, 2003). According to sociocultural theories, activities are collective and social in nature (Vygotsky, 1978; Leont'ev, 1981; Engestrom, 1987, Tsui and Law, 2007), and activities are not only cognition-based, but also include cognitive, executive, evaluative, and emotional aspects (Bedny & Meister, 1997). From a sociocultural perspective, activity is not a single action but a unit of actions embedded in the activity system that are collective and social in nature (Vogotsky, 1978; Leont'ev, 1981; Luria, 1974), which is addressed by the activity theory and illustrated by the complex model of activity (Engestrom, 1987,1999). Activity Theory has been further developed by Engestrom (1987) who proposes three more components of an activity system: the community, rules and the division of labor (see Figure 1. the complex activity system).

(Figure 1: The complex activity system is here)

3. Research Methodology

This research involved one English immersion primary school which was within the CCUEI Programs in Guangdong Province, where English immersion has been adopted since the establishment of the school in 2004. In September 2004, the school began to recruit students, and the English immersion program was introduced to the 5 classes of Grade 1. At present, the school has 21 English immersion classes with about 800 immersion students. Nearly all the classes in Grade 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are immersion classes. The time spent on immersion instruction occupies 20 percent of all the instructions given to the students. English is taught through social science, living science and English language arts.

3.1 Participants

The selection of the classes, the teachers and the students for this research was undertaken based on the following criteria:

- the teachers were willing to participate in the research;
- the classrooms were recommended by the principal with the consideration of warm and positive classroom atmosphere; and
- the students were selected based on a wide range of language ability such as higher, intermediate and lower proficiency levels in English.

This represented a large variation among the sample students. Class 4 of Grade 4 in this school was one among the first classes to start the immersion program in September 2004. Six students from this class were chosen as research participants. Most of these students were around 10 years old. The selection criteria aimed to ensure that gender balance and a range of language proficiency were represented. Selection interviews of the candidates recommended by the teacher were conducted in English to ensure that students of high, intermediate and lower proficiency levels were represented.

3.2 Data collection

The data of this case study came mainly from classroom observations and interviews. In the classroom observations, audio/video recordings and field notes were used to keep a record of in-class lessons, the students' after-class activities, and the teacher's behavior. Physical artifacts were also collected as a supplementary means. Digital recorders were attached to these 6 students in the class. These recordings were transcribed by the researcher. These methods of data collection offer the opportunity to obtain rich and naturally occurring thick data, which can grant an emic picture of this study.

3.3 Data analysis

Engestrom's (1999) framework of activity system formed the basis of the data analysis. The students in the class governed by class rules together with the teacher's instruction, guidance and assistance adopted various mediations in order to improve their language proficiency in their learning activities. For the analysis, techniques of spoken discourse analysis were used to analyze the transcriptions of the data. Mediations emerging from the data were then systematically categorized.

4. Results and Findings

The focus of this study is on the mediations in the students activities. In this regard, a detailed analysis has been done on the mediations from the peer resources, peer talk in particular in the activity of talking about living things.

4.1 Peer talk as mediation

The following excerpts illustrate how peer talk functions as important mediations in the activity from different aspects: 1) peer prompting and waiting, 2) reciprocity of peer assistance, 3) active engagement and non-verbal expressions, 4) active involvement, self-correction and voice volume, 5) peer talk expansion and creativity, 6) coinage and private speech, 7) resistance and inquiry, 8) comments and social function of private speech, and 9)code-switching, turn-taking and thinking. Owing to the limited space where I cannot show all the analysis on the talk of the three pairs, only excerpts from the talk were extracted and shown here: Excerpts 1 to 2 are from the talk by Pair W and N; Excerpts 3 to 5 are from the talk by Group Y, C and X; and Excepts 6 to 9 are from the talk by Pair L and H.

4.1.1 Introduction about the activity

As this was an English immersion school, living science was one the content subjects for the immersion. In the science class, the teacher introduced to the students the living things and the non-living things, as well as the criteria of how to judge the living things and non-living things. After the science class, the teacher assigned the students to talk about living and non-living things in the evening self-study class (as this was a boarding school), which included 8 pictures (a butterfly, a robot, the Milky Way, an electronic dog, an orange, a flower, a rock and a sea creature) in the textbook on the theme of "growth and change". Four features were identified in living things for students to judge them by: 1) can it grow? 2) can it produce babies? 3) can it produce or get nutrition? 4) can it react to the stimulus around it?

4.1.2 Peer prompting and waiting

Excerpt 1: Talk about Butterfly by Pair W and N

W= Student W

N= Student N

1. N: This is a butterfly.
2. W: Is this a living things?
3. N: Yes.
4. W: Why.
5. N: Because (..)
6. W: It can (prompting in a low voice).
7. N: It (..)
8. W: can (prompting).
9. N: It can (0.6) fly.

In this excerpt, W and N are trying to reason why a butterfly is a living thing. In Line 5, when N hesitates and pauses as he can not formulate and articulate the reason, W prompts in line 6 in a low voice with the two words needed "it can" in N's utterance. N picks up the prompted word "it" in line 7, but gets stuck there and still has difficulty to continue. W prompts again in line 8 with the word "can". N at this moment picks up the prompt and articulates the reason in line 9 with a pause of 6 seconds. From this episode, we can see that when N has some difficulty in the reasoning, W assists him with prompts patiently. When N comes to pick up the prompts in the end and gives the reason, W gives enough time to wait for N to talk. Peer prompting and waiting serve as mediation in their activity.

4.1.3 Reciprocity of peer assistance

Excerpt 2: Talk about robot by Pair W and N

W= Student W

N= Student N

1. W: What's this.
2. W: This is a (..) robot.
3. N: *er*- is this the (..)
4. W: living thing (prompting in very low voice).
5. N: living thing?
6. W: No, it isn't.
7. N: Why.
8. W: Because (…) it no can – no can grown [grow].

9. N: grow (correcting W)

In this excerpt, W and N are talking about whether the robot is a living thing or a non-living thing. In line 3 when N shows his difficulty with his stuttering filler "er-" and hesitation pause, W offers him prompts of "living thing" in line 4. In line 5, N picks up the prompts and completes his utterance with the question. In line 8, when W has some erroneous pronunciation with "grow", N corrects her and provides her with the correct pronunciation in line 9. This excerpt shows that students show their multi-competency in their learning, and reciprocity emerges in the student peer assistance.

4.1.4 Active engagement and non-verbal expressions

Except 3: Talk about butterfly by Group Y, C and X

Y=Student Y

C=Student C

X=Student X

1. Y: Is this a (..) living thing?
2. X: No, it isn't. It's a living thing.
3. Y: (giggling, indicating he is wrong)
4. X: Yes, it is.
5. It's a living thing because it can fly.
6. It can- it can
7. Y: move (prompting)
8. X: move. It can reproduce babies.
9. C: Yes?
10. X: Yes.
11. Y & C: (giggling)

In this excerpt, when Y asks X whether the butterfly is a living thing or not, X in line 2 gives a contradictory answer: first stating that "No, it isn't", later stating that "it is a living thing." Y's giggling in line 3 makes X to confirm that the butterfly is a living thing in line 4. Following that, X continues to give reasons for his statement in line 5 that "it can fly." In line 6 he repeats the phrase and tries to find out what he wants to express. Y prompts him in line 7 and X picks up the prompts in line 8. Besides, he gives another reason that "it can reproduce babies." The conversation is dominated by X and Y, which gives C very little chance to talk, however, C cleverly joins in the talk with a confirmation check "yes?" in line 10. This excerpt show us that in the peer talk, peer students' non-verbal expressions function as assistance for reflection, and that in the peer talk students are trying to find chances to participate in the talk to get actively engaged in the activity.

4.1.5 Active involvement, self-correction and voice volume

Excerpt 4: Talk about robot by Group Y, C and X

Y= Student Y

C= Student C

X= Student X

1. X: Is this a living thing?
2. Y: No, it isn't.
3. X: *en* (…)
4. C: why why why why (prompting in a low voice).
5. X: Why.
6. Y: Because it (..) it can (…) en (…) produce ba- he can (..) don't
7. X: reproduce (prompting)
8. Y: It don't produce baby:
9. X: Is this a living thing?
10. C: No, it is.
11. X: No, it ISN'T (correcting and prompting in a very low voice).

12. C: No, it isn't.
13. X: Why?
14. C: Because
15. Y: it don't (..) *er*- introduce *er*- produce baby=
16. X: = and it can move

In this excerpt, the first part from line 1 to line 8 is mainly between Y and X, however, C actively involves himself in the talk in line 4 prompting X with "why" when he finds X stuttering with difficulty by the pause. X picks up in line 5 and Y explains the reason in line 6, where she shows difficulty in articulating the reason of "reproducing babies." X prompts her with the word, and Y picks up though confused with the words "produce" and "reproduce". In line 9, X projects the talk to C and asks him whether the robot is a living thing or not. C, influenced by the L1 in mixing that answer of negative and positive, gives the erroneous answer to the question with "No, it is". X corrects him and has the stress laid on the word "isn't" in order to direct C's attention to the form. C immediately picks up in line 12. In the last 3 lines C, Y and X are co-constructing the reasons. What is interesting here is that in line 15, Y corrects herself and finds the correct form to express in the talk. This excerpt shows us 1) that students are trying to involve the other party into the talk in the process, 2) that when peers correct their partners, they utilize voice volume to stress or emphasize and direct their attention consciously, and 3) that self-correction also occurs in the peer talk.

4.1.6 Talk expansion and creativity

Excerpt 5: Summary by Group Y, C and X

Y= Student Y

C= Student C

X= Student X

1. X: Do you know their names?
2. Y: Yes. This is butterfly.
3. This is (..) robot
4. This is Milk Way
5. This is *er*
6. X: electronic dog (prompting in a very low voice).
7. Y: electronic dog
8. *er*- this is an orange.
9. This is water
10. X: water animals (prompting in a very low voice)
11. Y: water animals
12. This is er- this is
13. X: Rock (prompting in a very low voice).
14. Y: Rock.
15. This is a flower

In the excerpt, the students, not following the instructed pattern of asking and answering the questions, are conducting a free talk about the pictures. Through the expansion, they are using what they have learned in the situations they can find in the utterance "Do you know their names?", and even creatively using the language by creating a new phrase "water animal" for the "jellyfish" in line 10 and 11.

4.1.7 Coinage and private speech

Excerpt 6: Talk about orange by Pair L and H

L= Student L

H= Student H

1. L: Is this an orange?
2. H: Yes, yes, it is.
3. L: Do you have

4. *bu dui* {Not right}
5. do you do: he:
6. H: *ni shuo ta hui sheng zhang de* {You say it can grow} (prompting in a low voice).
7. L: *sheng zhang zen me shuo* {How to say "grow"?} (asking for help)
8. H: *sheng zhang?* {Grow}?
9. Gray
10. L: Grow (correcting H).
11. H: Grow
12. *gu tou* {Bone.} (coining the sound in Mandarin).
13. L: Can can he grow?
14. H: No: it isn't!

In this excerpt L and H are talking about whether orange is living thing or not. In line 4 and 5, private speech occurs when L tries to find out what she wants to express. H prompts in line 6 in L1 in a low voice, but L cannot pick up the prompt as she does not know how to say "grow". L asks H for help in line 7, and H prompts in line 8 with a wrong word "gray". However, though the prompted word is not correct, it reminds L of the correct word. In line 10 L finds the correct form and corrects H immediately. In line 11 H repeats after L and tries in line 12 to internalize the word by building a connection between this new word and his previous knowledge of pronunciation: he coined the sound in mandarin as a strategy to learn the language.

4.1.8 Resistance and inquiry

Excerpt 7:Talk about Milky Way by Pair L and H

L= Student L

H= Student H

1. H: Is // this a
2. L: // What is this.
3. H: It's Milk Way.
4. L: Oh, it's beautiful.
5. H: Yes, it is.
6. L: Is this the living thing?
7. H: *en*:
8. L: No, it isn't (prompting in a very low voice).
9. H: I don't know.
10. L: *en*? (surprisingly)
11. Oh he is non-living thing.
12. H: Really?
13. L: Yes.

In this excerpt, L and H are trying to manipulate the free language use by giving comments to what they see and expressing their affect through such the utterance as "Oh, it's beautiful." In line 7 when H hesitates to give the answer, L prompts with an answer in a low voice. H refuses to pick it up as he is not sure about the answer, so he just answers "I don't know", which surprises L, as this is unusual. When L rephrases in line 11 the utterance with "non-living thing", H gives his inquiry with "really?" in line 12, which shows that he is not taking in what he is not sure of. Therefore, the students' free language use begins to emerge in their talk, and agency also shows in their talk.

4.1.9 Comments and social function of private speech

Excerpt 8: Talk about electronic dog by Pair L and H

L= Student L

H= Student H

1. H: *ji qi gou zen me shuo* {How to say "electronic dog"?}?

2. L: Is this the dog?

3. H: *bu shi bu shi* {Not right, not right.},

4. *ji qi gou* {Electronic dog.}

5. L: Is this the dog?

6. No, it is the

7. H: Chocolate

8. L: Chocolate (giggling)

9. It's the chocolate dog. It's cool

10. H: *en*, yes?

11. Really?

12. L: Yes, it is.

13. Is this the no- library (giggling) non- no no

14. *shen me de* {What is it}? (thinking cloud)

15. H: Non-living thing (prompting).

16. H: Yes.

In this excerpt, H seeks help from L when he cannot express "electronic dog" in line 1. When L prompts him with only "the dog" in lines 2, 5 and 6, H emphasizes in L1 that it is "electronic dog". Then in line 7, H comes up with the word 'Chocolate" which has some resemblance in pronunciation with "electronic", and they continue to co-constructs the following talk. L comments on Chocolate dog "cool" in line 9, but still there is uncertainty about the expression, which makes H inquire about it with "really?" In line 13, when L wants to say "non-living thing", she suddenly cannot express herself, and tries hard to find the word through private speech. Her private speech has some social function, which H hears it and prompts her with the phrase "non-living thing". In the peer talk, peers are seeking help from each other, and private speech occurs in their thinking process, which functions socially. Besides, students are using language freely to give comments to objects around them.

4.1.10 Code-switching, turn-taking and thinking

Excerpt 9: Expansion of talk by Pair H and L

H= Student H

L= Student L

1. L: What what is it?

2. H: It's tree.

3. L: *em*! The *shu zhi* is very long. {This branch of the tree is very long.}

4. H: Yes, it's very long.

5. L: Is this the living thing?

6. H: *en*, no, not living thing.

7. It's *shi jia de* {It is artificial}

8. L: It's non-living thing (prompting in a very low voice).

9. H: It's not living thing.

10. L: Oh?oh!

11. What time is it now?

12. H: It's seven thirty five.

13. L: Thank you.

14. What is it?

15. H: //It

16. L: // It's very

17. *kong bu de zen me shuo* {How to say "terrible"?} (asking for help)

18. H: z*hi jie shuo zhong wen* {Speak in Chinese directly}

19. L: It is very k*ongbu* {It is very terrible.}

20. H: Yes, me too.

21. L: Is this the living thing?

22. H: *en*, yes it's living thing.

23. L: *ni jiang* {Your turn} (in a very low voice).

24. *hai you shen me* living thing *ah*? {What else is living thing? }

25. H: //tree

26. L: // the tree

27. the=

28. H: =flower

29. L: the flower

30. H: grass

31. L: YES, grass and the: animal

32. H: *em*

33. L: and (..)

34. H: and *ren* {human beings}.

35. L: Yes.

In this excerpt, in line 3 and line 7, L and H use code-switching to express what they cannot express in English in order to maintain their talk. Similarly, in line 17, L seeks help to express "terrible" in English, and H tells her to code-switch in line 18. In line 19, L uses code-switching as H prompts. L prompts in line 8 in a low voice when she finds H has some difficulty in expressing himself, and H picks up the prompt immediately. The talk about the assignment appears to be over. However, H and L seize the chances to use English as much as possible, thus expand their talk. Then L uses "oh?oh!" as a transition in line 10 to signal the change of the theme, and she asks about the time in line 11, then they go on to talk about living things from line 14 to 24. Students not only prompt the language expression to use, but also prompt turns for each other. In line 23, L reminds H of the turn he should take. What is exciting in this talk is that in the last part from line 24 to 35, L and H are co-constructing what else is living thing and expanding their talk in authentic thinking from concrete concepts such as "trees, flowers" to abstract concepts such as grass and animal. In the end, they connect humans to what they have learned about living things and non-living things, which shows that they are applying the abstract concepts into practice, connecting the remote to their intimate situation. In sum all these excerpts show that peer talk and peer assistance form the most important source of mediation in the student activity.

4.2 Comparison among the three pairs/groups

Aside from the mediation address above, the dynamics and interaction between the elements of the activity is to be explained through the comparison made among the three pairs, based on the components of the complex activity system: object, subject, mediation, rules, community, division of labor, outcome, peer relations in the peer talk and the strategies used respectively (see Table 1).

(Table 1 is here)

The students used a variety of strategies in their talk. Self-repetition and pauses were used to gain time for thinking and phrasing what they wanted to express. Peer correction and peer prompting scaffolded their talk where the low volume of their voice showed their efforts to minimize the asymmetry in their role relations. Code-switching was used when they could not express themselves in English. Self-repetition and self-correction were used in their talk together with peer correction, peer prompting, and giggling as a reminder. X and Y were dominating the talk without giving C any chance to participate in their talk. C listened to them carefully and skillfully used the word "yes" with the rising tone to initiate his participation in the activity. In H and L's talk, correction and peer prompting were also used in their talk to give each other scaffolding in the talk where the volume of voice was also lowered to show respect to their partners. H used coinage of the pronunciation for the new word to help him memorize the word. Code-switching occurred when L and H found they could not express themselves in English. Besides code-switching, tone-switching was used by L, for example she used "en" with the rising tone to show her surprise and disagreement, just as in L1; she used "hen" to show her irritation. Lastly, L used "oh?oh!" to mark as a sign poster for the ending of one picture and shifting to another picture.

4.3 Categories of mediations

Besides the mediations coming from the peer resources, peer talk in particular, other mediations are evidenced in this study, though no detailed analysis can be given here because of the limit of space. In this study, results show that in the

activities the mediations include the following categories: teacher resources, peer resources, e realia, content, semiotic artifacts and other semiotic artifacts. Teacher resources include teacher's talk such as instruction, questioning, elaborating and prompting, teacher's tone and volume of voice; teacher's gestures; teacher's eye contact; teacher's presence and teacher's silence. Peer resources involve peer talk such as tutoring, questioning, elaborating, collaborating and prompting; peers' tone and volume of voice; peer play such as kidding, chanting and play with words; and peer gestures and actions. Semiotic artifacts contain texts, textbooks and the language used. Other semiotic artifacts comprise of worksheets, PPT, pictures and maps. Subject content plays a very important role in mediation as the present study involves an English immersion context. In addition, genre "is likely to affect the linguistic form" (Ellis, 2003, p.92), which enable students to accomplish their activities. The type of mediations can be summarized as follows (see table 2):

(Table 2 is here)

4.4 Theoretical framework revisited: representations in this study

The variety of mediations function as the most important part in the activity where Engestrom's model of activity system with its seven correlated components of object, mediation, rules, community, division of labor, object and outcome serves as the analytical framework. The subject refers to the peer students. When the students participate in the activities, the mediation refers to the psycholinguistic and other semiotic tools, as described above. Since the current study examines peer talk, the subjects in the activity system involved are peers either in pairs or in groups. Rules refer to the relations, norms, conventions and expectations in the community. Peer role relation is a very important aspect of the rules. Community in the current study refers to the pair or the group, the class and the school, as the study pertains to a boarding school and students stay at the school most of the time except during weekends. Classroom is the place where students have their class studies and do their self-studies in the evenings. Division of labor incorporates how the students divide their work in the activity. Object refers to the task-driven/related goals of achievements: the language, the content, and the culture behind the language. Outcome refers to participants' goal-directed achievements, the participants' discourse, and the affective satisfaction of collaborating with peers. Tasks are designed with the goal of eliciting the language in use (Ellis, 2003) and peer talk in the current study is selected as an indicator of the outcome. Peer talk, the indicator of outcome serves as a type of mediation at the same time. Figure 2 illustrates the representations which grounded from the data in the current study in Engestrom's (1999) framework.

(Figure 2 is here)

4.5 Dynamic relations among the components of activity

The relations among these components can be described as follows: Peer students, who are regulated by the rules in the community, divide their works, and deploy the devices of mediation to try to achieve their goals in the object. The goals refer to acquiring English language proficiency, mastering the content, and learning the culture embedded in the content subjects. Through the division of labors and through the process of their effort, their goals will be transformed into the outcome, which include the goal-directed achievement, or the process of the experience of achieving the goals, and the affective dissatisfaction or satisfaction of collaborating with peers, and the peer talk. As the nature of activity is situated, dynamic, dialectical and internally correlated, these arrows show the situatedness, the dynamical and relational nature of activity, which means that the change of one component may cause changes in the others.

5. Discussion

This study shows results consistent from the previous studies that students use language and physical tools such as realia as mediational tools in their peer learning processes. The study also expands the previous literature on mediation by discovering that in the student peer activities, mediation covers a wide range of areas from teacher's talk to peer talk, content, genre, semiotic artifacts and other semiotic tools, and that mediation includes task, teacher talk, peer talk, subject contents and other semiotic tools. Peer talk demonstrates multifaceted functions as mediation, which together with linguistic resources constitutes an important resource aside from teacher talk, where subject content serves as an important mediational tool in the activity and the content-based immersion programs, offering students opportunities of language use in meaningful interaction.

This study investigates the students' peer learning process through the lens of sociocultural theories, which offers insights into the immersion practice. It investigates mediational tools which students employed in their activities from an emic perspective, which provides a better understanding of the English immersion programs in China. It enriches practices of the classroom interaction among learners. The findings generated from this study of the English immersion programs present an in-depth analysis of the spoken English language learning process and offer valuable insights for pedagogy and teacher professional education.

Some implications of pedagogy and teacher education can be drawn. First, when designing tasks, teachers should be able to predict and have clear expectations of the dynamics of activities, as students conduct the activities based their own interpretation of the goals, the rules, the mediation and the setting, which results in different outcomes. Second,

peer talk function as a most important mediation in students' English language learning, which, as an indicator, can reveal what is happening in the process of performing the task, and equip teachers to explain the reasons for the students' achievement. This can provide teachers with a clear and more complete picture of students' performance in the activities. Third, the fact that the change in one component within the activity system leads to different activities may give insights into the teacher education that the feasibility of variation of activities can be a way to satisfy the needs of different students.

The limitation of the study is that it investigated only the student spoken language, i.e., their peer talk in the activities. Further research can be done on the aspects of student written language discourse in their L2 proficiency development.

6. Conclusion

Mediations include the multiple resources such as teacher resources, peer resources, physical tools and semiotic tools. Peer talk functions as a most important source of mediation, where students demonstrate the deployment of communicative strategies such as prompts, and scaffolding help. Subject content serves as sources of mediation in the activity and the content-based immersion programs offer students opportunities of language use in meaningful interaction.

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Acknowledgement

I owe my progress in HKU to my supervisors Prof. Andrews, Dr. Luk, Prof. Davison. Special thanks are given to Dr. Clarke, and Prof. Tsui as my committee members. Thanks are also given to Prof. Qiang of the CCUEI, Ms Gao, Ms Xiu and Mr. Yu of the school for their support and cooperation. This study could not have been carried out without their guidance and support.

Appendix I: Conventions of transcription

Symbols	Meaning
Ss	Students
[ ]	Researcher's comments
(XX)	Uncertain hearing
(???)	Indecipherable utterances
.	Falling intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at the end of the declarative sentence)
(..)	Short pause
(…)	Medium pause of up to 5 seconds
(0.6/7/8…)	For wait time longer than 5 sec, the pause will be represented by figures showing the number of seconds involved.Wait time longer than one minutes will become (1.0) and so on
,	Continuing intonation
?	Rising intonation, usually a question
!	High falling pitch showing exclamations
:	Lengthened syllable (usually attached to vowels); extra colon indicates longer elongation
-	Self-halting, or abrupt cutoff
CAPS	Emphatic and strongly stressed utterances
=	Contiguous utterances or latching
//	Overlapping
<xxx>	Utterances made with a greater voice volume compared with that of the preceding and following ones
A-B-C-D	Sounding out the letter names of a word
{….}	untranscribed section of the excerpt
( )	Explanation of gestures or tone changes like smiling or laughing and so on
Italics	Putonghua (code-switching)
Bold	Cantonese (code-switching)
{ }	Translation of the code-switching
> <	Speech in a faster pace.
___	text provided (by the teacher or in the textbooks or other materials)
	(The last five items are s added by me)

Table 1. Comparison among the three pairs

Components	Pair W and N	Group Y, C and X	Pair H and L
Object	To talk about 8 pictures and decide whether they are living things or not	To talk about 8 pictures and decide whether they are living things or not	To talk about 8 pictures and decide whether they are living things or not
subject	W and N	Group Y, C and X	H and L
mediation	the pictures, the vocabulary of the content subject, peer prompts, the volume of their voice, and L1 (code-switching)	the pictures, the vocabulary of the content subject, peer correction, peer prompts, and the volume of their voice	the pictures, the vocabulary of the content subject, peer correction, peer prompts, the volume of their voice and L1 (code/tone-switching)
rules	Completion of the task, taking turn to ask and answer questions	Completion of the task, taking turn to ask and answer questions	Completion of the task, taking turn to ask and answer questions
community	Work as a pair in the class	Work as a pair in the class	Work as a pair
Division of labor	W asked, N answered, regularly they switched their roles.	Y and X seemed dominant the talk, C tried to participate	H initiated, L answered, then L asked questions all the way
outcome	Completed talking about the 8 pictures, following the same pattern. A little code-switching, satisfied	Completed talking about the 8 pictures, naming the things in the pictures, no code-switching, happy	Completed talking about the 6 pictures, expanded their talk to categorize things around them, satisfied though disputable
Role relations in the peer talk	collaborative	Between collaborative and dominant/ passive	Between collaborative and dominant/ dominant
Strategies used	Self-repetition, pauses, peer-prompting, peer-correction, the volume of their voice, code-switching	self-repetition, self-correction, giggling, peer correction, peer prompting, the volume of their voice, C's use of "yes?"	Peer correction, peer prompting, the volume of their voice, L's use of "oh?oh!", the coinage of the pronunciation, code/tone-switching,

Table 2. Types of mediation

Type of mediation	Examples of mediation
Teacher resources	teacher talk (instruction, questioning, elaborating, and prompting) teacher's gestures, teacher's eye contact, teacher's tone and volume of voice, teacher's silence, teacher's presence
Peer resources	peer talk (tutoring, questioning, elaborating, collaborating and prompting), peer's gestures and actions, peer's tone and volume of voice, peer play (kidding, chanting, play with words)
Realias	flowers, clothes, clock, etc
Semiotic artifacts	languages, texts, textbooks,
Other semiotic artifacts	PPT, pictures, maps, worksheets, etc
Content,	subject contents (e.g. traffic rules in social science, living things in science)
Genre	The discourse mode students use to accomplish the task such as 'object description" , narrative, expository, argumentational.

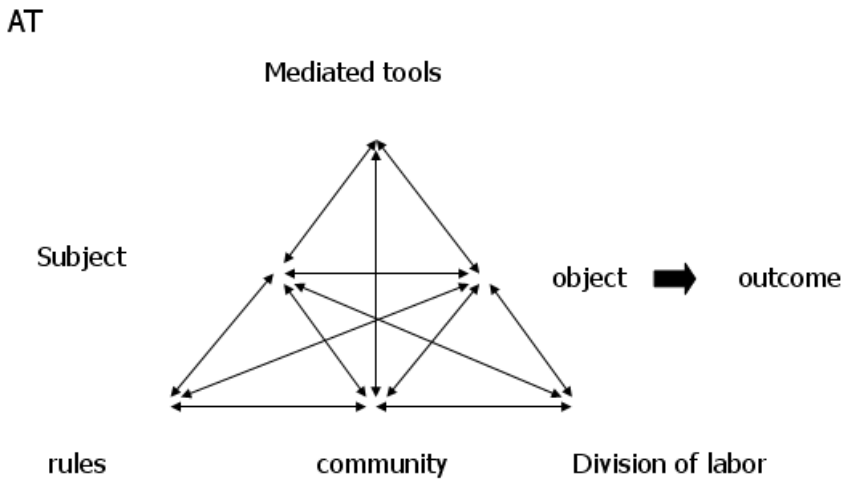

Figure 1. The Complex Activity System (Engestrom et al., 1999, p. 31)

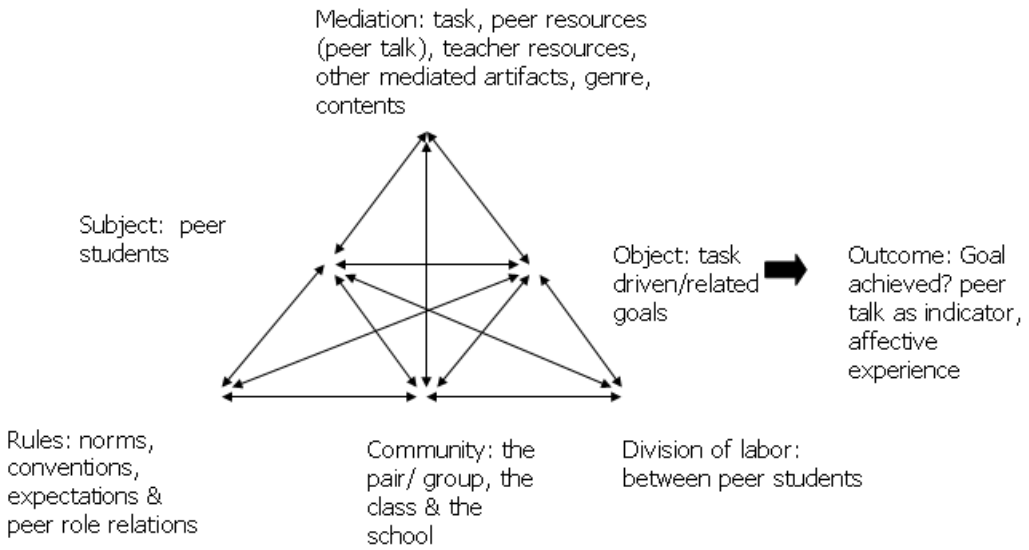

Figure 2. The current study in Engostom's framework (Based on Engestrom, Mittinen and Panamaki, 1999, p.31)

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

ESL Students' Attitude towards Texts and Teaching Methods Used in Literature Classes

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Abstract

Malaysia's Vision is for the country to become a fully developed nation by 2020. In order to compete at international level, the country needs to produce future workers who are well-versed in English. The National Philosophy of Education aims to produce holistic graduates who excel academically and have better intercultural understanding, which resulted in the re-introduction of literature into the curriculum. In addition, English is also used as the medium of instruction for teaching science and mathematics. In 2000, literature became a part of the English syllabus when the Literature in English Component was implemented in secondary schools. This paper aims to discuss students' attitudes towards the texts used in the program, the challenges faced in reading these texts and the type of texts students prefer to read. It also discusses the teaching strategies used in class, their effectiveness as well as the methods favoured by students. The study was carried out in two schools in Kemaman, Terengganu involving 110 Form Five students. Questionnaire and interview were used as the research instrument. Findings suggested that students generally had positive attitudes towards the text selection although they were less enthusiastic about the teaching methods used by teachers.

Keywords: Attitudes, Text selection, Teaching methods, Literature

1. Introduction

Students' attitude is one of the main factors that determine their success in language learning. Attitudes towards the target language, its speakers and the learning context may all play some part in explaining their success or failure (Candlin and Mercer, 2001). Numerous researches have been conducted on the role of attitude in second language acquisition, spurred by the knowledge that negative attitudes can be changed. Factors like better teaching strategies, classroom and social environment can help reduce negative attitudes.

Attitude has cognitive, affective and conative components; it involves beliefs, emotional reactions and behavioural tendencies related to the object of the attitudes (McGroarty, 1996). It refers to an individual's inclinations, prejudices, ideas, fears and convictions concerning any topic. It has an evaluative aspect, a disposition and tendency to react positively or negatively to something. It is, in short, the way someone thinks or behaves.

Attitudes is related to the motives of studying a language which can be divided into two main categories; integrative and instrumental motives. Integrative motives refer to situations where a person learns a second language in order to participate in the target language group's cultural activities. Instrumental motives refer to practical purposes of learning a language such as in order to get a better job or to pass examinations. Students with positive attitudes will spend more effort to learn by using strategies such as asking questions, volunteering information and answering questions. Fortunately, attitudes do not remain static; they can be changed through the learning process such as by using appropriate materials and teaching techniques. Attitudes also improve as a result of language learning as learners who learn well will acquire positive attitudes (Choy, 2002).

One of the main challenges in learning literature are caused by the text itself, such as the language of the text, especially when there is a mismatch between the texts selected and students' language ability. Even teachers cannot agree on the type of texts that should be taught although they generally agree that the texts should promote intellectual development, independent thinking, are interesting to adolescents and meet certain cultural and aesthetic standards (Agee, 1998) Struggling readers share the same problems which are weak comprehension, lack of interest and confidence (Arvidson & Blanco, 2004). They spend a lot of time looking up or guessing meanings of words which might result in regressive eye movement, losing sight of the plot or the bigger picture by the time they reach the bottom of the page or the end of the story. To avoid frustration and students' lack of participation, it is vital to ensure that the language of the text match students' proficiency level and that there is a match "between the linguistic expectations in the language syllabus with those of the literature component syllabus" (Ganakumaran, 2002 p.65.Unfamiliar vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure hamper students' understanding of texts. Students tend to misinterpret key words or fail to recognize them and focus instead on the less important part of a text (Fecteau, 1999) When faced with unfamiliar or difficult words, phrases or sentences, students use their lower-level reading skills where they look at a sentence or phrase for clues instead of using higher level skills such as inferencing or relying on the context to guess a word's meaning (Sarjit Kaur & Rosy Thiyagarajah 1999).

Literary style and structure pose a problem for students in trying to comprehend literary texts (Davis et al 1992). If the writer is from a different background, students need to be aware of the cultural norms in the author's world to be able to identify language deviances and their significance, especially in poetry. Students also need a good grasp of the target language to appreciate choices and deviances in the text. Poems are generally disliked due to the abundance of figurative language and images which students fail to interpret (Wan Kamariah, 2009). Linguistic structure in poems can be especially confusing such as the use of irregular punctuation, capital letters and organization. Students generally feel that poetry contributes very little to their language development compared to other genres such as short stories and novels. Although literary texts provides contexts in which ESL students can learn more about the L2 culture (McCafferty,2002), unsuitable texts can create distance between the text and the readers, especially culturally (Saraceni, 2003). Besides linguistic skills, students also need background knowledge to fully comprehend literary texts (Horowitz, 2002) which are written by authors who assume their readers share the same background knowledge, similar values and norms. When students encounter unfamiliar cultural aspects, they tend to interpret the meaning based on their own culture, which might results in inappropriate cultural representation. Sometimes students are faced with a cultural reference that is totally alien to them, which has no parallel in their own culture, such as the notion of autumn to the Malaysian students, as found in Robert Frost's poem, *The Road Not Taken*. At other times, students come across something familiar to them which might represent something else in another culture, such as death which is symbolized by the colour black in Western society but associated with white among Muslims. Understanding culture is made even more difficult as the values which shape and influence characters and their point of views are not explicitly portrayed in literary texts. Students' misunderstanding is due to the teachers' lack of cultural awareness, the lack of support material that address cultural issues and introductory classes that pay minimal attention to the cultural elements of the texts (Gurnam Kaur,2002 & Ganakumaran et al, 2003).

Besides cultural values, the topic of the texts can be remote to the students, not only in terms of experience but also historically, geographically or socially. Students prefer reading texts that address issues of youth, relationship and changes in social values. Texts favoured are those with clear language, careful organization and thought-provoking themes. Wu (2008) suggests using adolescent literature which is widely available thus providing more choices and are also easier to understand as they are written in contemporary English. Students feel more motivated to read literature if they are given a choice or allowed to negotiate the texts that are to be included in literature classes (Davis et al, 1992). Although teachers might feel that students do not select 'quality' works, it is important to make sure that the texts suit students' interest.

Ironically, interest in the literature teaching methodology only began in 1970s, when the number of students who choose to study literature dwindled as it was considered elitist, irrelevant and impractical (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000). There are various terms used in connection to teaching methods, namely (a) Methodology – a broad, general term which can be described as "the study of pedagogical practice" (Brown 2000, p.171) or in short, how to teach, (b) Approaches – these are theories, beliefs and assumptions on how languages or other subjects are learned and should be taught, (c) Method – refers to how language specifically, is taught based on one particular approach, it is broadly defined, meaning it is not specific to any particular context, and (d) Techniques – these are items like exercises, activities and devices or strategies used in class and the term is usually, though not necessarily, more concerned with the roles and relationship between teachers and students.

There are three most common teaching approaches in literature. The first is using literature as content which is usually reserved for tertiary level students who are considered to have enough linguistic and experiential knowledge to discuss literary texts. Students read literary texts and criticism as well as wider reading concerning the socio cultural aspects of the text. The amount of information provided usually depends on the time allocated, whether these information are

central to the text and also depending on students' interest (Carter & Long, 1991). The second approach is literature for personal enrichment. In using literature for personal enrichment, students are encouraged to relate the texts to their own experience as well as give their reactions and opinions. The aim is to encourage students to be more involved in the lesson. Techniques based on this approach can promote group work and interaction in the classroom while materials are selected based on the students' interest. Thirdly, language-based approach is used to integrate literature and language syllabus. Their main purposes are to enable students to make informed and meaningful interpretations and evaluations through detailed analysis as well as to make students more sensitive and aware of the language and its linguistic features. Using students' existing grammar, lexical and discourse knowledge, teachers guide students toward making aesthetic judgment of texts. Methods used include concentrating on the stylistic features of the texts and materials are chosen for their stylistic uniqueness as well as their literary advantage (Lazar, 1993).

Good grasp of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and understanding students' interests and needs are some of the requirements needed to teach literature competently (Agee, 1998). Students favour teaching techniques that encourage them to respond personally, give their own opinion, and concentrate on the content of the text as opposed to analyzing details of language structure as well as having class discussions (Davis et al, 1992). Students enjoy imagining themselves as the characters, writing letters as one of the characters and retelling the story from others' point of view. Students indicate negative attitudes towards activities that require them to memorize facts, answered multiple-choice questions, read aloud, drilling and teacher-centred classes where interpretations are provided only by the teacher (Wan Kamariah, 2009). Studies on teaching methods in Malaysia found conflicting results. Fauziah & Jamaluddin (2009) found that teachers used more students-centred approach in class compared to teacher-centred strategies which created a better learning atmosphere and improved students' perception and motivation towards literature. However, Daimah (2001) found the methods used by teachers in literature classes are mostly teacher-centred. Teachers agreed that their classes were usually divided into three stages which started with explanation by the teachers, followed by discussions in groups or with the whole class and concluded with some form of exercises. A teacher-centred approach is necessary in order to save time and finish the syllabus in time for examinations. Another reason cited was students' low proficiency level which prevented teachers from using students-centred techniques like group discussion, debates and role plays. Students' unwillingness and anxiety to speak or answer questions about the text for fear of providing the wrong replies also did not help. Gurnam Kaur (2003) found that students viewed teaching strategies used by their teachers as boring, dull and uninspiring as it involved mainly doing written work, especially among students with higher proficiency level. Students with lower proficiency could not understand the texts and therefore found literature lessons boring. This could be due to teachers who had very little experience and knowledge in teaching literature. Ganakumaran et al (2003) found that 48% of the teachers surveyed said that they lack knowledge about literature teaching methodology while only 51% indicated they had enough knowledge of literature. Language teachers also lack confidence to teach literature as they perceive as only competent to teach language due to their training (Katz, 2001).

Threfore, this study aims to investigate students' attitudes towards the texts used for literature lessons and the difficulties faced in reading these texts. It plans to examine teaching methods used by teachers in literature classes and students' reactions towards these methods. It also intends to find out the type of texts and teaching methods preferred by ESL students.

2. Methodology

2.1 Subjects

The subjects were 110 students from two co-educational schools in Kemaman, one located in a rural area while the other is in town. Form Five students were chosen as they had a longer experience in studying literature and had read all the texts and genres chosen for the program. Students were from science and arts classes. A total of 32 students participated in the interview, eight from each class.

2.2 Research instrument

The questionnaire consisted of two parts; the first section focused on respondents' demographic profile such as their grade, gender and socio-economic status. The second part used a five points Likert scale to gauge students' attitudes towards text selection and teaching methods. The interview used open-ended questions aimed at gathering in-depth information concerning students' reactions towards text selection and teaching strategies.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Students' attitudes and text selection

Short stories seemed to be popular among students. A total of 80% of the students agreed that they enjoyed reading the short stories chosen for the component. Interestingly, none of the students strongly disagreed with the statement. Students found them easiest to read as they were short and therefore not too time-consuming, which enabled them to do other homework and participated in co-curricular activities. Students also mentioned that the language was mostly manageable and therefore quite easy to understand. The plots were interesting, "like a movie". Students' responses

suggest that negative attitudes are associated with reading poetry. A total of 70% of the respondents agreed with the statement 'I find the poems difficult to understand'. Students were not too keen on poems, especially *Sonnet 18*. Interviewees felt that the use of "archaic" and "classic" language made it hard to understand and a few male students were put off by the theme, which was love. Students found the issues in the poems or the themes mostly boring. More importantly, they found it difficult to understand poetry as they considered "every word to have their own underlying meaning" and it was hard to figure out the real message in the poems. Students also described two poems, *si tenggang's homecoming* and *Monsoon History*, which are set in Malaysia, as "difficult" and "too long". Two male students found poems "okay" and "interesting", especially the poem *If* by Kipling, which they considered inspiring and meaningful.

Besides poems, novels were also not popular among students. A total of 61.8% students agreed that they did not find reading novels particularly enjoyable. Students seemed to react negatively towards reading the novel allocated for them, which was *The Pearl*. Mainly, students felt it was too long and described it as "dragging" due to its dull storyline. Students also found the plot and characters confusing, making it difficult for them to understand the text. Students also mentioned that it had "very little dialogue" which made it even more unattractive. A few students who liked the novel said that they liked the use of simple, everyday English which was easy to understand and also the portrayal of another person's life experience which was different from theirs.

An overwhelming 94% of respondents indicated that they preferred to choose or negotiate the list of texts that they have to read. Students also showed positive attitudes towards reading contemporary poetry and reading texts which are written by non-Malaysians. A total of 80% of the students agreed and strongly agreed with the statement 'I enjoy reading texts about people from different countries and culture'. Although students showed preference for reading foreign texts, 72% agreed that Malaysian texts were more familiar and easier to understand More than half of the students indicated positive attitudes towards the text selection for upper-secondary level. 67.3% of the students seemed to think that the texts selected were suitable for them.

The most popular topics among students were mystery or investigative stories followed by adventure. These were favoured due to their plots, which were considered "suspenseful" and filled with unexpected twists. Five students, all of whom were girls suggested love story. They said that the topic was relevant to them and it could prevent them from being involved with the "negative" aspects of love. Regardless of gender, students also mentioned science-fiction and fantasy because of their setting and storyline which were "beyond their imagination". Two students also specifically stated that they would like to read *Harry Potter*. Two girls also suggested non-fiction, like *National Geographic*. Other topics included family and teenage life experience and thriller. Most of the students seemed to think that their lack of proficiency in English was the main obstacle in reading and understanding literary texts. A total of 86.4% of the students agreed and strongly agreed with the statement 'I would enjoy literature more if I'm good in English'. It seemed at least three out of the four classes (excluding the science class in urban school), the language of the texts were too difficult for them. Language problems included unfamiliar words, phrases as well as archaic language used in poems. Language problem was especially time consuming as students had to constantly refer to dictionaries for meanings of words, get help from siblings or relatives or seek explanation from their teachers. Another problem faced by the students was in understanding the 'real' meaning or the message of the texts. A total of 70.9% students agreed that although they could understand the literal meanings of texts, they had problems figuring out the underlying meanings.

Students also considered poems like *si tenggang's homecoming* and *Monsoon History* lengthy (two to three pages), mainly because they had problems understanding these texts. Students also found the plot of the novel confusing. Interestingly, only students from the highest proficiency level in English mentioned that they found the cultural elements in some of the text unfamiliar and confusing such as understanding the characters' way of life and values. This seemed to suggest that perhaps only the good students were able to appreciate the importance of cultural elements in literary texts while others face more basic problems like understanding the literal meaning of the texts. This was shown by one student who referred to Red Indians when talking about a text set in Africa. More than half of the students admitted that they usually could not finish reading the text on time. A total of 58.2% of the students agreed that time constraint was one of the problems they faced in reading literature as they had to finish homework and were also involved in co-curricular activities .

3.2 Students' attitudes and teaching methods

Most of the students thought that background information concerning a text such as the author's life or the setting was vital to understanding a text. A total of 97% respondents agreed and strongly agreed that background information would make it easier for students to comprehend a text. A large majority of students also reacted positively towards using a variety of activities during literature lessons, probably to reduce monotony and boredom in class. Students seemed to be in favor of working in group, with a total of 91.8% of the students supporting the idea of doing more group work. Interestingly, students were keen to voice their opinions and personal reactions concerning the texts that they read. A total of 91% of the students agreed and strongly agreed with the statement 'I think students should be encouraged to give their opinions and views concerning the text'. This could mean that students were not given enough opportunities to contribute during literature lessons, perhaps due to time constraint.

Teachers' explanation and notes was ranked as the fifth most important strategy in teaching literature, followed by using audio-visual in literature classes. A total of 86% of the students agreed with the statement 'I would enjoy watching a film or video about the text'. Results suggested that students did not get enough background information concerning the texts that they read. When asked, students stated that teachers usually explained "about the text", referring to the writer's life or his purpose for writing the text. Teachers did not seem to emphasize on the cultural elements of the texts, perhaps due to time constraint or the lack of supplementary materials. There did not seem to be a variety of activities during literature classes. Almost all the classes had similar sequence of activities during literature. For weaker classes, the teacher would read aloud and sometimes asked students to take turns to read. Teachers then asked questions and checked if students had any queries about the text. Then, there would be an explanation by the teacher, followed by note taking. For very weak classes, teacher apparently "always translated word by word" while for average class, teachers only translated unfamiliar words. Finally, students were given exercises and sometimes asked to do these in groups.

Not surprisingly, teachers spent a lot of time discussing plot, characters, themes, setting and moral values of the texts in class as indicated by 85.4% of the students. Malaysian students are generally known for their examination-oriented approach, so perhaps it was not surprising to find that 58.2% of the students surveyed admitted that they only read the texts to enable them to do well in examinations. When asked about using other languages to teach literature, 70% of the respondents said that it was acceptable for the teacher to do so in order to help them understand the texts better. Quite worryingly, more than half of the students said the teaching strategies used by their teachers were boring. 42.7% agreed while 13.6% strongly agreed, adding up to a total of 56.3% who reacted negatively towards the way literature classes were conducted. Students also didn't think that teachers were doing enough to prepare them for their examination. A total of 50.9% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement 'The way literature is taught is not very useful for examinations'. Interestingly, when asked if their teachers were good at teaching literature, students from rural schools showed positive attitudes towards their teachers' teaching methods compared to students from the urban school. Both classes from the rural school mentioned that their teachers used the overhead projector to show them diagrams and charts concerning the texts such as their plots and characters. Students from the science class were especially satisfied with their teachers' strategies. They said that their notes were mainly in visual form. After the teacher's explanation, they were divided into groups and allocated different parts of the text to work on. The teacher then asked students to write their own script for their drama which was later performed in front of the class. Students agreed that dramatization made it easier for them to understand and remember information concerning the texts.

When asked to give suggestions that can make literature more interesting, a lot of students suggested drama as they found it helpful and interesting. Students were also keen to watch films or videos related to the text which could help them appreciate and understand the texts better. Others said that teachers needed to explain elements of the texts especially the plot as it could be confusing. Science students from the town school said computers and internet should be incorporated into literature lessons. One student said he did not mind participating in any activity "as long as it was not reading". Other suggestions included using songs or outdoor activities, games and group work.

4. Conclusion

A way to motivate students to read literature is through better text selection. The most important criterion in text selection is probably students' interest. This does not mean that the texts have to be about teenagers' issues only. Students' response suggested that they would like to read about adventure, mysteries and life experience. As students come from different background, interest and abilities, the best option is to choose texts which vary in terms of genres, topics and language level. Data from this study suggested that students were generally satisfied with the short stories but were less enthusiastic about the poems and novels. Perhaps more contemporary poems can be included in the text selection and for novels, it is better if more choices are provided and students are allowed to choose those which suits their interest and language level.

Teachers play a big role in students' education. Not only do they impart knowledge to students but they also help shape students' attitudes towards education, school and more specifically, the subjects that they teach. To do this, teachers need to be properly trained and equipped with proper knowledge and skills to successfully accomplish their tasks. Firstly, teachers need to be taught how to read any text (not just those listed under the programme) independently and to be able to make their own interpretations of the texts by using critical thinking skills. They also need to address the cultural elements of texts, which if neglected might result in misunderstanding and limited participation from students. Perhaps another skill that teachers need to acquire is the ability to produce their own supplementary materials. Instead of relying on the Ministry of Education or reference books for materials, teachers can learn how to get information through the internet for example and adapt them to suit their students' proficiency level and interest. It is important to ensure that teachers are equipped with enough pedagogical content knowledge which influences classroom practices, which in turns affect students' learning outcomes and achievement.

Using a variety of attractive teaching strategies is another way to improve students' attitudes. For students with higher proficiency level, teachers can use activities where students get to practice their creative and critical thinking skills such as writing their own scripts, staging a drama or even creative writing. Teachers can encourage students to be more

autonomous by using computers as well as the internet and guiding them in activities like researching information on the author's background or the historical elements of the texts. Using multitasking tasks in groups for large classes enable students to rotate tasks so that they can try a variety of activities and work at their own pace.

More research needs to be conducted on students' reading abilities as they seem to lack higher level reading skills. Other possible future research areas which can help improve the teaching of literature in ESL contexts are students' reading interests and teacher training.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

A Research on Second Language Acquisition and College English Teaching

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Abstract

It was in 1970s that American linguist S.D. Krashen created the theory of "language acquisition". And the theories on second language acquisition were proposed based on the study on the second language acquisition process and its rules. Here, the second language acquisition process refers to the process in which a learner with the mastery of his mother language learns another language without its social environment. Due to the close relationship between second language acquisition research and language teaching, the relevant acquisition theories are of great importance for college English teaching, during which teachers are expected to base their teaching on second language acquisition theories to study the rules of college English teaching, to reform the current teaching patterns and methods and to improve teaching quality. This is a significant project to study carefully for college English teachers as well as second language acquisition researchers.

Keywords: Language acquisition, Second language, College English teaching, Teaching quality

1. A Research on Second Language Acquisition Theories

1.1 Language Input Hypothesis

Here, input means the language information learners receive from the language environment. According to the second language acquisition theory proposed by Krashen, understandable language input is the key to language acquisition. This theory was expressed by Krashen as "i+1", that is, a language learner won't achieve the "i+1" level until he realizes the language input process beginning from this existing language knowledge i. According to this theory, learners mainly learn one language in two channels: one is acquisition and the other is learning. Here the former means that a learner takes in and then uses a language unconsciously through language communication practice while the latter means that a conscious study and understanding of a language. That is to say, acquisition is of greater importance than learning, hence emphasizing the significance of putting students into a language learning environment with feedback system to guarantee their contact with a large amount of understandable language input during our college English teaching.

1.2 Language Output Hypothesis

Output here means that learners achieve their language communication purpose by practicing with the language knowledge and skills they have obtained and sending understandable output. Wells defined this class interaction as a collaborative activity among language input, language information acceptance and language environment, which shows the importance of language acquisition environment and learners' internal encouragement system. Accordingly, in college English teaching, teachers should establish an interactive class pattern in which students will have opportunities to deal with the language input they accept, apply their language skills to communication and adjust their learning strategies.

1.3 Language Internal Syllabus

According to the theory of language internal syllabus, language learners' acquisition process should be gradual. Since the language acquisition effect will be influenced by the learners' intelligence, personality, learning motivation, interest and so on, language learning is a progressive, internal and natural acquisition process. Therefore, college English teachers are expected to give students some necessary guidance and instructions as well as encouragement and help to help them solve problems in learning, relieve their impatience, depression and anxiety as well as design language learning activities in a better way.

2. Influencing Factors of Second Language Acquisitions

A variety of factors may influence second language acquisition, including teaching materials, syllabus, teaching means and methods, teaching quality, differences in personality and learners themselves and so on. According to my study on second language acquisition theories, I'll only focus on the influences of learners' differences in personality, their motivation, attitudes as well as intelligence on language acquisition.

2.1 Differences in Personality

In Ellis' theory, "language acquisition through second language teaching attempts will indirectly lead to higher

acquisition efficiency in class no matter it is based on formal teaching or created conditions. Only by learning about the learners' different personalities and some necessary influencing factors of second language acquisition can we have a real control of teaching and teaching reform. It doesn't only depend on the teacher's teaching standard, teaching materials, teaching means but the learner's different personalities whether he will succeed or not. As is shown in our investigation, a successful language learner will be able to adjust his strategies to his own cognition style, learning task, basis and so on. Actually it is safe to say that positive psychological quality, stable mood, strong will and self-control power will influence a learner's choice of learning strategies, hence affecting his efficiency and result. A student lacking in self-confidence usually cannot express their ideas fluently or do well in language communication, cannot control his own feelings or have negative emotional strategies. On the contrary, a confident student has natural expression, light mood, strong activity and courage to take risks. Therefore, such a student will try to seize every opportunity to practice and relieve his depression, hence achieving better efficiency and result. In my opinion, personality influences the choice of language learning strategies, during which an excellent learner is able to choose the strategies fit for him. Therefore, teachers should find out students' differences in personality, establish and perfect different teaching targets based on them and take specific measures for different students.

2.2 Learning Motivation and Attitudes

Learning motivation and attitudes are emotional factors influencing the result of second language acquisition. First of all, learning motivation is a strong internal drive for language learning. Psychologically, teaching effect is closely related to learning motivation and interest, which determines whether a learner would like to spend more time learning English. Besides, learning motivation and attitudes are closely associated with language learning strategies, hence influencing language learning effect to some degree. Generally speaking, the stronger learning motivation is, the more passion learners have for learning, the more lasting the learning activity will be, the more difficulties can be overcome. Therefore, teachers are supposed to do a lot in teaching contents, teaching methods, teaching organization and teaching supervision in order to create a pleasant, natural and harmonious language learning environment. In addition, based on their grades, teacher should encourage students to have more creative thinking in order to develop their internal potentials, stimulate their diversified language learning motivation and demands, establish their confidence, help them to set up an internal self-stimulating system and improve their learning motivation finally. Only in this way can we help to form a virtuous circle between motivation and success and then to promote students' language acquisition effectively.

2.3 *Intellectual Factors*

To some degree, intellectual factors influence learners' achievements in second language acquisition, mainly in their learning efficiency. In my opinion, intelligence refers to the abilities helpful to language learning, such as memory ability, imitation ability, analysis and judgment ability, the ability to solve problems independently, organization and summary ability, self-assessment ability as well as a potential ability for language learning. Accordingly, teachers should take the heuristic method to develop students' intelligence, expand their views, develop their potentials and improve their cognitive abilities.

3. Significance of the Research on Second Language Learning Theories in College English Teaching

Students in English-speaking countries have a very good environment for English learning which is filled with real circumstances, expressions, gestures and body language. However, college English teaching is conducted in an unnatural condition, in which students have no access to a favorable language environment except their limited class hours. Thus, the study on second language learning theories seems particularly important for college English teaching. Based on my research, I would like to briefly elaborate on the significance of these theories on our present teaching activities.

3.1 Helping to Lay down English Teaching Objectives and Choose Teaching Materials

As is suggested in second language learning theories, the nature of language input, learners' acquisition process as well as the rules of language acquisition should be taken into consideration when establishing teaching plans in order to set up a student-centered language learning pattern and to design specific class activities and teaching skills. Besides, real, interesting, relevant and various language subject matters and materials should be chosen to put students into contact with a large amount of understandable language input, offer more real language communication opportunities, stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning and therefore to improve their efficiency and achievement in language learning.

3.2 Helping Teachers to Flexibly Employ Proper Teaching Methods

First of all, the indirect method can be turned to. Objects, pictures, gestures, expressions as well as actions can be made use of to design certain English teaching method and process and enrich language learning environment.

Second, the listening-speaking method can be used. Since the language acquisition process is one involving stimulation, response, imitation and enhancement, real-life listening and speaking practice will enable students to listen and imitate repeatedly, to learn pure pronunciation and intonation. This method, conforming to the rules of language acquisition as well as emphasizing language input, helps to create language environment.

Third, the audio-visual method or the situational method can be employed, in which more importance is attached to language acquisition rules, a large amount of language input, the creation of teaching situations as well as the importance of vision in language learning.

Finally, the communicative method can also be used. Language acquisition depends on a large amount of understandable language input, the gain of which involves the learners' extensive contact with language materials and their participation in communication in person to convert what they have got into some understandable materials. Therefore, this method puts more emphasis on oral practice, employing real and natural language, cultivating students' communicative abilities, which basically complies to a natural process of language acquisition. Without any doubt, proper and flexible English teaching methods help to imitate the whole language acquisition process, to create language environment, to stimulate students to take an active part in communicative activities so as to expand their language input methods and channels and improve their language acquisition efficiency.

4. Revelation and Application of the Research on Second Language Acquisition Theories to College English Teaching Reform

According to language acquisition principles, the acquisition process is a psychological one in which learners participate actively and a process in which learners store and arrange the language input they have acquired and put it into practice. Only with a favorable language environment as well as language input will language acquisition be fulfilled. In English teaching, the creation of language environment should be emphasized in which some characteristics in irregular language learning environment are introduced into regular language learning environment to achieve better teaching effect. Therefore, it is a particularly important guarantee and the tendency of college English teaching reform during the second language acquisition process to create language environment, offer language input, establish a dynamic teaching pattern.

4.1 Establishing Student-Centered Dynamic Class Teaching Pattern

According to Ellis R., "the failure to provide learners with opportunities to communicate naturally will separate them from the main channel to gain language materials and hence to hold up the acquisition process". Language acquisition is a systematic process involving teachers, students and teaching materials. A favorable class teaching and language acquisition environment, to some degree, results in the success in language acquisition. However, in our traditional English classes where the teacher's role is excessively emphasized, language learning is regarded as the acquisition of knowledge instead of skills. Accordingly, teachers are quite lonely at class, emphasizing the explanation and practice of language knowledge and rules while neglecting the opportunities for students to get in touch with as well as apply language knowledge and skills in practice, while students don't listen to them attentively. This pattern, of course, will affect the development and improvement of students' English proficiency. In my opinion, a student-centered dynamic class teaching pattern must be established, in which teachers speak English acceptable for students, control the whole language teaching and acquisition process directly, employ a variety of teaching skills and methods including teacher-student communication, group discussion and report, presentation, individual report and performance and so on in order to stimulate students' enthusiasm for participating in class activities. In this way, students will get more understandable language input, have contact with many kinds of understandable language and hence to have their language acquisition goal achieved.

4.2 Establishing "Four-in-One" College English Teaching Method

As is required in language acquisition rules, a large amount of practice teaching and learners' independent practice should be included in college English teaching since only in this way can they solidify their language knowledge and acquire language skills. Therefore, the "four-in-one" teaching method reflects the theories and rules of second language acquisition and highlights the objectives of language teaching.

First, offering a favorable language teaching environment. In college English teaching, a dynamic language environment should be offered first, in which the design of class teaching sections and techniques is emphasized, including getting familiar with teaching contents, collecting relevant materials, preview, introduction, establishing relevant teaching situations, group discussion, debates, assignments and so on.

Second, emphasizing class teaching drills. In college English classes, practice and drills are focused on, in which teachers are directors while students are actors. Students' errors in language application and communication should be corrected timely at the right time.

Third, instructing students to have personalized learning. Andrew D. Cohen (1990) pointed out that the success in language learning is based on learners themselves, especially their own factors and abilities to make full use of learning opportunities. College English learning should be the development in the direction of students' active and independent learning and practice, including English reading in the morning, independent practice at class, finishing assignments, reading English books, listening to English broadcast, participating in second class activities, online learning, self-assessment and son on, in order to promote students to learn independently and effectively.

Fourth, enhancing the assessment for students. As is pointed out in *College English Curriculum Requirements*,

assessment is an important knot in college English teaching, which includes students' self-assessment, students' assessment for each other, teachers' assessment for students, education administrators' assessment for students and so on. Accordingly, teachers are expected to observe, monitor and assess students' preview, review, phasic review, class activities, extracurricular activities, study documents, online learning, students' self-assessment, students' assessment for each other, interviews with teachers, students' forums, examination results, grades analysis and so on in order to learn about their language learning process and learning effect, to gain teaching feedback, to improve teaching methods and administration, to adjust students' learning strategies as well as to improve teaching quality and learning efficiency.

4.3 Creating Favorable Language Teaching Environment and Stimulating Learners' Enthusiasm for Language Learning

According to second language acquisition theories, ideal class teaching should provide a language learning environment with many opportunities to use the target language directly. In the college English teaching process, students' experience and participation play a particularly important role in language learning. Therefore, necessary environment should be created to exert teachers' intervening function, to stimulate learners' activity, to encourage students to participate in communicative activities for solving problems and fulfilling learning tasks, to give learners more access to language and therefore to indulge them in the environment of the target language. For instance, teachers provide a real environment for students by speaking the target language at class, creating role-play activities based on specific situations, organizing and instructing students' group discussion and debates, hence promoting students' cooperative learning, providing a pleasant language acquisition environment, relieving students' anxiety and improving their success rate in language acquisition.

4.4 Correctly Treating Language Transfer and Fully Considering Learners' Emotional Factors

Transfer, an important emotional factor in language communication, doesn't refer to the abandoning of one's own emotions, but surpassing it. Nevertheless, college English teachers don't regard language transfer from the perspective of cognitive linguistics and psychology. Due to the shortage of environment required by learners' cognitive and emotional behaviors, it is of no use talking about how to improve their learning efficiency. So it is of great importance to study the influences learners' emotional factors have on college English teaching because it helps to exert their learning potentials, stimulate their interest in language learning and improve their learning effect. If teachers put excessive importance on the cognitive factors of second language learning while neglecting the role of emotional factors, learners have no way to release their emotions and express their feelings, resulting in the separation of cognition from emotion in English teaching. As a result, with confidence-lacking students, dull class atmosphere and low learning spirit, it keeps troubling teachers how to improve English teaching quality.

5. Conclusion

In a word, second language acquisition research and college English teaching are auxiliary to each other. As a conscious acquisition process in a social environment without the target language, college English learning involves the development and improvement of language knowledge, language skills and intercultural communication abilities. Therefore, in college English teaching, based on second language acquisition theories, teachers should establish a student-centered class teaching pattern to deliver intercultural communication knowledge, cultivate students' intercultural communication abilities, create language acquisition environment, fully consider students' emotional factors and improve the teaching quality and learning effect of college English.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Cyclic Linearization and Island Repair in Sluicing

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Abstract

Cyclic Linearization is adopted to account for the island repair of Sluicing in English. The extraction of wh-phrase out of certain islands undergoes non-successive-cyclic movement, which yields conflicting ordering statements. The derivation can be rescued by deleting all ordering statements in IP, including those conflicting ones. Two arguments concerning Complex NP Constraint (relative clause) and Adjunct Island support the proposal.

Keywords: Sluicing, Island Repair, Cyclic Linearization

1. Introduction

Since Ross (1969) first raised the issue of Sluicing early in the pre-GB era, it has attracted much attention, thanks to the fact that Sluicing involves the investigation of the structure and the nature of the interfaces, which connects the sound and the meaning components in the computational system. One of the fascinations of Sluicing is that it can violate a wide range of island constraints. In this paper I will explore the island repair under Sluicing and put forward a tentative proposal to account for this puzzle.

2. Sluicing

Sluicing is the ellipsis construction illustrated in (1), in which an interrogative clause is elided, leaving only its wh-phrase overt (Note 1).

(1) a. Somebody just left ---Guess [who]. (Ross 1969: 252)

b. She's reading. I can't imagine [what]

Chung et al. (1995) classify Sluicing into two types: Merger cases, as in (1a) in which the wh-remnant has an overt correlate in the antecedent sentence; and Sprouting ones as in (1b) in which no overt correlate is found.

There are two general schools of the analysis of Sluicing: Non-structural approaches and Structural approaches. The former analysis proposes that there is no internal structure in the ellipsis site at any level. Culicover & Jackendoff (2005) argue that the Sluicing fragment is a very simple clause containing only a DP. The latter school, pursued by the majority of analyses, falls into two approaches in the literature, differing in their assumptions on the role of syntax in the ellipsis. One is the PF Deletion Approach (Ross 1969, Merchant 2001). Merchant (2001) assumes that ellipsis has abstract features of phonetic and phonological representation, but that grammar contains a means of blocking its pronunciation. In Merchant's theory, Sluicing is derived by PF ellipsis of a fully articulated IP (Note 2) out of which a wh-phrase undergoes movement. The Sluice in (2) can be illustrated with Figure 1.

(2) Andy can play something, but I don't know [what [$_{IP}$ ~~Andy can play t~~]].

The other is LF Copying Approach (Lobeck 1995, Chung et al. 1995). This account maintains that there is a full internal structure in the ellipsis site, but only at the level of LF.

Following the syntactic proposal by Merchant (2001) to account for the derivation of Sluicing, I will discuss the island repair in Sluicing.

3. Comprehensive Cases of Island Repair

Ross (1969) noticed that the wh-movement found in Sluicing apparently violates well-known conditions on movement. He observed that island violations as in (a) examples below are significantly improved when Sluicing takes place as in (b) examples.

(3) Complex NP Constraint (noun complement)

a. *I believe the claim that he bit someone, but they don't know [who$_i$ [$_{IP}$I believe the claim that he bit t$_i$]].

b. I believe the claim that he bit someone, but they don't know [who].

(4) Complex NP Constraint (relative clause)

a. *She kissed a man who bit one of my friends, but Tom doesn't realize [which$_i$ (of my friends) [$_{IP}$ she kissed a man

who bit t_i]].

b. She kissed a man who bit one of my friends, but Tom doesn't realize [which (of my friends)].

(5) Coordinate Structure Constraint

a. *Irv and someone were dancing together, but I don't know [who$_i$ [$_{IP}$ Irv and t_i were dancing together]].

b. Irv and someone were dancing together, but I don't know [who].

(6) Sentential Subject Constraint

a. *That he'll hire someone is possible, but I won't divulge [who$_i$ [$_{IP}$ that he'll hire t_i is possible]].

b. That he'll hire someone is possible, but I won't divulge [who].

Besides these examples, it seems that Sluicing can overcome a much wider range of syntactic islands. More examples are given below. (data from Merchant 2001)

(7) Adjuncts

a. *Ben will be mad if Abby talks to one of the teachers, but she couldn't remember [which$_i$ (of the teachers) [$_{IP}$ Ben will be mad if Abby talks to t_i]].

b. Ben will be mad if Abby talks to one of the teachers, but she couldn't remember [which].

(8) Subject Island

a. *A biographer of one of the Marx brothers interviewed her, but I don't remember [which$_i$ (Marx brother) [$_{IP}$ a biographer of one of t_i interviewed her]].

b. A biographer of one of the Marx brothers interviewed her, but I don't remember [which].

If the (b) examples in (3-8) are derived from the (a) examples through wh-movement and PF deletion, the question arises as to why there are no island effects. Ross (1969) concluded that the Sluicing deletion could repair island violations, with syntactic violations calculated globally across the derivation.

4. Previous Accounts and Their Problems

Many researchers have discussed the island repair phenomenon under ellipsis. In this section I will examine some influential accounts and point out their problems.

4.1 Chomsky (1972)

Chomsky (1972) suggests that Sluicing does indeed involve long wh-movement, and that island violations can be repaired. He assumes that when an island is crossed by a movement operation the island node can be marked with an output condition forbidding * in surface structures. He presents an example involving extraction out of a noun complement.

(9) a. *He has plans to send some of his children to college, but I don't know [which one$_i$ [$_{IP}$ he has plans to send t_i to college]].

b. He has plans to send some of his children to college, but I don't know [which one].

Chomsky's analysis is illustrated in Figure 2.

Wh-movement extracts the DP *which children* from its base position (marked by *t*) to the highest [Spec, CP]. The complex NP island (noun complement) is crossed, so it is marked with a *. In non-elliptical example as in (9a), when this *DP reaches PF, it will cause a PF-crash, since * is by hypothesis PF uninterpretable. The operation of Sluicing will prevent the * from triggering a PF-crash, by deleting IP containing the *DP.

4.2 Merchant (2001, 2008)

Attractive as Chomsky (1972) is, the account faces a serious problem in that it falsely predicts that any type of ellipsis that deletes an island node should repair the violation. But the fact is that VPE (VP-ellipsis) can not do the same job. The extraction out of a VPE site is as ungrammatical as its non-elliptical case, as in (10).

(10) Relative Clause Island

a. *She kissed a man who bit one of my friends, but Tom doesn't realize which (of my friends) she [$_{VP}$ kissed a man who bit t_i]. (no ellipsis)

b. * She kissed a man who bit one of my friends, but Tom doesn't realize which (of my friends) she did. (VPE)

Sluicing repair this very island violation in (4b). Therefore, Merchant (2001) rejects Chomsky's account, and argues that the island insensitivity of wh-movement requires two different kinds of solutions, depending on the kind of island involved. Some are the result of a variety of PF violations, which include Left Branch Extractions, That Trace Effects,

Subject Island, and Coordinate Structure Constraint, and others are due to LF violations, which contain relative clauses, sentential complements to head nouns and adjuncts. Only the former can be repaired by PF deletion. By contrast, the latter involves extraction out of propositional domains, and it is not repairable by deletion. That is why (10b) remains bad. He claims that propositional islands involve no island at all, but short extraction. The Sluice in (4b) has the following structure:

(11) She kissed a man$_k$ who bit one of my friends, but Tom doesn't realize [which$_i$ (of my friends) [~~he$_k$ bit t$_i$~~]].

A major assumption by Merchant (2008) is to think of * as a feature of traces, instead of thinking of it as a feature of island nodes as in Chomsky (1972). He suggests that when an island is crossed, the newly created intermediate trace or copy will be marked with the * feature, and all later copies of this * item will also be given *-marking. A standard island effect will then arise whenever intermediate *-traces survive until PF. Sluicing in (12a) is illustrated with the derivation in (12b).

(12) a. They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember [which (Balkan language)].

b. *They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember [$_{CP}$ which (Balkan language)[$_{IP}$ *t'''[$_{IP}$ they [$_{VP}$ *t''[want to hire someone [$_{CP}$ *t'[$_{CP}$ who speaks t]]]]]]].

The grammaticality of (12a) is due to the deletion of the highest IP, with all the *-marked traces eliminated from the PF-representation. In doing so, the island effects are missing. (Note 3)

4.3 Problems of Previous Accounts

The island repair puzzle has inspired some influential analyses, but these accounts are not unproblematic. As mentioned above, Chomsky' (1972) account faces a serious setback, in that the elliptical sentence can still be ungrammatical even though the island node is deleted in VPE, as in (13b) and many other VPE cases in various island environments. (see Merchant 2008)

(13) a. They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember [which$_i$ (Balkan language)[~~$_{IP}$ they want to hire someone *[who speaks t$_i$~~]]]. (Sluicing)

b. * They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember [which$_i$ (Balkan language) they do [~~$_{VP}$ want to hire someone *[who speaks t$_i$~~]]]. (VPE)

The Sluicing in (13a) is grammatical since the *-marked relative clause island node is deleted, as Chomsky (1972) predicts. The VPE in (13b), however, is ungrammatical even though the *-marked island node is eliminated, contrary to his prediction.

Merchant (2001) argues that what he calls Propositional Islands (including relative clauses as in (13)) are LF islands, rather than PF islands; thus this kind of island cannot be repaired by a PF deletion. Therefore, he proposes that the derivation as in (13) doesn't contain an island violation. However, in his influential book *The Syntax of Silence*, we find that he bases his arguments for form-identity effects (Note 4) on comprehensive data in islands context, especially relative clauses (Merchant 2001: 90, 104). If these examples indeed contain no islands, then Sluicing will never repair island violation, contrary to the fact. Therefore, his proposal is disturbing and it weakens the form-identity effects.

Instead of thinking of * as a feature of island nodes as in Chomsky (1972), Merchant (2008) consider * as feature of traces. However, as Kitahara (1999) argues, the assumption that a *-feature enters into a derivation as the output of certain environments contradicts the Inclusiveness Condition (Chomsky 1995), since it is not a lexical feature and appears nowhere in the lexicon.

5. A New Approach to Island Repair in Sluicing

Following the commonly accepted assumption that PF ellipsis can repair islands in Sluicing, I will adopt a more recent approach to explain the examples involving island repair.

5.1 Cyclic Linearization (Fox & Pesetsky 2005)

Fox and Pesetsky (2005) propose Cyclic Linearization to account for the mapping between syntax and phonology, by suggesting that phonology determines the linear ordering of words. The core of their proposal is Linearization Preservation:

The linear ordering of syntactic units is affected by Merge and Move within a Spell-out Domain, but is fixed once and for all at the end of each Spell-out Domain.

Fox and Pesetsky (2005) argue that the list of Spell-out Domains includes at least CP, DP, and vP/VP. (Note 5) Ordering statements are collected at the end of each Spell-Out domain and are added to the ordering table. As a result of Linearization Preservation, the ordering table must not contain contradictory statements. They suppose a bottom-to-top derivation has created the syntactic domain D in (14), where D is also a Spell-out domain. The Spell-out operation establishes the ordering statements given below.

(14) $[_D$ X Y Z]

Ordering:

X < Y

Y < Z

The expression "X < Y" should be read as "X precedes Y". This is an ordering statement understood by PF, which means that the last element of X precedes the first (non-trace) element of Y. Suppose that after Spell-out applies to D, the syntax merges α with D, yielding (15).

(15) α $[_D$ X Y Z]

Consider a situation in which some element in D undergoes leftward movement into the higher Spell-out domain. Let's examine two possible scenarios, depending on whether or not the element that moves out of D previously occupies its left edge.

(16) Scenario 1 (leftward movement from a left-edge position)

Insert Figure 3 Here

Ordering in D:

X < Y

Y < Z

Ordering in D':

a. **X < α**

b. **α < D**

c. **α < Y**

d. **X < Y**

When the next domain D' (containing α and D) is spelled out, the linearization of D' will add the new (boldfaced) ordering statements listed in (16). Note that α < Y is a consequence of Linearization Preservation**.** The expression "X < Y" in D' is a result of transitivity of the precedence relation ' < '. Because X was at the left edge of D, the ordering statements added in D' are consistent with those previously added in D. Therefore, leftward movement from the left edge of a Spell-out Domain obeys Linearization Preservation and yields no ordering contradictions.

Suppose instead that Y in (17) overtly moves to the left of α. When D' is spelled out, it will include all the ordering statements from D as well as the new ordering statements as in (17).

(17) Scenario 2 (leftward movement from a non-left-edge position)

Insert Figure 4 Here

Ordering in D:

$\boxed{\text{X < Y}}$

Y < Z

Ordering in D':

a. **Y < α**

b. **α < D**

c. **α < X**

d. $\boxed{\textbf{Y < X}}$

Consider the new ordering statements in D': Y precedes α, and α precedes D. Linearization requires that α must precede X. Consequently, Y precedes X; conflicting statements arise, as shown in boxed ordering statements in (17).

It is safe to conclude that a wh-phrase undergoes successive-cyclic movement, thus it cannot cross the edge of a Spell-out Domain. Furthermore, leftward movement from a Spell-out Domain D must take place from the left edge of D. Finally, non-successive-cyclic movement is generally possible, when linearization is not necessary. Therefore, leftward movement from a non-left-edge position is supposed to be non-successive-cyclic, resulting in a PF-crash.

5.2 Cyclic Linearization and Sluicing

Reconsider the situation in (17), repeated here as in (18). Y is attracted to the left of α, but a property of D prevents Y from first moving to the left edge of D, so Y undergoes non-successive-cyclic movement to its final landing site. Then

the problem arises because contradicting statements appear at the ordering table.

On the assumption that island is such a property of D that leads to non-successive-cyclic movement, I suppose D in (18) is subject to ellipsis under the condition proposed by Merchant (2004); then any ordering statement that makes reference to X (or Z) has no impact on pronunciation; therefore, the overt movement of Y does not bring about conflicting statements. The deleted ordering statements are shown with strikethrough as below.

(18) Insert Figure 5 Here

Ordering in D:

~~X < Y~~

~~Y < Z~~

Ordering in D':

a. **Y < α**

b. ~~**α < D**~~

c. ~~**α < X**~~

d. ~~**Y < X**~~

Consider the cases in Sluicing. I assume that the extraction of wh-phrase out of certain islands undergoes non-successive-cyclic movement to the highest [Spec, CP]. This kind of movement will result in conflicting ordering statements in ordering table. I further propose that the contradiction of statements will be removed by deleting all ordering statements in IP; then the derivation is rescued.

5.3 Explaining Data

I'll give two examples concerning Complex NP Constraint (relative clause) and Adjunct Island to illustrate my proposal. First consider relative clause as in (19):

(19) *They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember [$_{CP2}$ which (Balkan language) [$_{IP}$ they $_{VP2}$ _ want to hire someone [$_{CP1}$who $_{VP1}$ _ speaks _]]].

The wh-phrase ***which (Balkan language)*** functions as the complement of the verb *speaks*. It first moves to [Spec, VP1]. The linearization of VP1 yields the following:

(20) **Spell-out applies to VP1:**

which < speaks

Because [Spec, CP1] is occupied by ***who***, the wh-phrase ***which*** has to move from [Spec,VP1] directly to [Spec, VP2], without stopping in the specifier of CP1. The linearization of CP1 will be as follows:

(21) **Spell-out applies to CP1:**

who < which < speaks

And Spell-out of VP2 yields the following ordering information:

(22) **Spell-out applies to VP2:**

which < VP2 < CP1

The wh-phrase ***which*** finally moves to [Spec, CP2]. Spell-out of CP2 has the following ordering information:

(23) **Spell-out applies to CP2:**

which < they < VP2

The information in (21) and (23) impose conflicting requirements on the phonology. In (21) ***which*** must be pronounced after ***who***, but (23) requires ***which*** to be pronounced before ***who*** (it is contained in VP2). The derivation violates Linearization Preservation, because contradictory ordering statements appear at the ordering table. The reason for this is that ***which*** has crossed Relative Clause Island, which renders a left-edge landing site for wh-movement unavailable. That's why (19) is ungrammatical.

In accordance with my proposal, the contradictory ordering statements can be eliminated by PF deletion of IP. Through IP ellipsis the grammatical sentence, namely Sluicing, is derived as illustrated in (24).

(24) a. They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember [$_{CP2}$ which (Balkan language)[~~$_{IP}$ they $_{VP2}$ _ want to hire someone [$_{CP1}$who $_{VP1}$ _ speaks _~~]]].

b. They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember [which (Balkan language)].

Next let's consider the example Adjunct Island is involved, as in (25):

(25) *Ben will be mad if Abby talks to one of the teachers, but she couldn't remember [$_{CP2}$which (of the teachers) [$_{IP}$ Ben will be mad [$_{CP1}$if Abby [$_{VP1}$_ talks to _]]]].

The wh-phrase ***which (of the teachers)*** first moves to [Spec, VP1]. Apply Spell-out to VP1:

(26) **Spell-out applies to VP1:**

which < talks to

CP1 is a Spell-out Domain that lacks a left-edge landing site for movement. Thus, the wh-phrase ***which*** has to move directly to [Spec, CP2], crossing the adjunct island. Since CP1 is a Spell-out Domain, the linearization of the relevant elements in CP1 yields the following ordering information.

(27) **Spell-out applies to CP1:**

if Abby < which < talks to

Apply Spell-out to CP2:

(28) **Spell-out applies to CP2:**

which < Ben will be mad < CP1

The ordering information in (27) contradicts that in (28). In (27), ***which*** go after ***if Abby***, but in (28) ***which*** precedes ***if Abby***. The conflicting ordering statements will bring about difficulty in pronunciation. But if the relevant items are deleted, there will be no contradictions. All the ordering statements will be eliminated with IP ellipsis; then the derivation is rescued, as in (29).

(29) a. Ben will be mad if Abby talks to one of the teachers, but she couldn't remember [$_{CP2}$which (of the teachers) [$_{IP}$ ~~Ben will be mad [$_{CP1}$if Abby [$_{VP1}$_ talks to _~~]]]].

b. Ben will be mad if Abby talks to one of the teachers, but she couldn't remember [which (of the teachers)].

6. Conclusion

The paper explores the nature of Sluicing, that is, island constraints seem to be violated with grammatical examples. But if the Sluicing sentences are derived from their non-elliptical sources through wh-movement and PF-deletion, the puzzle arises as to why there are no island effects. On the assumption that the extraction of wh-phrase out of certain islands undergoes non-successive-cyclic movement, which yields conflicting ordering statements, I argue that the derivation can be rescued by deleting all ordering statements in IP, including those conflicting ones. I have tentatively put forward a new proposal to solve the island repair puzzle. However, there are some residual problems that need further study. My approach cannot account for the differences between IP ellipsis (Sluicing) and VP ellipsis. VPE seems to be impossible in certain contexts where Sluicing allows for island repair. In addition, the paper does not deal with Sprouting Sluicing, which does not exhibit the same island repair effect.

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Notes

Note 1. The Sluicing sentences are bracketed throughout the paper.

Note 2. The phonetically deleted constituent is indicated with strikethrough in this paper.

Note 3. The final copy of *which (Balkan language),* located in the highest [Spec, CP] in (12b) is not marked with *, since the *-feature of the final copy is checked by E-feature, which is located on C. (Merchant 2004)

Note 4. The form-identity effect is the crucial evidence for Merchant's (2001) 'Movement + Deletion' account of Sluicing, The wh-remnant crosslinguistically shows similar behavior across a wide range of grammatical dependencies to its wh-phrase counterpart in regular, non-elided questions. These cases include case marking and preposition stranding.

Note 5. Fox & Pesetsky (2005) combine their proposal with the Phase Theory (Chomsky 2001). Therefore, Spell-out Domains roughly correspond to Chomsky's notion of phase. In this sense I develop my proposal under the Phase Theory, by using the term 'Spell-out Domain'.

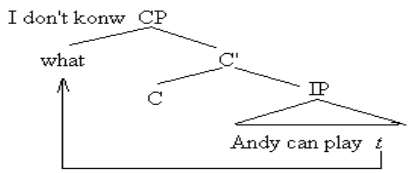

Figure 1. Andy can play something, but I don't know

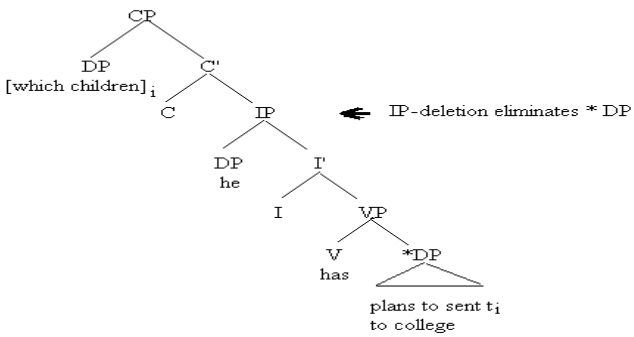

Figure 2. He has plans to send some of his children to college, but I don't know

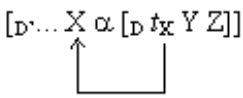

Figure 3. leftward movement from a left-edge position

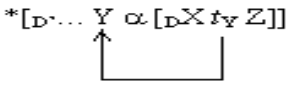

Figure 4. leftward movement from a non-left-edge position

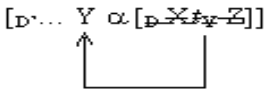

Figure 5. leftward movement from a non-left-edge position (ellipsis)

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Investigating the Relationship among Test Anxiety, Gender, Academic Achievement and Years of Study: A Case of Iranian EFL University Students

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Abstract

The construct of anxiety plays a major role in one's life. One of these anxieties is test anxiety or apprehension over academic evaluation. The present study was designed to investigate the relationship between gender, academic achievement, years of study and levels of test anxiety. This investigation is a descriptive analytic study and was done on 110 undergraduate students from University of Isfahan. The Suinn's Test Anxiety Questionnaire with 48 questions was used to gather the data. For analysis of data correlation coefficient and chi square test were used. The findings revealed that female students have a higher level of test anxiety in contrast to male students. The average of test anxiety score among female students was higher. Also a statistically significant negative correlation was observed between test anxiety and academic achievement. There was no meaningful relationship between test anxiety and years of study.

Keywords: Test anxiety, Gender, Academic achievement, Years of study, Iranian EFL University students

1. Introduction

Too much anxiety about a test is commonly referred to as test anxiety. It is perfectly natural to feel some anxiety when preparing for and taking a test. Test anxiety is really common among college students! It is normal to feel some level of anxiety or stress regarding upcoming exams, papers or presentations. Examination stress and test anxiety are pervasive problems in modern society. As the information age continues to evolve, test scores will become even more important than they are today in evaluating applicants for demanding jobs and candidates for admission into highly competitive educational programs. Because test anxiety generally causes decrements in performance and undermines academic achievement, the development of effective therapeutic interventions for reducing its adverse effects will continue to be an important priority for counselors, psychologists, and educators. Alleviating test anxiety will also serve to counteract the diminished access to educational and occupational opportunities that is frequently experienced by test-anxious individuals.

Every year, millions of students under-perform in school and university because of heightened test anxiety, which is defined as the "set of phenomenological, physiological, and behavioral responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluative situation" (Zeidner, 1998, p.17). Although test anxiety is known to depend on situational variables, such as levels of motivation, task complexity, and the practical consequences of high or low performance (Humphreys & Revelle, 1984), it varies markedly from one individual to another. Thus, some individuals will be relatively calm when it comes to completing a test, whilst others will generally "perceive examinations as more dangerous or threatening and experience more intense levels of state anxiety when taking tests" (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995, p.6). On the self-defeating consequences of subjective cognitions (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988; Lazarus, 1991) suggest that poorer self-beliefs are a major cause of test anxiety.

Test anxiety has emerged as one of the most salient constructs in modern-day psychology and by far the most widely studied specific form of anxiety in the literature. Test anxiety is a ubiquitous phenomenon, with some degree of evaluative anxiety being experienced by most people in modern society. The test anxiety construct has matured within a large cocoon of attention ever since its inception in the early 1950s, with researchers making important strides toward understanding its nature, components, origins, determinants, effects, and treatments. The importance of test anxiety in understanding sources of student stress in evaluative situations and poor test performance is now readily apparent. The topic of test anxiety has prospered, in part, due to the increasing personal importance of test situations for people in modern society, making tests and their long-term consequences significant educational, social, and clinical problems for many. Since test results in most academic and occupational settings have important practical implications for a person's

goals and future career, test anxiety is frequently reported to be a meaningful factor impacting upon test scores. In fact, much of the test anxiety research over the past half century has been motivated by the desire to ameliorate the debilitating levels of test anxiety in various settings and populations and to find ways of helping test-anxious persons become more effective in test or test like situations. Over the past few decades there has been an upsurge of interest in test anxiety research among psychological and educational researchers. Literally hundreds of researchers have investigated the nature, antecedents, correlates, and consequences of test anxiety, and the literature is prodigious. A wealth of studies relating to various facets of test anxiety has appeared in some of the premiere journals in psychology and education. Test anxiety has become a major topic of research interest in education and various subareas of psychology, including personality and social psychology, educational and developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, health psychology, counseling and clinical psychology.

2. Background

Research on test anxiety has a long and fruitful history. First studies relating to test anxiety were conducted as early as 1914 (Folin, Demis & Smillie, 1914), and the concept began to be investigated under its own name in 1952, when Mandler and Sarason (Sarason & Mandler, 1952) published a series of studies on test anxiety and how it relates to performance, as well as developed an instrument to assess individual differences in test anxiety in adults, the Test Anxiety Questionnaire.

The increasing interest in outcome-based approaches to assessment and reporting in language testing (e.g., Brindley, 1998; McKay, 2000) has heightened the need for more research on fair assessment (Kunnan, 2000) by which more valid inferences can be drawn. Although assessment can be done without tests (e.g., portfolios, and self- and peer-assessments, Brown and Hudson, 1998), of particular interest and complexity is assessment based on tests. The current research focuses on one variable related to test-takers' characteristics, namely test anxiety, and investigates to what extent test anxiety affects listening test performance.

According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), test performance is attributed to test-taker and test task characteristics. The test-taker qualities consist of (a) topical knowledge, (b) language knowledge, (c) personal trait, (d) strategic competence, and (e) affective schemata. Of these attributes, the former three interact with the latter two. The test-taker and test task traits have effects on each other, and as a consequence, test performance results from these interactions. Since our decisions or inferences based on test performance depend on these characteristics, it is very important to know how these components affect test performance. Although these variables all merit investigation, a central issue seems to be how personal traits influence test performance. There are many types of personal attributes related to test performance (e.g., age, sex, nationality, Bachman and Palmer, 1996, p. 65), but one which is of great significance is test anxiety. Test anxiety refers to a "special case of general anxiety consisting of phenomenological, physiological, and behavioral responses" related to a fear of failure (Sieber, 1980, p. 17) and to the "experience of evaluation or testing" (Sieber, 1980, p. 18). Test anxiety may occur due to test-takers' lack of learning or study skills (Culler and Holahan, 1980; Wittmaier, 1972). Generally, test anxiety is negatively correlated with test performance in the field of psychology (e.g., Sapp, 1999; Zeidner, 1998). Although many studies have been conducted, one conclusive research work is a meta-analysis study (Hembree, 1988) that uses correlation coefficients between a wide range of measures of performance and test anxiety based on 562 North American studies published from 1952 through 1986. Results show that test anxiety scores are negatively and very weakly related to grades in reading and English ($r = -0.24$) and foreign language ($r = -0.12$).

In contrast, in the context of second language studies, anxiety in a more general sense is considered in attitudes and motivation studies (Gardner, 1985; MacIntyre and Gardner,1991), and especially foreign language anxiety (e.g., Bailey et al., 1999; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Horwitz, 2001; Phillips, 1992) has often been examined. Previous researches have shown that males typically score lower on measurements of test anxiety than females (Lashkaripour, 2006; Berger & Schecter, 1996; Mehregan & Najjarian & Ahmadi 2001; Ferrando et al, 1999; Chang, 1997; Feingold, 1994). The different test anxiety constructs affect males and females in different ways. Results show that: (a) worry was related to task-orientation and preparation and low avoidance coping in females; (b) emotionality was related to seeking social support in male students and to task-orientation and preparation in female students; and (c) interference was related to avoidance coping in females (Stober, 2004). There was a gender effect on worry and emotionality test anxiety for high achieving students. Overall, females were reported to be more subject to test anxiety than males; and females experienced higher worry than emotionality, while males reported little difference between the two dimensions (Everson, Millsap, & Rodriquez, 1991).

3. Research questions and hypotheses

The present study was conducted to investigate the relationship between test anxiety and other variables such as: gender, academic achievement, and years of study. In order to define its goals three research questions were set:

Q1: Is there a higher test anxiety among female students than male students?

Q2: Is there any relationship between test anxiety and academic achievement among university students?

Q3: Is there any relationship between test anxiety and years of study among university students?

To answer the above questions the following null hypothesis were tested.

H0 1: There is no difference between males and females considering the rate of test anxiety.

H0 2: There is no relationship between test anxiety and academic achievement.

H0 3: There is no relationship between test anxiety and years of study.

By dint of SPSS software several statistical procedures were utilized. The results are presented in the following sections.

4. Method

4.1 Participants

Participants were 110 undergraduate students from University of Isfahan. There were 65 females and 45 males. It is usually a general feature of the population at this university that females outnumber males. Students were English undergraduates who volunteered to take part in this study. Stratification of the sample was done by obtaining a random proportional sample of classes within English Department to ensure that a wide variety of students of different ability levels were involved. In terms of college status, 25 were freshmen, 35 were sophomores, 19 were juniors, and 31 were senior students.

4.2 Instrument

The Test Anxiety Questionnaire (Suinn, 1969, Revised by Summer 2002) was used to assess test anxiety in this study. It can be described as a 48-item, 5-point, Likert-type instrument. Students were required to read the assertions, and then check the scale number which indicated how much they are frightened when in the mentioned situation. For example, for the item: ‘‘How much are you frightened by hearing the announcement of a coming test?’’, the student would then respond by checking either: 1=Not At All; 2=A Little; 3=A Fair Amount; 4=Much; 5=Very Much. A Test Anxiety Index (TAIN) score can be calculated by summing the scores for each item. A score of 160 or higher indicates that the student may have a problem with test anxiety. Data were collected from students during their schedule class time. For analysis of data correlation coefficient, chi square test and mean were used.

5. Results and discussion

5.1 Test anxiety status

Test Anxiety score can be calculated by summing the scores for each item of the questionnaire. A score of 160 or higher indicates that the student may have a problem with test anxiety. Scores between "80-160" indicates that the students in this group have a moderate level of test anxiety. The score that is lower than 80 indicates that the student has a low test anxiety level. Among the population in this study (n=110) 13 (11.8%) have high test anxiety level, 81 (73.6%) have a moderate level of test anxiety, and 16 (14.5%) have low test anxiety level.(see table 1).

5.2 Analysis 1

In the first analysis the researcher's purpose was to test the first null hypothesis "There is no difference between males and females considering the rate of test anxiety". Comparing the mean of test anxiety scores between male and female students shows that there is a meaningful difference between males and females considering the rate of test anxiety. As it is shown in table 2 the mean of test anxiety score for female students (X=123.72, SD=35) was higher than the mean of test anxiety score for male students (X=113.27, SD=32.14).

The researcher compared the two groups by their answers, too. Comparing male and female students considering the frequency and percentage of their answers to each question on the figure shows a meaningful difference (see table 3 & figure 1).

5.3 Analysis 2

In the second analysis, the researcher aimed at finding the relationship between test anxiety and academic achievement. To test the second null hypothesis "There is no relationship between test anxiety and academic achievement" the data collected by test anxiety questionnaire (test anxiety scores) and the students' GPA (grade point average) were correlated with each other. For so doing, a Pearson correlational procedure was conducted. The level of acceptance was set at 0.03. The results are presented in table 4. As the table shows, there is a negative correlation between these two variables at the level 0.199. The procedure yielded a correlation coefficient of -0.199. A reverse ratio was observed between test anxiety and academic achievement.

The students are divided into three groups considering their GPA. The first group (or group A) consisted of students whose GPAs' are ranged from 20 to 17. The second group (or group B) consisted of students whose GPAs' ranged from

17 to 15. The third group (or group C) consisted of students whose GPAs' are ranged from 15 to 12. As it can be seen in table 5, group A has the lowest level of test anxiety (X=113.24) and group C has the highest level of test anxiety (X=130.33). It means that as test anxiety level increases, educational achievement decreases and vice-versa.

5.4 Analysis 3

In the third analysis the researcher intends to test the third null hypothesis "There is no relationship between test anxiety and years of study". In table 6 chi-square tests were conducted. The results show that there is no meaningful relationship between test anxiety and years of study.

Comparing the mean of test anxiety scores between four groups of students considering their years of study shows that juniors have the highest test anxiety level. In terms of college status, 25 were freshmen, 35 were sophomores, 19 were juniors, and 31 were senior students. As it is shown in table 7 seniors have the lowest level of test anxiety (X=114.35) and juniors have the highest (X=132).

6. Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between test anxiety and gender. Findings show that 11.8% of students in our sample suffer from test anxiety. The mean of test anxiety score among female students was meaningfully higher than the mean of test anxiety score among male students. Also, results reveal that there is a reverse ratio between test anxiety and educational achievement and this relationship was meaningful. The last analysis shows that there is no meaningful relationship between test anxiety and years of study.

Females reported significantly higher levels of test anxiety than males. This is consistent with the previous researches on gender effects on test anxiety (Mousavi & Haghshenas & Alishahi, 2008; Lashkaripour, 2006; Mehregan & Najjarian & Ahmadi, 2001; Ferrando et al, 1999; Bishop & Baner & Becker 1998; Chang, 1997; Berger & Schecter, 1996; Feingold, 1994). However, this difference has not been evidenced by some researches (Mwamwenda, 1993). The difference in the socialization patterns of males and females has been the primary explanation for this difference. More pressure is placed on females to succeed in school than males. This leads to the increase in test anxiety levels because girls essentially are afraid to fail; each testing situation is seen as another possible chance of failure. Another possible explanation is that “males are more defensive about admitting anxiety because it might be seen as threatening to their masculinity; they are trained to cope with anxiety by denying it or by finding ways to overcome it” (Mousavi & Haghshenas & Alishahi, 2008).

In the second analysis the results showed that there is a negative relationship between test anxiety and educational achievement. Some past studies have more or less obtained the same findings. The results with regard to educational achievement are also in line with those obtained from other studies by Lashkaripour (2006), Moore (2006), Mwamwenda (1994), Comunian (1993). All have reached the conclusion that educational achievement and test anxiety level have a reverse ratio. It means that as test anxiety level increases, educational achievement decreases and vice-versa.

The third analysis, not so unexpectedly, reveals that there is no meaningful relationship between test anxiety and years of study. Finding no relationship between these two variables was not surprising, since past studies did not pay much attention to this part. Psychological phenomena are among the most sophisticated concepts. Therefore, discovering the relations and connections within this intertwined web is not an easy task. It requires lots of research and long studies to explain them.

Acknowledgments

We thank all the participants, and appreciate the views and comments of the reviewers.

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Table 1. Test Anxiety Status

TA status	Total		Male students		Female students	
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency
High	11.8	13	3.6	4	8.1	9
Moderate	73.6	81	29.7	9	44.5	49
Low	14.5	16	8.1	32	6.3	7

Table 2. Test Anxiety Score and Gender

Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Std. Error of Mean	Range
Female	123.72	35.001	1.225	4.341	155
Male	113.27	32.148	1.033	4.792	123
Total	119.45	34.105	1.163	3.252	169

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of the student's answers

	Male students		Female students	
Answers	frequency	percent	frequency	percent
1.Not at all	661	30.6	712	22.8
2.A little	645	29.9	928	29.8
3.A fair amount	423	19.6	719	23.1
4.Much	278	12.9	483	15.5
5.Very much	153	7.1	277	8.9

Table 4. TA score & GPA Correlations

		GPA	TA Score
GPA	Pearson Correlation	1	-.199
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.037
	N	110	110
Test Anxiety Score	Pearson Correlation	-.199	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.037	
	N	110	110

Table 5. Test Anxiety Scores and Educational Achievement

GPA	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Std. Error of Mean	Range
A (20-17)	113.24	34.931	1.220	7.623	116
B (17-15)	118.52	34.364	1.181	4.078	169
C (15-12)	130.33	31.358	983.294	7.391	120
Total	119.45	34.105	1.163	3.252	169

Table 6. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.622	6	.467
Likelihood Ratio	5.739	6	.453
N of Valid Cases	110		

Table 7. Test Anxiety Scores and Years of study

Years of study	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Std. Error of Mean	Range
Seniors	114.35	30.113	906.770	5.408	110
Juniors	132.00	21.584	465.889	4.952	94
Sophomores	118.23	42.007	1.765	7.100	169
Freshmen	117.92	33.721	1.137	6.744	136
Total	119.45	34.105	1.163	3.252	169

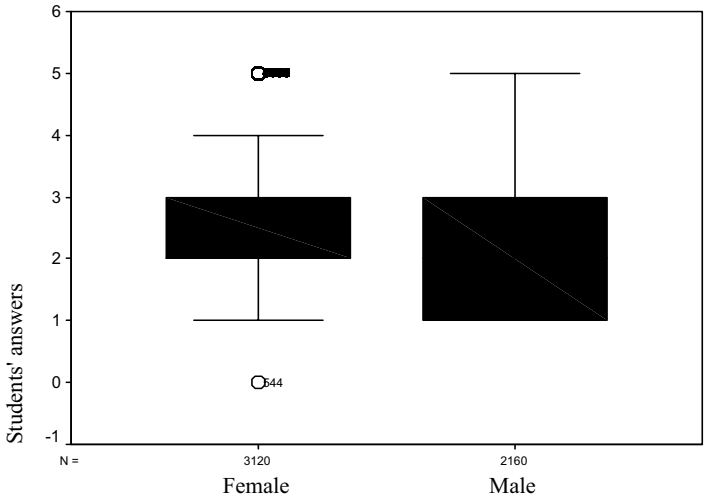

Figure 1. Comparing male and female students considering the frequency of their answers to each question.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Activating Strategies to Fossilization for English Learners in China

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Abstract

The paper attempts to explore the activating strategies to fossilizations for Chinese EFL learners. Fossilization, although always being ignored in China, still exerts its important role in blocking the EFL learning process for Chinese learners. To overcome this learning barrier, this paper is written to put forward the practical solutions to fossilization.

Keywords: Activating strategies, Fossilization, English learners in China

Fossilization, a common phenomenon in second language acquisition (SLA), refers to speakers of a particular native language persisting on using non-standard linguistic items, rules, and other subsystems relative to their particular target language.(Selinker, 1972) Although it first appeared in the category of SLA, the scholars still found its traits in EFL learning process and began to study it. (Chen Yaping, 1997; Chen Huiyuan, 1999) China, boasting of its largest population for EFL learning, can never avoid talking about this topic. But the situation here is hard to say.

1. Most likely ignored problem in Chinese EFL teaching

It does not mean that Chinese EFL teachers do not know the existence of fossilization. To the contrary, the authority academic database in China—CNKI reports that more than 150 papers are written by Chinese scholars, concerning with fossilization. But few of them really give attention to it in the teaching process.

Chinese EFL teaching always follows the model—textbook explanation. Under this misguidance, English teachers have to pay all the efforts to consider the fulfillment of textbook teaching. The teaching objectives are misled to the material learning, which is the criterion to evaluate a teacher's job, because all the tests here are knowledge-points-based instead of the competence-oriented. It is not worth time to overcome fossilization in such a teaching process. However, this ignorance of fossilization does not mean it won't exert its side-effects on Chinese EFL learners.

2. Stumbling Blocks of Fossilization in EFL learning process

In China, English learners, just like those from other countries, usually puzzle at the barriers they meet in fossilization. EFL learners in this traditional oriental country even have to take more challenges.

2.1 Psychological barrier

Psychological barrier is the largest problem to the learners. They don't show great interesting in English learning as before. After long years of study, most Chinese EFL learners learn English from their secondary or even primary school; they are no longer fascinated in English but taking it as a bone in the meat, because they seldom have the chance to use it in real situation.

Another psychological problem to the learners is the suspicion to their ability. Having paid a great deal of effort, they still do not see apparent improvement, and begin to doubt their own learning ability and even the necessity of continuous English learning course. Gradually the blocks of psychological barriers become the root of behavior barriers.

2.2 Behavior barrier

Influenced by those negative psychological elements from fossilization, Chinese EFL learners are confronted with more pressures from their behavior problems. Their oral English is still not as fluent as they expect. Most of them cannot express their thoughts freely. Their vocabularies are limited and expressions are shadowed in the past knowledge they learnt. Accuracy and decency is not good enough to be found a lot of repeated errors. Their writing works still follow Chinese English style. When they take reading and listening comprehension exercises, the results can never reach perfect. A lot of language learners seem lost in a standstill situation for long, which makes them lose their confidence and give up their routine practice. Those behavior barriers intensify the psychological barriers and lead to the cognitive barrier at last.

2.3 Cognitive barrier

Keith Johnson and Peter Tomlinson once suggested the possible causes of fossilization should be the cognitive learning models. (Zhang Xuemei, 2000) EFL cognitive model is different from L1 model. When L1 model is already latent in the mind, L1 cognitive mechanism is also generated. Since the mind is already occupied by the L1 cognitive mechanism,

EFL learning has to rebuild a generating model for another language. China learners do not learn English until they can use Chinese fluently. Therefore, English, as a foreign language completely different from Chinese, is much more difficult to learn.

EFL cognitive environment is also different from L1, since it is lack of necessary communicative environment. In China, unlike in other English speaking countries, English is not an official language; it is not popularly used here. Learners can never enjoy an "immersion environment". Classroom teaching is the only way for them to learn English comprehensively.

Those subjective and objective barriers seem as an insurmountable mount in the way of Chinese EFL learning.

3. Activating Strategies

Impossible is nothing, fossilization still has its ways out. Although it seems uncrossable, the best way is always under the feet.

3.1 Reinforcement of awareness of fossilization

The most important thing for activating fossilization is to reinforce the learners' awareness to overcome their psychological barriers.

3. 1.1 Reinforcement of learners' awareness of fossilization

True understanding to fossilization can arouse the learners' awareness. Chinese learners, unlike those from other countries, are less familiar with fossilization, since it is the most likely ignored problem here. When the learners are involving in it, they always puzzle at the present logjam situation. They do not see it is caused by a common phenomenon every EFL learners may experience. At this moment, the teacher's instant reminding may keep them sensible to the occurrence, and comfort their uneasy. In this way, at least, the learners could keep patience on their own performance in the fossilization. They will not lose their psychological control.

3.1.2 Reinforcement of teachers' awareness

Teacher is the next important person to bring attention to fossilization. For the teacher, more knowledge about fossilization seems helpful for them to take suitable teaching choice. When a teacher provides lecture, he could not promote the early attainment of fluency at the cost of accuracy. As to students' mistakes or errors, the teacher could give learners positive affective feedback. Therefore, keeping alert to fossilization in a teacher's heart is another solution to overcome the learners' psychological barriers.

3.2 Intensification of learning motivation

Motivation is the power of learning. During fossilization, the learners always lack of motivation. In order to change this negative situation, the EFL teachers may follow the way: Firstly, the EFL teacher should keep enthusiastic, earnest and responsible. A warm-hearted, open-minded and responsible teacher plays a key role in creating a relaxing and pleasant learning environment. As Finocchiaro(1981) has said, "motivation is the feeling nurtured primarily by the classroom teacher in the learning situation. The moment of truth, the enhancement of motivation, occurs when the teacher closes the classroom door, resets his students with a warm, welcoming smile, and proceeds to interact with various individual by making comments or asking questions which indicate personal concern." Secondly, the teacher should help learners take right attitudes toward the frustration from fossilization. Frustration mainly stems from difficulties and bad results of learning. If learners are afraid to make mistakes, their confidence of learning English will be weakened. Therefore, encouragement and error-tolerance from the teachers may help them solve problems and enhance their confidence. Thirdly, the teacher should keep the teaching contents interesting and original. In China, under the pressure of various English tests, many teachers attach much importance to the cultivation of learners' abilities to take examinations. They spend a lot of time in explaining sets of test paper. Such classroom settings are teacher-centered rather than learner-centered. In this case, the classroom seems dull and dry, which is hard to kindle the spark of learners' interest. If the teacher adopts vivid teaching contents with flexible teaching methods, the learners will much more like to take part in the classroom learning. At this time, colorful activities such as debates, role-plays, discussions or competitions and so on can be organized so as to arouse learners' interests. Finally, the teacher should urge the learners to preview the texts and finish assignments in time. Many students did not achieve good results, the main reason for which was that they did not preview the texts and prepare for the classroom activities. For example, in debates, many students seldom presented their opinions. It was due to the fact that they did not prepare for it in advance, so they seemed having nothing to say and lose interest gradually. In this case, it is quite necessary for the teacher to urge students to prepare for the assigned activities and preview texts in time so that students have something to say and want to say something in the class. In this way, the learners would have a sense of achievement and success. In turn, they would be more confident on learning English further and the onset of fossilization would be correspondingly reduced.

3.3 Avoidance of the first language interference

Interference of first language is one of the leading reasons to fossilization. It has been learnt that many everlasting interlingua errors are concerned with the first language interference, such as omitting the third singular present tense final "s" and the relative pronouns before some special attributive clause, etc. To deal with these interferences, the teacher may adopt behaviorist viewpoints which suggest the language learning should be promoted when the learners take active and repeated responses to stimuli, which emphasize the importance of reinforcing learners' responses by rewarding target-based responses and correcting non-target-based ones. Therefore, when the students are taught certain grammatical rules or sentence structures related to first language interference, the teachers could use intensive techniques such as repetition or drills to overcome the interference and establish necessary new habits. For example, the teacher could ask students to repeat various sentences containing relative clauses after explaining specific rules about relative clauses. By doing so, the teacher can help learners reduce the interference from first language, and help them establish the habit for correct relative clauses. What's more, all students should be encouraged to read as much as possible English materials written by native writers. By reading, students can get exact meanings of words, and acquire the useful sentence structures to enhance their linguistic competences. Eventually, helping learners develop their language sense is another way to avoid the first language interference.

3.4 Accumulation of foreign language input

Quantity of input determines the quality of learning. It is evident that in China, not all EFL teachers speak English accurately with a native or near-native accent. Learners rarely hear standard conversational speech in class which is major source for EFL learners learning English. The minimal contact with standard language, they internalize many errors. Lack of the exposure to authentic input becomes one of the main causes of fossilization.

The large quantity of effective accurate input can help reduce fossilization. For language teachers, should adjust their own classroom language, in line with students' proficiency, to simpler or more difficult vocabulary and slower or faster speech while retaining natural rhythm and intonation. In the teaching process, the teacher should try hard to input some interesting and vivid materials to enrich the classroom activity and to arouse students' enthusiasm.

3.5 Augment of language output

In China, mechanical reciting is the main training for EFL learners. In fact, keeping those language points in mind is not a difficult task. But the key point is how to put the knowledge into practice.

More communicative activities seem more useful to enlarge language output. English teacher can organize English corners for once or more times a week. The given topic in English corner every week should be set in accordance with their course. Before English corner, the teacher demands students make adequate preparation for vocabulary, sentence structures, expressions and opinions. In the corner, the teacher can ask students to write down new words and expression and look up dictionary after they go back. Besides, holding speech contest is another way to activate the environment. At the same time students should have more chance to read original works, from which learners can study some well-known sentences and typical expressions in order to strengthen their identification and comprehension abilities.

All in all, fossilization, as a necessary phase in EFL learning, can never be ignored in China. To activate fossilization for those Chinese EFL learners, the above strategies are suggested to overcome its barriers psychologically, behaviously and cognitively.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Designing and Assessing Learning

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The research is supported by Yunnan Education Science "Eleven Five" Layout project (GY080024).

Abstract

This paper analyses the design, implementation and assessment of a level 2 module for non-English major students in higher vocational and professional education. 1132001 is a code of module that uses active methods to teach college English in China. It specifically reflects on the module's advantage and defect for developing and improving learning and teaching. The paper concludes with an evaluation and effective suggestions for the next school year.

Keywords: Designing module, Learning outcome, Rational/Objective models, Constructive alignment, Deep learning approach, Effective practice and assessment, Reasonable reflection, Redesigning module

Introduction

As Lu and Luo (2003) say that "the past years have seen many Chinese college graduates, especially the non-English majors, leave school ill-equipped with high skills in English speaking and writing", college English teaching should aim at improving the students' English knowledge and language communicative ability in China.

The purpose of this module is enable students grasp certain basic knowledge and skill of English; let students have the certain ability of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. So students can use simple English to write and communicate in their daily life and business activities in order to lay the foundation to further improve students' English knowledge and communicative ability in future. The redesign of English curriculum is a content of English education reform. In recent years, Chinese universities and colleges have made a great progress in the redesign of English curriculum. It can broaden students' horizons and fits in with the requirement of those employing the graduates in the future. This module also gave me the opportunity to reflect "in action and on action" (Schön, 1983) in relation to the teaching and learning experience it aims to provide.

Context

As a tutor in level 2 module, 1132001, a module that uses active learning methods to teach English, I am always seeking for a way to build up this module as effective as possible. The students participated in this module would be minority students in higher vocational and professional education in their first semester. Students' major subjects are manufacturing and marketing management of seeding in Yunnan Agricultural University, the students are expected to be able to use English as a tool in their future life.

1. Learning outcomes

1.1 Analysis

Learning outcomes will help teachers more exactly to tell students what is expected of them, as Jenkins and Unwin (1996) describe that "Learning outcomes are statements of what is expected that a student will be able to DO as a result of a learning activity." It is important to tell students learning outcomes before lecturing.

1.2 Designing learning outcome

A curriculum design from which learners 'should not be able to escape without learning or developing' (Cowan, 1998, quoted in Biggs, 2003) so the prior basic requirement of this module is to cultivation of students' practice ability, while enhancing student's basic knowledge and skill of English. By the end of the course study this term, (1) students should be understand 1000 new words and phrases, and 100 Specialized English words; (2) students can follow and understand dialogues; (3) students can use English to communicate in classroom, daily life and business activities; (4) students can read and understand brief practical article, such as business letter, fax, technical description; (5) students can write a propositional business letter which completes at least 100 words within 30 minutes. (6) students can translate article

with 200 English words per hour when the number of new words are less than 5% in the article. The learning outcome should encourage students improve their English level.

1.3 Implementation

At the beginning of this term, I told my students their leaning outcomes including six aspects as motioned above. Most of my students are surface learners, so in order to help them develop their ability of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, I need to help them change their learning approaches, so they adopt appropriate learning strategies, and I implement as follows:

(1) According to Ramsden (2003) describe that one of University teacher's theories of teaching is making students busy and using a set of efficient actions, I gave the students task-based instruction in session. At the start of each session, I told the students the learning outcome. For example, I focus on new words and phrases this session, and I will focus on listening or speaking next session, etc.

(2) As Biggs (2003, p27) states that "Constructive alignment makes the students do the real work, the teacher simply acts as broker between the student and a learning environment that supports the appropriate learning activities", I try to provide active teaching and learning environments, because I completely agree that "Perceptions of teaching environments influence learning outcomes both directly (perceptions to outcomes) and indirectly (perceptions to approaches to outcomes). Thus, changes in teaching environments may have an impact on students' learning outcomes without necessarily affecting their learning approaches." (Lizzio, Wilson, Simons, 2002) Sometimes I use rich and colorful content, interesting vocabulary, and additional exercises, encouraging happiness of examination skills, trying to make my students get more, think more and achieve more. I design some pair tasks, include opening questions, discussing, question and answer pairs. At the same time, as Sieber (2005) suggest that it is possible to show students how things work rather than telling them with computers, and might even, it is enables students to work out for themselves to provide an environment and culture. Apparently, it is more attractive to start a lecture with computer technology than on chalkboard. So I try to use technology to support students' learning as much as possible, such as use CD, DVD, PowerPoint, etc.

(3) The aim of English teaching is not only at mastery of linguistic forms, but also at building student's communicative ability, namely the ability of linguistic use. It should be improve business English teaching and the cultivation of practical personnel in higher vocational and professional education in China. (Cong, 2005) so I focus on practical writing this semester, because the students' major subjects were manufacturing and marketing management of seeding, practical writing will be very helpful after they graduate.

Take writing business letter for example. Firstly, in order to let students know what I expected to and what is the result of a learning activity, I tell my students their learning outcome, that is the students will be able to: (1) identify any area of concern within the module; (2) can read and understand brief practical article; (3) can write a propositional business letter which completes at least 100 words within 30 minutes; (4) know where to get help if needed and improve writing business letter. Secondly, let the students do pair work. In order to make them take deep approach of learning, they discuss the difference of the layout and the content between business letter and personal letter. Thirdly, let the students read and try to understand some brief practical articles. Fourthly, let the students try to write a business letter, suppose for marketing their seeds. The students are too excited to this activity, for it is related to their future jobs. At last, I think that group work is very useful to the students for sharing their ideas in English learning. A benefit of group work or pair work can encourage students use the chance to put their knowledge of English into practice in a comfortable environment, and then providing help, advice and encouragement and improve their practical writing. So I make the students do group work. They share their letters and find where to get help if needed and improve writing their business letters by themselves.

2. Assessment

2.1 Analyses

Biggs (2003, p178) states "Assessment, like teaching, is something done to students. As teaching yells information and procedures, so assessment classifies the students on the criterion of how well they have absorbed the data thus transmitted."

Problems with assessment most commonly come from a variance between the aims of the course and the assessment. The University has clearly stated that it expects graduates of this university to have a broad range of skills beyond just recalling content knowledge. However if we only assess them on the recall of a series of isolated facts then we can do no more that expect them to learn those facts, and we have no basis to judge whether or not they had actually learnt more than this. It is essential to ensure that the assessment matches all the goals of the course and it would be unreasonable to expect students to put large amounts of their time into activities which will not assist them in getting a good grade

Steinkuehler and Derry (2001) suggest that "assessments can provide important evidence about what and how students are learning and whether course goals have been met." And "Today's educational settings place an increasing emphasis on understanding, analytical thinking, and communication skills, which in turn has created a growing need for assessment practices, procedures and measures that get beyond mere memorization of "facts." Assessing the effectiveness of a pedagogical or technological intervention in today's academic setting means…"

2.2 Designing assessment

As Biggs (2003) offers that "… assessment should test knowledge of the content of the syllabus." the methods of assessment for this module are based on: (1) the final examination contributes 70% toward the final grade; (2) midterm examination will contribute 20% of the final course grade; (3) the regular performance will contribute 10% of the final course grade.

2.3 Implementation

I try to combine the learning outcome with the methods of assessment. The paper of the midterm/term examination include two parts, they are listening comprehension (which contribute 15% of the paper) and reading comprehension (which contribute 75% of the paper). The assessments of regular performance include the condition of terminal attendance record, homework record and course performance. At the end of this term, the students assign a final grade based on course performance, assignments and two tests.

3. Reflection

3.1 Analyses

In Hunter's (1982) description of "transfer," Schön (1987) offers about "reflective practitioner", which also applies to student learning, Brookfield's (1986) work on critical reflection and reflection about learning through journaling as described by Cooper (1991). These examples provide a theoretical framework for a constructive of learning and assessing design.

At the end of this term, I find that my students are more interested in English, they tell me the reasons are mostly as follows:

(1) English learning is not a job but a joy, and it is for their future life;

(2) They have much confidence to listen, read and understand English, because they change their learning approach from surface to deep;

(3) They begin to enjoy communicate in English.

So I think the learning outcome designing of this module is effective. But most of the students feel it is too difficult to write a business letter at least 100 words within 30 minutes, and some students can not follow and understand dialogues.

3.2 Redesigning module

According to Print's (1993) methods to curriculum design, such as a continuum, vary from rational/Objective to Cyclical to Cycamic/Interaction, I think that this module may redesign based on rational/Objective models (Tyler, 1949; Taba, 1962).

As Print's (1993, p64) say "These approaches to the curriculum process emphasise the fixed sequence of curriculum elements, beginning with objectives and following a sequential pattern from objectives to content, method and finally evaluation", firstly, I reflect on what the students want and need to learn; secondly, I reflect on what the appropriate content is; thirdly, I reflect on how these teaching and learning experiences be effectively organized; finally, I reflect on if the objectives of the curriculum are in fact being achieved. After reflection, I found that there are two aspect of the curriculum need to resign.

Biggs(2003) discuss the term "constructive alignment" to put together constructivist ideas which notice learning as a process of knowledge construction. Jackie Lublin (no date) says higher order objectives are more likely to encourage students to take a deep approach to learning in the subject. Assessment tasks should mirror and reward these objectives, not merely reward recall.

According to analyze the drawback of designing learning outcomes, the new assessing method is established, it is designed the system of assessing aim which will change into operable teaching behavior. It can objectively, all-rounded, exactly assess student's learning, so I modified the design of module. I add some content in one term of learning outcome "students can follow and understand dialogues." to "students can follow and understand dialogues when speaking slowly." Then I change the last learning outcome like this: "students can write a propositional business correspondence which completes at least 80 words within 30 minutes." So, the resigning learning outcome are: (1) students should be understand 1000 new words and phrases, and 100 Specialized English words; (2) students can follow and understand dialogues when speaking slowly; (3) students can use English t**o c**ommunicate in classroom, daily life

and business activities; (4) students can read and understand brief practical article, such as business letter, fax, technical description; (5) students can write a propositional business letter which completes at least 80 words within 30 minutes. (6) students can translate article with 200 English words per hour when the number of new words are less than 5% in the article.

On the other hand, I find that the students excessively concerned about their examination results, most of them are busy to memorize the answer of exercise before examination. This does not comply with the aim of the course, so I will modify the methods of assessment for this module like this: (1) the final examination contributes 40% toward the final grade; (2) midterm examination will contribute 30% of the final course grade; (3) the regular performance will contribute 30% of the final course grade.

4. Conclusion

This paper has critically analyzed the result of assessment for designing module, which namely 1132001. It also has analyzed how the designing module mirrors the constructive alignment (Biggs, 2003) as for constructing aligned teaching and learning process. This paper has provided me the first opportunity to review the 1132001 module. From this process, I know how to encourage students to take a deep learning approach, and I learn how to develop and redesign module. So I believe that the redesigning module will be better suited to my minority students next school year.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Reader Stance and a Focus on Gender Differences

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The paper is financed by National Science Council, Taiwan

Abstract

The purpose of this paper, drawing data from a large research base, was to investigate how and why Taiwanese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) male and female university students responded to feminist texts differently. These participants were taking an elective course titled Gender and Reading while this research was conducted. Weekly reading journal entries were used for data analysis. Idea units were first used to categorize participants' journal entries; relevant idea units were grouped together, and then organized into stances for discussion. Four stances–textual, evaluative, reflective, and resistant–were generated for interpretation. Comparative content analysis was then applied to contrast male and female participants' stances while responding to feminist texts. Some pedagogical implications are suggested for classroom practice.

Keywords: Reader stance, Reflective stance, Resistant stance

1. Introduction

One factor that affects a reader's understanding and interpretation of a literary work is a reader's stance, or focus of attention. Stance in literacy events is defined as a reader's ideological orientation or perspective and so linked with reader's openness or "responsive understanding" to indeterminacies and ambivalence inherent in discourse and social relationships (Many, 1994; Many & Cox, 1992). In inferring possible meanings, the reader must apply his/her stance—i.e., ideological orientation or perspective. When adopting a stance, a reader infers those meanings consistent with their beliefs, attitudes, or disciplinary orientation. Readers may adopt a stance whereby they suppress exploration of multiple meanings or "responsive understanding," in which they actively explore multiple meanings (Beach, 1994, 1997; Corcoran, 1992).

Unfortunately, previous research on reading English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) has seldom examined the role of meanings inherent in readers' ideological stances. Language learning and knowledge acquisition in ESL/EFL classes are always viewed as two separate entities, of which linguistic components are major focuses of English instruction (Chi, 2006). A crucial step to assist ESL/EFL students to realize their knowledge of words can also enhance their knowledge of other worlds gained through exercise that stresses real interaction with the target language holds another benefit, since learners vary in mode of expression and rhetorical strategy. For reading in ESL/EFL, modes involve learners not only achieving propositional and procedural knowledge of language structure and norms, but also acquiring beliefs, values, and attitudes about self, others, and text (Cochran, 1996; Mackie, 1999).

Gender issues in classrooms appear in a growing body of research. Lloyd (1998) and Maher (2002) point out many implications of gender bias in classrooms and suggest that these contribute to loss of self-esteem and academic security for girls. Adolescence is also a time when the lives of boys and girls become even more sex-differentiated. Taylor (1993) strongly insists that social construction of gender is an active and ongoing process; teachers must supply materials with alternative versions of femininity–those more helpful to females in developing a sense of self and their future as women. Such text will more likely provide both sexes with chances to "bump up against ideologies" and try on diverse forms of agency, making it necessary to widen the range of discourse available to girls, thereby extending a repertoire on which to draw in constructing their femininity. Singh (2008) and Wayne (2004) further advocate that it also vital to broaden the range of discourse available to boys in an effort to expand possibilities for constructing their masculinity. A means of widening the range is to offer reading material facilitating a feminist reading and offers alternative forms of female and male agency. Yet merely providing texts is unlikely to suffice in helping students read texts differently. Girls are members of a society that has historically devalued female's experiences and concerns; both sexes likely need support and guidance in attempting to read against stereotypical roles of boys and girls. More importantly, feminist texts derive added value from new questions emerging with girls put "at the center" of analysis. Barrs (2000) also argues the importance of social factors during adolescence and pinpoints that this is a critical time for adolescents to construct a sense of personal identity. It is a time for trying on selves, for reflection, self-awareness, and self-definition.

Alcoff (1988) argued that gender is not a point starting, not a given, but a construct, formalizing discourse in some non-arbitrary way through a matrix of habits and practices. Reading is a way of knowing, not simply decoding or what readers already know; only where there is language is there word. Reader gender--a myriad of experiences, attitudes, ideas, memories, and feelings before the reading event--is reconstructed in the act of reading. If the text is one that should be resisted, becoming can mean either alienation or active resistance. If the text should be embraced, becoming can mean either passivity or active acceptance (Cherland & Anson, 1992). Students' efforts to read against the grain may be influenced by type of text read. These concerns led the researcher to peruse the feminist texts and discover female protagonists/heroines strong, active, resourceful, independent, and capable of solving their own and others' dilemmas. When fictional characters contradict or confront societal norms for females, how do EFL university students respond? How do non-traditional fictional females appeal differently to male and female university students? Considering these discoveries, the researcher concluded that the most natural way to answer these inquiry questions about how young adult collegians responded to feminist texts was to go to the students themselves.

2. Method

2.1 Research Setting and Participants

Setting for this study was a national university, a campus of 12,000 students, located in the middle of Taiwan. Admission requirements included passing the competitive national entrance examination. Five male and five female participants were voluntary to take part in this paper as focal participants, who were willing to reveal their detailed journal entries and oral interviews for the public. These ten focal participants were all English majors, 6 juniors and 4 seniors. They all enrolled in an elective course titled "Gender and Reading," a 17-week course meeting three hours a week during the time of this study. In general, these participants had been exposed to at least six years of English in high school and two or three years at university level, also in Taiwan, and they also hailed from similar cultural and language learning backgrounds.

2.2 Selection of Feminist Texts

Texts selected challenged students to read and discuss gender equality issues. Choice of text for this study was based on several criteria: (1) content unfamiliar to participants; (2) potential for multi-layered interpretation; and (3) concept of woman's self-awareness. Appendix 1 presents a list of texts extracted for the current paper.

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

Two types of data, the participants' weekly journal responses and semi-structured oral interviews, were used for the current paper, as described below:

2.3.1 Reading Journal Entries: Participants' weekly journal entries were a vital data source, since enrollees in the course were all requested to take part in journal writing throughout the semester. Though students were urged to write as many journal responses as possible, typically they wrote at least one per week. A journal response usually consisted of one to several paragraphs; most were composed on word processors as the semester progressed, though several participants sometimes wrote by hand. At the outset of the term, students were advised to write responses in journal form to any reading material and/or classroom discussion, with reference to gender equity issues. They were informed that the purpose of journal writing was communication and reflection; for that reason journals would not be corrected. As for grading, they were notified that minimum credits would be awarded to anyone submitting journals on time, maximum credits based on quality and quantity of journal writing. The teacher (researcher) would read journals and respond to content of students' writing as if replying to a letter from a friend. No corrections or suggestions pertaining to quality of writing or even contents or ideas were made.

2.3.2 Semi-structured Oral Interviews: Goals of the semi-structured oral interviews included finding out how participants reacted to text, peers, and class discussion. Those interviews likewise afforded the researcher chances not only to share transcripts with participants of interpretations of data but also to ask for clarification about specific reflections. This gave participants occasion to review their interview transcripts and to alter, amend and/or reiterate previously stated views. Sharing of transcripts and early interpretations of perspectives with participants conforms to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) practice called member-checking; they claim researchers have an obligation to represent subjects accurately and fairly, that member-checking boosts trustworthiness and credibility of research. Each participant was interviewed twice; at the middle and end of the term. Both interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the two research associates.

2.4 Data Analysis Procedures

In data analysis, idea units were first used to categorize participants' journal responses. Each paragraph was coded and analyzed as an idea unit; relevant idea units were moved, grouped together, and then organized into a stance as a discussion pattern. Four stances (textual, evaluative, reflective, and resistant), were generated to compare how males and females responded to feminist texts. As for oral interviews, data relevant to stances were first underlined and coded,

then moved to their relevant stance for data analysis and interpretation. A total of 131 identifiable idea units were coded from two divergent types of data written by participants, 86 relating to the four stances. Comparative content analysis was then applied to gauge how males and females responded differently to reading texts and in-depth discussion of such differences is illustrated below.

2.5 Credibility

To ensure credibility of analysis, transcripts were first coded by the researcher, then by two EFL instructors. The researcher discussed the coding system with these teachers and displayed two or three samples of each theme, any discrepancies discussed and resolved. Data igniting disagreement between us were discarded from the data pool. After lengthy conversations and negotiations, inter-coding agreements we eventually reached were 84% between the researcher and EFL teachers, 85% between the EFL teachers themselves.

3. Results and Discussion

Discussion of stances should not, however, be construed as representing necessarily distinct entities. Separation of a particular sequence of these stances, then, reflects more of the researcher's rhetorical needs than of natural processes participants undergo along the path of reading and responding to feminist texts.

3.1 Textual stance

Beach (1994) defines "textual stance" as readers' knowledge of how different language functions impact making of meaning. In this study, textual stance focused on participants utilizing their knowledge of discourse organization, knowledge of the author, and textual information to make sense or meaning of texts. In order to make sense of feminist texts, participants were apt to elaborate upon the texts locally, based on linguistic components like words or phrases. Titles, metaphors, and author's writing style were also employed as textual clues as resources for making sense and meaning. However, reading a feminist text spawns reading disjunctions that emerge from confusion, ambiguity, inconsistency, and even absurdity, so relationships between reader and text or reader and author grow stressful and aversive. Such situations occurred very obvious to participants when they read the text "Becoming a Mother," since no participant had parental experiences.

An interesting phenomenon related to gender differences emerged whenever male and female subjects encountered parts they failed to understand. Some participants recorded their lack of understanding, resulting in confusion about aspects of the reading text. Such situations became especially obvious when they read the essays on maternity, since none of them had had such experiences in their previous life. Their knowledge about and belief in maternity and motherhood came from their personal investigation and others' telling. These vignettes below glean from Jim's and May's journal responses upon encountering the issue of maternity.

Extract A (Jim, "Becoming a Mother")

I don't know what to write about this week. As a male I have no experience as another. I don't quite understand why my classmates said it means big pressure to be a mother, so I will write something about what I read from the newspaper for this assignment.

Extract B (May, "Becoming a Mother")

Since I am not a mother, I don't know how a mother feels about the role of a mother. As I know many girls are dream of being one. As we discussed in class, maybe that's because the media portrays motherhood in a very positive way. That's why we never think about how much burden a mother carries or whether we want to be a mother or not. The article makes me start thinking whether I want to be a mother or not.

Extract A manifests Jim's attempt to shy away from lack of understanding on maternal issues by illustrating his own experiences. In contrast to Jim, May in Extract B not only stated what she did not understand but also tried to interpret the part she could not fully understand. Female participants like May seemed to engage with text, offering possible interpretation of passages rather than only stating their confusion. Males like Jim merely stated their lack of experience or understanding, then disengaged from the text. Results presented in this study support Flynn's (1986) research, which cites how "male students sometimes react to disturbing stories by rejecting them or dominating them, a strategy, it seems, that women do not employ. Females often arrive at meaningful interpretations of stories because they more frequently break free of the submissive entanglement (p. 285)." Males, as indicated in Extract C, reacted differently from female participants.

Extract C (Jack, "Becoming a Mother")

I am not a mother, so I have no right to respond to the reading text this week, "Becoming a Mother.' Before class was dismissed, you [the professor] once mentioned "castration anxiety." I think it is an interesting term and thus look it up in feminist books. At last I got extra knowledge and concluded "fetishism" is the by-product of "castration anxiety." A little boy's castration anxiety begins when he sees that his mother has no penis. He thinks the mother was castrated and

grows anxious about his own penis. Originally the boy regards his mother as a phallic mother, but now she is reduced to the woman by the lack. The boy is forced to accept gender difference from the original un-differentiation. Consequently, fetishism is recognition plus disavowal of female castration. This is what I get out from the textbook, and I'm glad to share it with you.

As shown in Extract C, so as to avoid being directly detached from the reading text, Jack instead switched his responses to clarify the term "castration anxiety." In sum, both male and female participants took a textual stance to comprehend and interpret reading text, but when it comes to how they approached segments where they lacked understanding or experience, gender differences did arise in their journal responses. When using various strategies to deal with their lack of understanding, divergent approaches were selected by the two sexes. Males were more likely to react passively, demonstrating confusion and/or frustration, then disengaging from the text. In contrast, female participants tended to state confusion and then offer possible interpretations of a difficult part. They took the risk that their ideas may be faulty, but were thereby curious about possibilities and engaged with texts. They did not show the same frustration males exhibited. Both genders used other tacks of using questions, re-reading, and physical affect. In this view, our study supports Flynn (1986): "a pattern of dominance was evident in some of the men's responses and more women were able to resolve the tensions in the stories and form a consistent pattern of meaning. The dominant reader is often a detached reader; the text is not engaged, and so the reader feels little empathy for the central characters" (pp. 272-273).

3.2 Evaluative Stance

Textual meaning can possibly be made or changed as well as extended and enriched at every new moment and in each new environment. As the class continued their readings on gender issues, participants constantly re-defined texts, re-framed thoughts and beliefs, re-constructing their personal experiences and knowledge of the world and of language. Such a process lends readers opportunities to continually revise their existing knowledge. Evaluative stance afforded chances to revisit a text, read discuss, and finally re-examine their comprehension and interpretation. Ongoing reading text grew more understandable for readers astute enough to detect their own previous thoughts; it became powerful when they connected earlier text with the present one and related these to prior experiences.

Gender differences seem to exist with respect to both sexes' emotionally evaluative responses to characters and to situations: female and male readers exhibited emotional reactions to events, and therefore showed their engagement with the texts. Excerpts from response journals indicate that participants' emotional responses were essential to them as they drew themselves into a text, and caused them to relate their own feelings to those of the characters. Many female subjects revealed emotional evaluations such as "It is an interesting story to read, "I like the woman [in 'The Office'],," whereas no male reacted to any text with such emotionally evaluative discourses as "interesting" or "fascinating." Moreover, female participants focused on their emotional reactions to characters involved in an event, rather than the event itself. Simpson (1996) discovered how "girls regularly empathized with characters and related events to their own feeling," while "boys would discuss plot, focus upon the action, and challenge the possibility of particular events in the story" (p.271). Ruby and Dean exemplify how the sexes responded to reading texts.

Extract D (Ruby, "The Frog Princess")

I loved the end of the story very much. The princess and prince did not match with each other and they were unhappy while living together. The princess 'loved her husband but couldn't adopt herself to his lifestyle." "She had tried and failed."...

Extract E (Dean, "White Riding Hood")

Page 16 mentioned that the grandmother chopped up the hunter's body into manageable piece and strewed them in the forest for wolves to eat. To me, that is somewhat cruel and bloody. I don't agree that violence can resolve all the problems. Once in a while women grouse that men always use violence to solve problems. Thus, when it is women's turn to get to the power, it is not smart to make the same mistakes. I suggest that using peaceful ways when women are fighting their rights. I don't mean to speak for men's rights, but if women fight with violence, people get sick of it.

As data suggested from the current study, more female than male responses revealed empathy with characters, whereas more male than female participants responded with empathy toward situations rather than about characters. The extracts presented above indicate how gender differences influence journal responses. When a reader is "touched" or "moved" in a certain way, true engagement with a text like compassion, sympathy, or even anger are naturally developed. Empathy is strong concern for characters as people–emotional involvement comprising reactions to authors, observers, and other characters" (Bantmeier, 2003). Many female participants repeatedly displayed empathy for characters in the readings. As for male participants, Dean is the only one who responded to the reading text with somewhat emotional evaluation. Extract E indicates how Dean's responses are similar to Cherland and Edelsky's study (1993): boys were "more inclined to read literature in terms of both plot and event" (p.145). Unlike Evans' research (1996), in which "boys emphasized specific plot events in the story, but did not address the internal motivation or reasons behind the

events" (p.187), Dean in the current study, aside from addressing his internal response to the "White Riding Hood" grandmother's cruelty, also flaunted his evaluative stance by integrating his claiming voice on gender equity.

3.3 Reflective Stance

Reflection provides chances for learners to integrate self and knowledge as one entity. Beach (1998) and Many (2001) strongly advocate autobiographical responses for interpreting texts, which in turn promotes text interpretation and knowledge acquisition. Reflective stance in this study refers to participants' ability to use self as an instrument for learning. That is, reflection is defined as a self-applied process of learning, use of self as an active sign in learning (Chi, 2008). In this sense, reflection is viewed as an action which allows participants to turn personal experiences into learning by critically re-examining or casting their past experiences into some new context (Lloyd, 1998; Taylor, 1993). In relaying personal experiences as a reflective stance, both male and female participants employed first-person narration. By using "I" throughout their explanations, readers may feel closer to the event and gets the sense that the writer is being sincere; thus, use of "I" as a personal voice ("I think," I believe," "I wonder,") signifies a writer's involvement in a given subject. Yet personal narrative voice presented herein reveals gender differences in using a reflective stance to project the subjects' voice in highly disparate ways. While identifying with characters in readings due to similarities or differences from self, males tended to criticize what characters did in a story, then tell how they would act differently. In female participants' responses, similarities between characters and self appeared more than differences, as seen from Linda's and Odey's journal responses.

Extract F (Linda, "Everyday Use")

In my opinion, Dee doesn't identify with her black culture; she considers white culture superior to the black. This also occurs in Taiwan. Many Taiwanese will worship foreign culture, movies, music, etc….This case indicates lack of confidence in our own culture, which we see as inferior…I have to confess I have a tendency to worship foreign things like culture and movies. When I meet white foreigners, western people, I am very happy and even feel excited to talk to them, while I am afraid of Thai or Vietnamese laborers. For me, they are horrible and dangerous because they come from developing countries. Compared with western people, they are inferior, so I look down on them. I was not even aware of this until I read "Everyday Use." I think Ruby is right; maybe in some way, we are just like Dee, albeit not conscious of this. Much worse, many TV and MTV programs depict white as superior to black, man superior to woman.

Extract G (Odey, "The Office")

After reading and discussing "The Office" in class, I feel male and female are educated differently. We males are educated to protect girls; I see it is my responsibility, and girls also want to be protected and cared. If I don't do that, my girl friend will complain about me. The writer could tell the landlady so that the problem may be solved. Girls always just complain without taking any action.

Influenced by their reading of "Everyday Use," several female participants like Linda (in Extract F) revealed irrational fears and deeply held prejudices on sexism or racism. They pursued a discussion of race as their group talked about their fear of the foreign laborers in Taiwan, and expanded that discussion to include people with differences (e.g., blind, learning disabled, elderly, poor). Once again, it was girls who expressed feelings (fear of being old or ugly, fear of being touched by a boy, etc.). The girls revealed that they felt unsure, tentative and anxious about these issues in their own lives. Linda in Example F even tried to compare her own experiences with those of foreigners. She sees similarity rather than difference as the dominant feature of Odey's journal responses, as indicated in Extract G. Linda even tried to think about how television and advertising have had great impact on gender stereotypes. From a gender standpoint, girls related affectively to story characters, identifying and expressing feelings of fear, sadness, pity, or anger; boys only took the reflective stance as a way to defend their voices. An excerpt from Jack's journal response (Extract H) illustrates such defensive voices.

Extract H (Jack, "The Office")

[Today I said I would quit a job if my wife wanted me to stay home and take care of the children.] I feel so depressed upon hearing that "I am a person without my own opinion." What wrong doings do I do? Why is my consideration regarded as having no opinion? If today I say, "You quit the job," what would all of you say? "Oh, you are so dominant"? I just feel unfair and wonder if I am wrong to treat girls well. I treat girls well since I have come to be mature, but why do girls always like someone who doesn't care about a girl's feeling and never appreciate the one who respects them? I feel so frustrated and I can't speak out on most days, so I write it down to express my feeling.

Gender influenced participants' journal responses, in which males took a reflective stance as a defensive position, while females took the reflective position as a way of inquiry, to explore how they think about the past and why; hence more inquiries naturally emerge. Patriarchy looms as a hierarchical process in men's dominance over women; within this process, differences light the fuse of competition, discrimination, and denigration versus solidarity and unity (Flynn, 1986, 1990). Dunn (1987) noted a similar situation in which males took another form of resistance: silence.

3.4 Resistant Stance

A struggle with new perspectives occasionally leads to resistance, which may in turn hinder self-development and self-inquiry. Dunn (1987) asserts that students who feel uncomfortable with reading materials, peers and/or pedagogy may throw up barriers: an "ethical" one deflecting challenges to their value system, or a "critical" one that deflects information at loggerheads with their current schemata (pp. 40-41). Whenever gender threatens a reader's social world, one may be forced to confront one's beliefs, deal with one's prejudices, and learn to act responsibly. Frank is a noteworthy example in this class who expressed his strong resistance to reading texts and female counterparts, since both stimulated him to question his biases and assumptions about the society in which he lives.

The most significant experience came near the end of the semester. Throughout three months of research in this classroom, we were involved in talking and reflecting about social issues with emphasis on gender equity. These participants went through stages of development, awareness from intellectualizing issues to seeing them in their own lives. One day, Frank raised the issue of the group's gender dynamics, then expressed deeply tacit beliefs about girls being "prissy," which led to further discussion about the girls' domination in small-group work. The most entrenched resistance came from Frank, who blamed his female counterparts while discussing the film Thelma and Louise (below).

Extract I (Frank, "The Office")

I think the lady must be crazy. Why did she not stay at home and write? Why did she not move in with her husband? Why must she live alone and rent a room for her writing purpose? Many girls like to show independence without boys' help, but that's not right.

Extract J (Frank, Oral interview)

Each time I defended male thoughts, girls in my group always said that I am a big man. It happened to me again and again. Whenever we talked about the movie, I said if Thelma listened to her husband, nothing would happen. She got trouble herself and Linda in my group was very upset with me. She said I am a BIG, BIG man again. This time, I am very angry at her and said that she is a BIG, BIG woman and never respected men.

Frank's anger toward his female counterparts was understandable, but he failed to grasp how the author and his peers meant to challenge his stereotypical view of gender. While his interpretation was valid for him in the moment, he missed the more universal message of the reading text: i.e., that to respect difference can break down stereotypes and bridge seemingly intractable cultural barriers. Such resistance illustrates forms of denial that can seriously hinder self-development and -inquiry. Ruby and Linda were the two who were not afraid to express their ideas, even when presenting a different and more challenging perspective. They keenly focused on gender inequity they saw in reading materials, then connected their generalizations to experiences in a classroom or small-group discussion. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997) averred that women who move beyond passivity and acceptance of male domination usually attain more control over their lives. They can see the world from a position of "constructed knowledge," creating their own understanding and recognizing multiple perspectives and alternatives to the status quo.

Similar to Frank's case, Pamela reveals her resistance to both reading material and peers. As hinted by Gilligan (1993), teenage girls watch, listen, and change according to people around them. Gilligan claims that on a daily basis, girls receive lessons on what they can let out and what they must keep in, if they do not want to be morally judged by others, or simply told they are wrong. As a young adult, Pamela, like Gilligan's girls, wants acceptance and recognition by peers, needing positive feedback from teachers and peers alike. Extracts K and L highlight her situation.

Extract K (Pamela, "The New Dress")

We all know women should love our bodies, don't torture them, don't believe unrealistic advertisements, and don't envy models' ideal appearance. Still, jumping out to a frame of body image is difficult for me. Like Mabel in "The New Dress," I can not ignore others' judgment on me. Although I tell myself to get rid of those beauty standards, it is hard to accomplish. Knowing is one thing, doing is another. People are not always beautiful, but there are so many other beautiful things around them. This is the biggest problem always bothering us. 'She was a fly, but others were butterfly, beautiful insects.' A female hopes she can become a swan from an ugly duckling. Hence the fly is always around the saucer or in the saucer. It is hard to get ride of the saucer [social standards].

Extract L (Pamela, Oral interview)

Linda is the most influential person in my group discussion, very quick-thinking, and has taken some courses on gender issues. I had not much experience reading this kind of text. It [the text] requires a lot of thinking and I think and think, but I think it's difficult to change male concepts, since this is a male world. At least, to me, it's mission impossible.

When speculation and analytical hypothesis were presented to Pamela, she had chances to integrate her own values, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes and to use these opportunities for development of self. Still, her conventional beliefs play a key role in comprehending and interpreting feminist texts. For Pamela, divergence and differences create opportunities as well as problems in learning, a two-sided coin. Like Frank, she only saw one side, not the side full of potential for

inquiry, since to confront the other side required her to change, to doubt, and even to inquire further. As presented in Extract L lack of reading experience in the area of gender issues was a prime concern in the process of reading and responding to feminist texts. Some also said during oral interview that reading tension caused by this problem gradually decreased as the course progressed. While speaking, some reported involvement in fulfilling more than one task at a time. That is, they not only reflected on a subject/topic of self-expression but also thought "very hard" to ensure their oral syntax was understandable to others. They felt that "a head has to do many tasks at one time," as Anna stated in her journal. One other major factor actually emanates from the study and merits further discussion. What with girls expected to be "passive," "silent," confirming, submissive, and "veiled," some females' active role in small-group discussion appeared contradictory to certain concepts that most participants knew and to narratives they used.

Extract M (Linda, Oral Interview)

In this class, we girls can talk freely because we are encouraged to project our voice by the teacher. In other classes, if I talk, or probably talk a little bit too much, I can feel both my male and female classmates looking at me with a very strange eye. I felt like I did something wrong in this class. I found when any male talked, my teacher and classmates felt all right. I asked my classmate, Jane, who is taking the same class with me, and she felt the same way. So I think I am not too sensitive to my classmates' responses. I think "silence is golden" is still a motto to us girls if we want to have a peaceful life.

Atwood (1994) argues that tension arises with regard to gender differences when a deeply held value or belief is challenged. When female participants do not join in discussions, it is assumed that they lack ability and knowledge; when they do, they tend to be disliked and labeled as invaders, particularly if their voices contradict those of male counterparts. This in turn may rob female students of that very self-confidence and motivation they had prior to entering the university. Some females expressed unease about participating in a discussion, particularly one focused on gender and power issues, despite their perception of me. Similarly, the researcher heard males complain of being disrespected and excluded when discussing gender and power. Who felt "empowered" by them? Who benefitted? Frank (Extract I) perceived female classmates as granted privileged voice; Linda as stated in Extract M was forced into silence by what she saw as males' confrontational and alienating speech style.

5. Conclusion

Results from the current study indicate that male and female participants employed four stances to attack feminist texts in different ways. When encountering the parts that participants lacked of background knowledge or experiences or even the parts that they didn't understand, male and female participants responded differently. For female participants not only stated what they did not understand, but also attempted to interpret a part she didn't fully understand, whereas male participants stated their lack of experience or understanding and then disengaged from the text. As for the evaluative stance, both female and male participants exhibited emotional reactions to events, and therefore showed their engagement with the texts. Female participants focused on their emotional reactions to the characters involved in the event, rather than on the event itself. Females' responses revealed empathy more with characters than with the situations, whereas males responded with empathy more toward situations or the events itself rather than about characters. While employing reflective stance, male participants tended to criticize what a character did in a story and then stated that they would act differently; female responses, similarities between characters and self of readers superseded differences. Girls related affectively to characters in a story, identifying and expressing feelings of fear, sadness, pity, or anger, whereas boys in this class only took a reflective stance as a way to defend their voices. Some participants struggled with the concept of gender equity at times and consequently led to resistance. Some expressed strong resistance to reading texts and female counterparts, since both impelled them to question biases and assumptions about a society in which they live. Such types of resistance represent forms of denial that may seriously hinder their self-development and self-inquiry. Many participants' understanding of gender was enhanced by the stories read, small-group discussion, and by relating issues in the texts to their own life, as they experienced gender issues in their classroom. It was recursive (not linear) process in which their behaviors informed their thinking. Their reflection began to modify their behaviors, and reading fortified their understanding. Changing perspective made them more aware of their own feelings, along with the need to rethink what they experienced and learned about themselves vis-à-vis the opposite sex.

6. Implications

As with qualitative research, only ten participants were analyzed for the current paper. This limits generalizability of findings, as do four stances delineated herein. Results merit further evaluation of students in larger numbers at various language proficiency levels. Despite the limitations, some implications for pedagogical practice surfaced from this probe.

Reading feminist texts should be viewed from an inquiry perspective with an open-ended list, meaning that the texts can be constantly added to or subtracted from, changed or modified as it is played out within the practice of inquiry. Students have differing needs, interests, perceptions, and interpretations of gender issues; teachers should stand beside

students and do more with feminist texts in ESL/EFL than merely replicate the power practices of benevolent, helping relations. Gender equity is thus not simply one moral social issue in ESL/EFL but a way of thinking, of teaching, and most importantly, of learning.

If teachers indeed hope to promote a concept of gender equity in ESL/EFL class settings, they should let students feel free to express what they find valuable in their thoughts and experiences; thus, reader-response should not be limited to written reflections. Reading, writing, and talking become mutually supportive learning activities. By the act of response, students adopt a textual, evaluative, reflective or even resistant stance, not only a tool for encouraging personal engagement in reading, but also a method to help them refine their understanding of texts.

It is important for teachers to concern about selecting texts used in classrooms. The texts should have well-rounded male and female characters in which individuals have distinct personalities regardless of their genders. For example, feminist texts can help students recognize gender- stereotypical messages. The combination of traditional and non-traditional texts can spark discussion of how genders are portrayed in different texts that promote gender-neutral attitudes. Moreover, the portray non-traditional gender roles, including boys and men in nurturing or care-giving roles, as well as girls and women in active, leadership roles, provides an important contrast to the commonly popular cultural messages often seen and heard by university students. Hence, the use of appropriate feminist texts must be well-timed as ESL/EFL students construct their views of being adults.

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Appendix 1

Texts from Susan Cahill's Women and fiction: Short stories by and about women (1975):

Alice Walker's "Everyday Use"

Alice Munro's "The Office"

Texts from Barbara Walker's The Feminist Fairy Tales (1996):

"Princess Questa;" "The Frog Princess;" "Little White Riding Hood"

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

The Role of Input, Interaction and Output in the Development of Oral Fluency

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Abstract

This paper is a research in the second Language acquisition (SLA) with its focus on the role of input, interaction and output in the development of oral fluency in the EFL context from both a theoretical point of view and a case study. Two instruments were used: tests of oral fluency and face-to-face interviews. The findings showed that non-native oral fluency could be obtained through efficient and effective input, interaction and output in EFL while on the other hand they suggested answers to the question why most Chinese English learners failed to speak English fluently, namely lacking effective input and output, having no real need for interaction, attaching too much importance to language forms and written tests.

Keywords: Input, Interaction, Output, Oral fluency

1. Introduction

Since 1978 when the then Chinese government leaders decided to adopt the reform and open-door policies, English language learning has been boosted in China. In the past three decades, the Chinese English learner has greatly improved their four basic skills—listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, these four skills have not developed at the same rate. Li (2003) holds that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners. They are still incompetent to communicate orally in English even though they might be able to read Shakespeare's works in original after years of study at school. What accounts for this inability? Is it possible for a nonnative speaker to possess near native-like proficiency? Such questions have interested me for years and consequently prompted me to choose this topic and conduct the present research.

The research is a study on the second Language acquisition (SLA) with its focus on the role of input, interaction and output and discusses their influence on the development of oral fluency. As the subjects have learned English in an input-poor EFL context, what it is reflected in this study somewhat represents the problems that have arisen from EFL learning. Hopefully, the present research in the role of input, interaction and output and their influence on oral fluency should enhance the understanding of the nature of speaking, an indicator of L2 proficiency, and the understanding of the relationship between learners and factors that influence their SL acquisition.

In this paper I will start by eliciting different viewpoints about the role of input, interaction and output in L2 learning, before defining oral fluency. After that I will present the data collected from an experiment of 15 Chinese young learners, especially from two types of English learners and their learning history that contributed to their oral ability. At the end of the paper I will make a conclusion by summarizing the findings from the experiment and state my opinion about the role of input, interaction and output in the development of learners' oral fluency.

2. Literature view

2.1 Input, Interaction and Output

The role of the three closely relevant factors, namely input, interaction and output has gradually been acknowledged in second language (L2) learning. It is now widely recognized that input is essential for language acquisition. In addition to input, it is also accepted that interaction plays a crucial role in the process of learning L2. Output--an automatic output, to be exact--is one pedagogical goal in learning L2. So, input, interaction and output are three essential compositing elements in L2 acquisition. But for years there has been a debate about their role.

2.1.1 Input

In language learning, input is the language data which the learner is exposed to. It is commonly acknowledged that for second language acquisition to take place there must be two prerequisites: L2 input available to the learners and a set of internal mechanism to account for how L2 data are processed (Ellis, 1985). Towards the issue of input there are generally three views: behaviorist, mentalist and interactionist view, each holding a different emphasis in explaining SLA. A behaviorist view treats language learning as environmentally determined, controlled from outside by the stimuli

learners are exposed to and the reinforcement they receive. In contrast, mentalist theories emphasize the importance of the learner's 'black box'. They maintain that learners' brains are especially equipped to learn language and all that is needed is minimal exposure to input in order to trigger acquisition (Ellis, 1997). Interactionist theories acknowledge the importance of both input and internal language processing, emphasizing the joint contribution of linguistic environment and the learners' inner mechanism in interaction activities, which I will discuss later.

Krashen was an important figure whose input hypothesis once exercised powerful influence on SLA. According to his input hypothesis, SLA takes place when the learner understands input that contains grammatical forms that are at 'i+1' (i.e. are a little more advanced than the current state of the learner's interlanguage). He suggests that the right level of input is attained automatically when interlocutors succeed in making themselves understood in communication (Krashen, 1985:2). In his view, the Input Hypothesis is central to all of acquisition, i.e. L2 acquisition depends on comprehensible input. In the classroom, then, the teacher's main role is to ensure that learners receive comprehensible input by providing them with listening and reading materials. However, a great many researches later challenge his hypothesis by supplying abundant evidence indicating that though necessary, comprehensible input alone is insufficient for L2 acquisition (Swain 1981,1991; Harley & Hart, 1997; Harley & Swain, 1984, etc.). They argue that processing of comprehension is different from processing of production. And the ability to understand meaning conveyed by sentences differs from the ability to use linguistic system to express meaning (Swain, 1985, 1988; Sharwood Smith, 1986; Crookes, 1991). When input is negotiated and learners produce output in interaction, they selectively "take in" portions of comprehensible input and choose correct linguistic form to express themselves. This process makes it possible for the learners to internalize what they have learnt and experienced.

Corder's distinction between input and intake should be mentioned here. He defines input as what is available to the learner, whereas intake refers to what is actually internalized by the learner (Corder, 1967).This distinction is justified by huge amount of evidence in foreign language learning practice. It is convincingly argued that L2 acquisition will not occur even if with input at the right quantity and quality but without being internalized by the learners and becoming part of their interlanguage system.

On the whole, input is absolutely necessary and there is no theory or approach to SLA that does not recognize the importance of input. In Schwartz's view (1993), the input feeds or nurtures an innate system to aid its growth. But input alone cannot facilitate second language learning. It will not function to the full in SLA until it gets involved in interaction.

2.1.2 Interaction

Interaction refers to exchanges in which there is some indication that an utterance has not been entirely understood and participants need to interrupt the flow of the conversation in order for both parties to understand what the conversation is about (Gass & Selinker, 2001). In conversations involving NNSs, negotiations are frequent. Long(1980) was the first to point out that conversations involving NNSs exhibited forms that did not appear to any significant degree when only NSs were involved. For example, confirmation checks, comprehension checks and clarification requests are prepared throughout conversations in which there is a nonproficient NNS participant. In his updated version of the interaction Hypothesis, Long(1996) suggests that "negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interaction adjustments by the NS or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways" (pp.451-452). Thus , through negotiation, a learner's attentional resources may be oriented to (a) a particular discrepancy between what he or she knows about the L2 and what the L2 really is or (b)an area of the L2 about which the learner has little or no information(Gass & Torres, 2005). Interaction is said to be an attention-drawing device, which means that interaction serves to draw attention to an unknown part of language (Gass, 1977). Learning may take place during the interaction.

Allwright (1984:156)regards interaction as the "fundamental fact of classroom pedagogy" because "everything happening in the classroom happens through a process of live person-to-person interaction". During such kind of interaction learners make efforts to generate comprehensible output, which turns to be sources of input for other interlocutors. Misunderstandings occur frequently in interaction due to different factors, which can be, on different occasions, phonological, syntactic, vocabulary, contextual or cultural, to name only a few. To get meaning through, or seek correct interpretation, or make up for communication breakdown, the learners resort to all sorts of strategies. The feedback the learners get from their teachers and peers drives them to "test their hypotheses and refine their development knowledge of the language system" (Hedge, 2000); hence functions as a facilitator of language development.

Other SLA theorists regard interaction as the bedrock of acquisition based on the theories of L. S. Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, who argues that children learn through interpersonal activity, such as play with adults, who provides 'scaffolding', whereby they form concepts that would be beyond them if they were acting alone. In this respect, the notion of the zones of proximal development is important, which are created through interaction with more knowledgeable others. As a result of interaction, the child learns how to control a concept without the assistance of

others (Ellis 1997).

In sum, input and interaction may facilitate the development of the natural route of SLA in that comprehensible input resulted by means of interaction adjustments by the NS or more competent interlocutor. Then, what is the role of output in SLA?

2.1.3 Output

Output is the language a learner produces. Swain, the most influential figure for Output Hypothesis, has argued that comprehensible output also plays a part in L2 acquisition. She pointed out early in 1985 that only when learners are "obliged" to produce comprehensible output otherwise comprehensible input alone is insufficient to L2 learning process. According to her there is no better way to test the extent of one's knowledge (linguistic or otherwise) than to have to use that knowledge in some productive way—whether it is explaining a concept to someone (i.e. teaching) or writing a computer program, or in the case of language learning, getting even a simple idea across, and in doing so, he might modify a previous utterance or he might try out form that he had not used before. However, prior to her important paper in 1985, output was traditionally viewed as a way of producing what had previously been learned and the idea that output could be part of the learning mechanism itself was not seriously contemplated(Gass & Selinker 2001). Then in 1995, she stated that output might stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended, nondeterministic, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production. Output, thus, would seem to have a potentially significant role in the development of syntax and morphology.

Gass (2001) summarizes the four functions of output in L2 learning based on Swain's ideas: testing hypothesis about the structures and meanings of L2; receiving crucial feedback for the verification of these hypotheses; forcing a shift from more meaning-based processing of the second language to a more syntactic mode; and developing fluency and automaticity in interlanguage production.

The last significant function of output is to create greater automaticity, which is one pedagogical goal in SLA. Little effort is required to execute an automatic process(involved when the learner carries out the task without awareness or attention) as it has become routinized and automatized just as the steps involved in walking towards a bike, getting out the key, unlocking it, pushing it, getting on it and riding it, requiring little thought and less time. Mclaughlin (1987:134) claimed that automatization involves "a learned response that has been built up through the consistent mapping of the same input to the same pattern of activation over many trials." Here this notion is extended to output, meaning that consistent and successful mapping or practice of grammar to output results in automatic processing (Loschky & Bley-Vroman, 1993).

In many researchers' opinion, automaticity benefits learning. Firstly, as automatic processing consumes fewer attentional resources than does controlled processing (involved when conscious effort and attention is required to perform a task), the more automatic performance becomes the more attentional resources left over for other purposes. For example, if one can handle the phonology and syntax of a second language automatically, then more attention can be paid to processing semantic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic levels of communication. Secondly, when a mechanism becomes automatic it will process information very quickly and accurately. Thirdly, there are strong reasons for associating automaticity with important aspects of fluency (Skehan, 1998; Hulstijn, 1997,etc). Then what is fluency?

2.2 The Definition of Fluency

Many researchers in SLA have attempted to define it. Fluency represents the ability to speak or read quickly, accurately, and without undue hesitation, then automatic execution of certain aspects of L2 performance such as pronunciation, grammatical processing, and word recognition would, by definition, promote fluency (Skehan, 1998). Here, oral fluency is of my interest, for speaking, an indicator of L2 proficiency is the most difficult skill for English learners in China to master. According to Faerch et al. (1984), oral fluency is a relative conception, which in FL learning means the ability a learner has to express his or her thoughts freely and easily. They classified these abilities into three types: semantic fluency, lexical and syntactical fluency, and phonetic fluency. Brumfit (1984:42), on the other hand, assumed that fluency was "the maximally effective operation of the language system so far acquired by the student". He hypothesized that fluency was not only applicable to speech production (speaking and reading) but also to speech distinction (listening and reading). Sajavaara (1987) held that besides the skills they needed, speech production and speech distinction were also affected by a number of social and cultural factors. Therefore, two dimensions should be considered in the explanation of fluency: acceptability and continuity. Meisel (1987), in support, insisted that fluency be defined in terms of communicative acceptability.

A more influential definition was proposed by Fillmore (1979), who discussed fluency in terms of oral production and distinguished four abilities manifested in L1 oral fluency. According to him, a thorough consideration should be given to "fluency", "correctness", "flexibility" and "creation", the four abilities involved in language production when oral fluency is measured. Skehan (1996) also stressed that fluency should not be separated from meaning conveyed by sentences because it reflected the learner's ability to cope with real communicative events.

Based on Parrott (1993)), oral fluency in the present paper is operationally defined as the ability to communicate an intended message; to adjust the messages according to the responses of the listener; to produce coherent utterance and stretches of speech; to respond and speak with continuity; and to use strategies to aid communication when the appropriate vocabulary or grammar is not available.

3. Method

3.1 Hypothesis

The hypothesis in this study is that non-native oral fluency can be obtained through efficient and effective input, interaction and output in a foreign language setting.

3.2 Subjects

The subjects participating in this study were 15 young Chinese-speaking English learners who had learned English for four or five years. They ranged in age from 9 to 13. They learned English in different schools on weekdays while at weekends they received extra 2-hour English training program in a private training center, where this study was carried out. The reason why they were chosen as the subjects is that all of them had been using the textbooks which highlight learners' communicative skill development under the guidance of the present national English curriculum, that most of them were the best at English or among the best in their school classes with their latest mid-term English test scores above 90 (maximum possible score is 100), i.e. this group of learners were not weak ones who needed remedial class in order to keep up their studies, and instead they came with the ambition to remain the best in their classes and then enter the key universities, and that their parents attached great importance to their English learning, doing their best to provide them with what they needed in English learning.

3.3 Instruments

Three instruments were used to gather the data for this study: (i) a test of oral fluency among all the subjects; (ii) a second test of oral fluency between the two subjects who stood out in the first one; (iii) face-to-face interviews. The detailed descriptions of each instrument are as follows:

Instrument 1**:** In order to evaluate all the subjects' oral fluency, I decided to let each of them take the oral test by saying something which was related to their lives regardless of their personal details, that is, age, family background, school where they studied and time they spent in learning English. Considering they had just learned the past tense in the training center, I chose the topic "What happened to you yesterday?" The task was carried one by one in a quiet room in the form of face-to-face interactions with me, but with the focus on the learners' productive skills I only encouraged them to think aloud about what they had done on the previous day by saying "first, then, after that..."occasionally.

In assessing each learner's performance, I used the following criteria, which were adapted from those specified in the RSA Test battery: (a) range of language forms which the learner can make use of, (b) accuracy in the production of the language forms (production, intonation, stress, grammatical and lexical features), (c), appropriateness in the use of the language forms to convey meaning in specific context, (d) length and complexity of the learner's production, (e) fluency in conveying the spoken language(Li, 2003).

I recorded each carrying out the task and later I made written transcription of their answers to the question. All participants could say something and were fluent in conveying their thoughts, but so far as the range of the language forms is concerned, what they were able to use was limited and static, for example, most of them repeated the same sentence structure, i.e. SVO, by saying "I did my homework. I watched TV. I surfed the internet…" Among other things, three participants used the present continuous tense (for example, "I am playing the piano") and simple present tense (for example, "I go to the shopping mall.") in the situation where they should have used the simple past tense. One participant generally used each verb with just one of these tenses from the beginning to the end of his speech. Among 15 subjects, two learners named David and Snow stood out, for they spoke with comparative length and complexity and fewer errors. Following are their oral descriptions of what they did on the previous day.

David's:

Yesterday I went to have a Christmas dinner in Dongchen International Hotel. *At* there I *eat* some sandwich, *drink* some orange juice and I *eat* a lot of pork. It was very delicious. After the meal, we went to the cinema. At the cinema, we watched a great film. It is about aliens. After watching the film, we *go* back home and played chess. Dad was always winning me. So I wish I could win him someday. After playing chess, we played table tennis. I beat him, but he *can't* afford my attack. So he can not beat me in table tennis, but can only beat me in the chess. It is a great day.

Snow's:

Yesterday morning I got up at half past six as usual. Then I made my bed and washed my face. *Finished* that, I had breakfast, and then I played computer, watched TV and did my homework. I *go* to bed at 11.

The italicized words are the errors they made. From time to time David failed to give the correct forms of irregular past

tense such as 'ate, drank, went and couldn't' while Snow made one error in this respect. The other errors are the redundant prepositional word 'at' before the adverb 'there' and 'Finished', which should have been 'Finishing'. Apart from these errors, they used other language forms accurately. Besides, both of them expressed their thoughts freely, easily and without undue hesitation. But so far as the descriptive information given by them, David's is more vivid and dynamic, being rich in tense and words while Snow's is static, dull, vague and general, lacking variety of words and sentence structures. Thinking Snow might really have a dull time on that day and had nothing interesting which was worth mentioning, I decided to give both of them a second test to try their oral ability.

For the second test, two subjects David and Snow were asked to read a passage silently and then retell it. Similar to the first one, the task was carried respectively. Either of them was given 2 minutes for silent reading and then retold it immediately afterwards, without looking back at the passage.

Because the research concerned successful input and output, I had to find a text that contained 98% of words that the participants would know. The text also had to match the comprehension ability of the young learners. The passage(see Appendix A) contained 151 words in length, which as long as the texts they learned in the training center. To determine the appropriateness of the passage in terms of its reading level and content, I piloted the passage with a group of junior two middle school students assumed to be similar to participants with respects to language proficiency and level of reading comprehension. The students were asked to underline any words they didn't know. All of them reported that *court case* were the words unknown. The pilot study revealed that the students had a good comprehension of the text.

I made recordings and the following are the written transcriptions of their story retelling.

David's:

Mr. Gray was a hunter. He always *goes* to hunt, but he was not good at shooting wild animals and his eyes were not good, either. One time when he was together with his hunters he shot one of the hunters. And the hunter that was shot said: "You shot at me. Why? In the *layer*'s office, (a little pause), in the lawyer's place, the lawyer asked: "Why did you shoot *(at)* him?" Mr. Grey answered: "I thought he was a bear." "When did you realize that you were wrong?" asked the lawyer. "After the bear shooting *(at)* me back."

Snow's:

Mr. Grey *like* shooting very much. And…hum…and.. But he didn't get much practice at shooting at animals. One of his troubles was…hum …

David spent 15 seconds reading the passage silently and then closed the storybook to start retelling it confidently. He seemed to be an experienced English reader. He read very fast and had little difficulty understanding the content. Within 15 seconds, he read for information by constantly jumping from individual words and immediate contexts, for example, "when it rained and his glasses got wet," to make a global sense of the passage by saying, for example, "His eyes were not good," in his quick and fluent output. At the same time, he paid attention to the new word *court* and its meaning. By guessing from the whole passage, he succeeded in communicating the idea of it by inventing his own saying 'the lawyer's place'. Obviously he already possessed some communicative strategies that can help him make effective use of his L2 knowledge.

Snow read the passage silently for 2 minutes and then unwillingly closed the book. She was only able to say the beginning of the story before she stopped by saying "Sorry, I don't know what happened next." I could see she tried to recite the story word by word from memory, which was a difficult task within two minutes. After I switched off the recorder, she told me she understood the story but she just didn't know how to express it in English. In this case, I asked her to retell it again from the beginning in Chinese. She did it very well. She even knew the exact Chinese meaning of the two new words *court case.* Her problem lies in producing output.

Instrument 2: Interviews

To find out whether there was anything in their leaning history that may account for what has been found, I conducted the interviews one week later, which were individualized. To obtain accurate information on their English learning while not overburdening the participants with L2 processing, I interviewed the two subjects in Chinese while David, being much younger, was accompanied by his mother. The interview questions (see appendix B) and data shown below are English translations.

Characteristic	David	Snow
Age	9	13
School	a private foreign language school	a state-owned school
Grade	5	8
Years of study English	6	5

English classes each week	8	5
The latest English score(%) at school	99	95
Help available at home	frequently	seldom
Watching English TV	often	not very often
Reading English	reading extensively	English textbooks only
Speaking English	often	seldom
Native speakers available	often	never
Participation in English competitions	Yes, winning a prize	Yes, but no prize
Father's occupation	bank clerk	businessman
Mother's job	owner of a small training center	housewife

3.4 Findings

3.4.1 David

About David's English learning history, his mother said as follows:

Firstly, David was fond of reading. He read everything he could reach at home including his elder sister's senior middle school English textbooks. He never read the book that interested him for just once. Instead, he read it for at least three times to internalize it by being one of the characters in it. While reading he never consulted dictionaries, occasionally he might ask his sister and family tutors for help. For most part of time he sought for information available in the pictures beside the words and attempted to infer the meanings of unknown words which he encountered by studying the pictures in combination with his awareness of context and his limited relevant linguistic knowledge. He would often watch the English movies, which were based on the books he read, and talked about them with both his family and Chinese or foreign friends. From what was uttered or mumbled from his mouth, you might know what kind of books he had been reading, his mother said.

Secondly, David had learned English from native English speakers for years both at school and at home. In his home, I recorded the following conversation carried between him and his school English teacher, a young American man, who came once a week and stayed there playing with him while instructing him informally for about 2 hours each time.

Teacher (T): What does your grandmother do?

David: She has no job now.

T: Why not? Is she retired?

David: Yeah. She is very old. She is over seventy.

T: Where did she use to work?

David: Hm hm. I am not sure. Maybe in a bank.

T: Do you know that bank? The name of the bank is…

David: Yeah The Bank of China.

T: That's a world-famous bank. Then do you want to be a bank clerk? Do you want to work in the bank?

David: No, because I am not rich enough.

T: What do you mean by saying that you are not rich enough, David?

David: I will have to pay trillions of dollars. I need six trillions to make a bank.

T: You mean you want to have a bank of your own.

David: Yes. I need that money. I will have to *lend* that money.

T: Will you lend it or borrow it? Lend or borrow?

David: I will first have to borrow it from others and then I will make money by lending it to others…

The extract above is an example of the interaction between David and his teacher. In the conversation, the teacher interrupted the flow of the conversation in order to confirm what David was talking about while drew David's attention to the difference of *lend* and *borrow,* which is confusing to most southern Chinese English learners because of the effect of the transfer from L1 to L2. In the course of so doing, the teacher might assist David in English learning and thus David's English knowledge was developed gradually.

Then, his mother said that he was a fearless confident learner, willing to struggle to communicate in English, even when

he had very limited resources. Gradually he became more confident and independent. He loved English. He was always ready to approach to native English speakers whom he met in public places, such as restaurants, stores and parks to have conversations with them. As a cute-looking polite little boy, he had never been left out in the cold on these occasions. At school, he willingly acted as the interpreter of his English teachers who couldn't speak Chinese; and he was never timid to go to attend any English class open to him at school, usually in higher grades, which suited his level and interest, with the school authority's permission.

David's parents had never been abroad and only knew a few English words but they tried every possible way to create English-like learning environment for him, for example, by sending him to expensive private foreign language kindergartens and schools at the age of four; regularly negotiating with the school leaders and teachers about his study; buying all kinds of English books and movies CDs for him; hiring either Chinese English tutors or American English ones to help him learn English at home; and moving to a residential area where he could make friends and play with the children from English-speaking countries.

As a more socially advantaged learner in the sample, David had more resources available to him than other Chinese learners. He had been learning English for six years even though he was just nine years old. Having eight English classes each week and many English books to read and English movies to watch, he had got much exposure to English. Learning English from and communicating with native English speakers provided him the chance to listen to and speak authentic English and get feedback from his teachers and friends to test his hypotheses and refine his knowledge of the language system. The fact that her mother was the owner of a training center where English was one of the major subjects ensured the availability of books and chances to get to know English when he was very young and contributed to the type of education he received.

In both instructed and noninstructed settings David developed his oral English proficiency. That's why his English was the best among all the participants studied. In 2005, according to his mother, he qualified for the National Outlook Oral English Competition after performing well at the provincial one and he won the silver medal in kids' group. Because of the success he had greater incentive to work harder at English.

3.4.2 Snow

Like the majority of Chinese learners in state-owned schools, Snow started to learn English from Grade three at the age of 9 and had 3 English classes each week at primary school and then 5 classes at junior middle school with Chinese English teachers teaching her only. With more than 50 students in her class, the class was rigidly dominated by the teacher who explained the texts either in English or in Chinese with the detailed explanations of the meaning of new words and phrases and long difficult sentences while the students sat quietly listening and taking notes, leaving little room for the students to speak. In class there was not much interaction between learners and teachers and peers themselves. High-staked exams, which mostly tested students' writing and reading competence, would decide what the student learned and how the teacher taught. It seems the requirements of the National Curriculum had not been taken into consideration and action. As a result, Snow didn't have much chance to practice speaking at school.

Like the majority of Chinese learners, after school, owing to work assignment which occupied all of her free time she didn't spend much time reading English and watching English movies, and she had no tutor who could help her improve her oral expression at home, and she couldn't contact any native English speakers in the place where she lived, either. As her father was busy with his business and mother was busy doing housework, she had to deal with all study matters by herself. She was timid to open a conversation with foreigners from other countries when she met them in public places, and thus a great many chances to practice speaking passed away from her.

In one word, her learning context did not provide her with adequate input, output and interaction with more knowledgeable others. Therefore, she consciously chose to emphasize highly intensive intentional textbooks learning. She was course-centered. Her ambition was to excel in examinations. Her priority was to fulfill all the requirements of the textbooks. In 2005, as a successful English learner in her class because she did well in number of exams she was chosen as one of those to represent her school to take part in the National Junior Middle School Grade Two Students' English Competence Competition but she won no prize.

Snow and David correspond almost precisely to the two types of English learners. First, they started to learn English at different ages. David began at four while Snow, a very typical Chinese learner, at nine. The second difference between them was their learning environment. David had much exposure to English and a lot of opportunities to speak English while Snow learned textbooks only with little chance to communicate with others in English. The third difference is their leaning style. Snow was meticulous about details and focused mainly on textbooks whereas David focused on reading and enjoying extracurricular material. Motivation was another area of difference. Snow was learning to excel whereas David was learning because of his intrinsic interest in English. Snow preserved, and David enjoyed his learning process. Snow spent a great deal of time learning through the passage because intensive reading had been her main source of English input. David, on the other hand, spent less time on textbooks but much more time on extensive

reading, which ensured the natural recurrence of words and sentences he tried to learn in his growth as people as he acquired a foreign language.

4. Discussions of Findings

4.1 SLA literature shows that comprehensible input, interaction and output play an essential role in L2 acquisition. The present study suggests that it is possible for a non-native speaker to possess near native-like proficiency in a foreign language setting if he or she has adequate and effective input, interaction and output. This is quite in agreement with the theories of Krashen's exposure to input, Long's interaction and Swain's comprehensible output. If Snow had been exposed to a wide variety of uses of English, and had had interactions with native English speakers or more knowledgeable ones, she could possibly have obtained native-like oral fluency, too. In the second instrument of the case study, she understood the reading passage very well, but after reading she could not express it in her own words. According to Swain, Plann, Harley & King, the ability to understand meaning conveyed by sentences differs from the ability to use linguistic system to express meaning. Besides more exposure to input, Snow needs plenty of practice in speaking. In a foreign language setting the only way to improve oral expression is to make the most of the situations available for speaking just as David did in the case study. And classroom training alone is far from sufficient. Students need to do more beyond what was taught in class.

4.2 Reading extensively is found to be the single most important source of English input in the foreign language setting. Its aim is mostly two folded in learning: reading to comprehend English and reading to learn English. However, on the one hand, many English learners ignore its another important function, i.e. it facilitates speaking by enlarging their knowledge and providing them with more topics to talk about. English should not be only as a subject to be learned, but as a means of communication as well. Not many realize it's the opportunity to improve speaking by telling others orally what they have read. According to the SLA theories, comprehensible input alone is not enough and when input is negotiated, the learners will possibly internalize what they have learned and experienced. On the other hand, while reading many students tend to focus on syntax and vocabulary and as a result the flow of reading may be interrupted, important information may be ignored and the passage may not be comprehended as a whole. After reading the passage, they may not be able to express its main idea and significant factors orally with fluency. In fact, the poor speaking ability of English learners is not due to their inadequate command of English syntax and vocabulary; but it is due to their too much emphasis on vocabulary, idiomatic usage and sentence structure. David's success suggests that reading for information and reading to talk about it should be one of the aims sought by learners to practice their English in a foreign language setting.

4.3 The critical period (before puberty) hypothesis is found to function when explaining individual difference. Sufficient input before the age of twelve makes L2 acquisition easy and complete. If a child is not exposed to a language, i.e. to hear it or see it in the case of sign language at the right time he or she will not learn it. This is quite in agreement with the theories of the behaviorist and exposure to input. Millie, one subject of the case study in the paper began to learn English at four but she was still poor orally in communicating because of her insufficient exposure to English. One boy in my college English class didn't start to learn English until twelve when he became a middle school student and after many years of efforts, he was able to speak English fluently but with very strong L1 accent, which was very difficult for him to get rid of no matter how hard he tried. He might never be able to achieve a native-like accent unless he had been exposed to it at an early age. For L2 learners, when is the best time to start to learn it? The answer maybe is the younger, the better.

4.4 The role that conversational interaction between native and non-native speakers plays is found to be dynamic in the development of a second language. This further confirms Long's point of view. It's suggested that learning process should involve native English speakers or at least Chinese English teachers with near native-like fluency, who are competent enough to provide 'scaffolding', which functions in recruiting the learner's interest, simplifying the task, highlighting its relevant features, maintaining motivation, controlling the learner's frustration, and modeling. (Wood, Bruner, & Rose, 1976)

4.5 National exams, which have played an important role in nationwide English studies, and teachers, who put too much emphasis on vocabulary, idiomatic usage and sentence structure, should be partially responsible for oral inability. To speed up oral improvement, oral test needs to be extended and only in this way can teachers alter their attention to the practice of speaking.

5. Conclusion

This paper is a research in SLA with its focus on the role of input, interaction and output in the development of oral fluency in the EFL context from both a theoretical point of view and a case study. SLA literature shows that input, interaction and output play an imperative role in the development of oral fluency, which is supported by the results of the case study. A nonnative speaker is able to possess near native-like proficiency in the EFL context if he or she has plenty of time for learning English, adequate exposures to a wide variety of English both spoken and written, a real

need to use English on a daily basis and interaction with more knowledgeable ones, not treating English as a subject to be learned, but as a means of communication, where the focus is on the meaning first, then on the form of the language.

In the research, learners' age, language aptitude, personalities, motivation, attention and learning strategies were also found to be very active. It's suggested that, in addition to input, interaction and output, there are some other factors affecting oral fluency and the procedure of second language acquisition is really very complicated. What are important factors and what are less important is hard to establish because they are closely related to each other and integrate to work on learners. However, what was found from this study may provide some insights into the importance of the role of input, interaction and output in SLA and the nature of speaking, though having its limitation owing to the small scale of the case study and the two learners reported in the study being young, and may serve as a basis for further research.

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Appendix A

The Reading Passage

Mr. Grey liked shooting very much, but he did not get much practice at shooting wild animals, and he was not very good at it. One of his troubles was that his eyes were not very good and he had to wear glasses. When it rained and his glasses got wet, he could not see very well.

One day he was invited to go to shooting bears in the mountains. It was rather a rainy day and by mistake Mr. Grey shot at one of the other hunters and hit him in the leg.

There was a court case about this, and at it the lawyer for the other man said, “Why did you shoot at Mr. Robinson?”

Mr. Grey answered, “I thought that he was a bear.”

“When did you realize that you are wrong?” the lawyer asked.

“When the bear began to shoot back at me,” Mr. Grey answered.

Appendix B

Interview Questions:

1, How old are you?

2, Which school do you study in?

3, Overall, how do you see yourself as a language learner?

4, How many years have you learned English?

5, Do you have anyone help you to study English at home?

6, Do you often watch English TV programs?

7, Do you often read English books?

8, Do you often speak English in daily life?

9,Whom do you speak English to?

10,What do you do when you don’t know how to express yourself in English?

11,What do you do when you don’t understand them?

12, Do you have any native English speakers teach you English?

13, How many English classes have you each week at school?

14,Are you active in class? Do you have many chances to speak English in class?

15, Have you taken part in any English competitions? How many times? Have you won any prize?

16, What do your parents do?

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

A Survey of EFL Learners' Attitudes toward Information and Communication Technologies

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Abstract

In response to the widespread use of and ever-changing nature of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), various investigations were carried out regarding attitudes toward ICT. This paper attempted to investigate college non-English majors' attitudes toward the integration of Information and Communication Technologies into English learning and factors contributing to their attitudes so as to provide some constructive information and suggestions for the adoption of technology in foreign language education.

Keywords: Attitude, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Attitude toward ICT

1. The Increasingly Important Role of Technology in College English Education

Technology has an important position in our society, affecting our life more and more. A worldwide increase in the demand for foreign language instruction and learning has stimulated interest in how technology can help meet students' need. The use of technology in teaching foreign language has been increasing dramatically over recent decades as the merits of technology in language learning and teaching are becoming more widely acknowledged worldwide.

Teaching and learning foreign language through technology has become a new trend in foreign language education all over the world. Technology is playing a greater role during class and home study, as computer-assisted instruction and interactive media technologies supplement the traditional use of the chalk and the blackboard.

The increasing connection between English and technology creates new demands for College English education (Zhang, 2003). In China English is taught as a foreign language as a compulsory course for all the undergraduates who do not major in English. However, the English literacy of the college students have generally been seen as unsatisfactory although most of them have learned English for over 6 years, and the approach to teaching English has been seen as ineffective, far from satisfying social needs (Dai, 2001a, 2001b). Under the circumstances, the Ministry of Education has launched the campaign of College English reform ever since 1996 and determined afterwards to take three steps to reform the current situation of College English teaching. The first step is to apply advanced information technology to college English teaching and learning on a wide basis in order to further the computer-based College English reform) (Liu, 2003). In January 2004 the Ministry of Education issued new college English teaching requirements and proposed hypertextualization as one of the four goals in the new round of College English reform (Hu, 2004). The potential benefits of ICT use in college English education being recognized by the authorities at all levels, increasing funds has been spent recently on language labs, computer multimedia equipments, wireless network on campus to meet administrative and teaching purposes to improve the situation throughout the country.

Woodrow (1987) points out that integrating technology into the educational curriculum has the potential to change the process of education drastically. He also suggests that any successful change in educational practice necessitates the development of positive user attitudes toward the new technology. From a review of literature of the kernel academic journals published in China from 2000-2007, it is noticed that some educators advocate that interaction between teacher and students in the English class is so important that no technology can take the place of it. They propose that instruction using ICT should be viewed as an enhancement to the traditional way of teaching rather than a substitute for it (Zhou, 2003; Shi, 2003). A number of studies have explored the use of technology in language learning and teaching (Li, Li, Zhong, Xiong, Liu, 2006), but very few focus on learners' attitudes toward the integration of technology into English teaching and learning. Therefore, the purposes of the study are to examine the college students' attitudes toward information and communication technologies in English teaching and learning and to identify and analyze possible factors that account for the college students' attitudes toward ICT and ICT adoption in their English learning. As an English teacher, the researcher also attempt to find out the role CET 4 has played in accounting for college students' attitudes toward ICT in their English learning.

2. Studies on Factors Affecting Learners' Attitudes toward ICT

2.1 Attitudes toward ICT

Attitudes are an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or

opinions about the referent (Gardner, 1985). Attitudes have generally been divided into three components: affect, cognition, and behavior (Zimbardo,1969). The affective component consists of "a person's evaluation of, liking of, or emotional response to some object or person". The cognitive component has been conceptualized as "a person's beliefs about, or factual knowledge of, the object or person". The behavioral component involves 'the person's overt behavior directed toward the object or person".

The three-fold definition is significant in that it provides us with ideas about how to measure them. The affective component could be measured by physiological responses or verbal statements of like and dislike, while the cognitive component might be measured by self-ratings of beliefs or by the amount of knowledge which a person has about some topic. The behavioral component could be measured by observation of how the person behaves in specific stimulus situations.

Following the above definitions, in the present study, students' attitudes toward ICT consist of students' feelings toward ICT (affective), students' belief and factual knowledge of ICT (cognitive) and students' behavioral intentions and actions with respect to ICT (behavioral). The operational definition of "attitudes toward ICT" in this study is students' knowledge, belief, liking and intent for future use of ICT.

2.2 Factors Affecting learners' Attitudes toward ICT

To identify possible influencing factors on computer attitudes, the literature review could not be confined to the Chinese studies. Studies from other countries have also been used, provided it could be assumed that the identified influencing factors are relevant in the Chinese context as well.

Rogers (2003) asserts that one of the major factors affecting individual's attitudes toward innovation is the attributes of the technology. In order to address the "innovation" differences, he identified five perceived attributes of innovations: 1) relative advantage, 2) compatibility, 3) complexity, 4) trialability and 5) observability. Therefore, a new technology will be increasingly diffused if the adopters perceive that the innovation has an advantage over previous innovations, is in agreement with existing practices, not complex to understand and adopt, shows observable results and can be experimented with on a limited basis before adoption. In a study of EFL teachers' attitudes toward ICT, Albirini (2006) noted that participants' perception of ICT attributes was the largest factor in predicting their attitudes toward ICT. Zhang Qi (2007) found in her study that EFL teachers' perception of ICT attributes, i.e. relative advantage, compatibility, simplicity, and observability, explained the major difference in teachers' attitudes toward ICT and ICT use. Her study adds to the theoretical accountability of Rogers' (2003) innovation diffusion theory in the field of ICT adoption and implementation.

In this study ICT attributes are defined as the "advantage", "compatibility", "simplicity" and "observability" of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as perceived by the college students. Trialability is left out from the present study because students in the study do not have the chance to experiment with the computers before the installation in the classrooms.

Cultural perception is also an important factor in predicting students' adoption of ICT in English learning. Rogers (1995, as cited in Albirini 2006) and Thomas (1987, as cited in Albirini 2006) emphasize the importance of the cultural or social norms of a given country to the acceptance technology among its people. Rogers (2003) indicates that system norm was an important predictor of diffusion of innovations. He defines "norms" as "the established behavior patterns for the members of a social system". It is therefore supposed that norms can become barriers to the adoption of innovation, as the norms of a society or an organization usually tell people what they are expected to do in a given culture.

As ICT have originated and developed in developed countries, its implementation in developing countries may encounter resistance because of teachers' and students' perceptions of its influences on the nation and the school they are in. In this study, cultural perceptions of ICT mean the college students' perceptions of value, relevance and impact of ICT as it relates to Chinese society and colleges as well.

Besides Perceived ICT Attributes and Cultural Perceptions of ICT, previous researches show factors that have been associated with computer attitudes are Gender Difference, Social Environment, Computer Experience, ICT Competence and Self-confidence about Use, Access to Internet

In this study, students' attitudes will be examined to explore in what ways ICT is beneficial and helpful in the process of foreign language learning, while at the same time the cultural implication of application of ICT into English teaching and learning will be investigated to account for their attitudes toward it. Students' ICT competence, ICT confidence, ICT attributes, cultural perceptions of ICT, together with students' personal characteristics will be examined to see if they are correlated with students' attitudes toward ICT.

2.3 Objectives of the Present Study

In general, this study is designed to find out college EFL learners' attitudes toward ICT and ICT adoption in their

English learning. It also attempts to explore the factors contributing to the differences in students' attitudes. To be specific, the following questions will be explored:

Quantitative Study:

(1). What are the subjects' attitudes toward ICT as a medium for learning English?

(2). What are the subjects' perception of the major factors contributing to their attitudes toward ICT a). ICT attributes? b). Cultural relevance of ICT to the Chinese society and colleges? c). Their level of ICT competence? d). Their level of ICT confidence? e). Their level of using ICT to learn English?

(3). Do the extraneous variables (gender, major and home location) significantly correlate with subjects' attitudes toward ICT?

(4). Are there any association between the subjects' ICT attitudes and learning outcomes, in terms of ranks in CET4?

Qualitative Study:

(5). What are the possible factors accounting for the subjects' positive attitudes toward ICT and facilitating their adoption of ICT in English learning and what lies behind the subjects' negative attitudes toward ICT and inhibits them from adopting ICT in English learning?

3. Research Method

The participants for this study were 140 third -year non-English majors out of the approximately 7000 population at Yangquan College, Taiyuan University of Technology. When selecting students, an attempt was made to include approximately equal numbers of male and female students from different majors to allow the researcher to have a balanced sample to make comparisons related to gender issues. The selected classes were four of sciences & engineering consisting of 70 students, and three of social sciences made up of 70 students as well. Instruments for this study were questionnaires and a focus group interview. Most items in the questionnaire in the quantitative study were developed based on Zhang Qi's (2007) research in English as Foreign Language teachers' attitudes toward ICT in science universities in Beijing, Albirini's (2006) research of Syrian EFL teachers' attitudes towards the adoption of ICT in high schools and Cretchley's study of computer confidence in a technology-enriched science and engineering mathematics course in an Australian university. The Cronbach's α reliability coeffieicents for the scales used in Albirini's research were: computer attitude (0.90), computer competence (0.94), computer attributes (0.86) and cultural perceptions (0.76) and Cretchley's computer confidence scale also demonstrate consistently high Cronbach internal consistency alphas (around 0.9) and high test/re-test reliability (Cretchley, 2007). The questionnaire was first translated into Chinese from English and then revised based on Zhang Qi's study according to the Chinese higher education setting and principles of writing attitudes statements. The revised questionnaire consisted of six sections: personal information, ICT competence, attitudes toward ICT, ICT confidence, ICT attributes, and cultural perceptions. For the convenience of categorization, CET4 achievement levels, learning English using ICT and access to Internet were included in the personal information scale.

For interview, the researcher of the present study chose the form of focus group interview to make sure that the interviewees would be willing to express their feelings freely. It serves as a kind of complementary of deeper and richer data for the quantitative data obtained by questionnaires in order to offer some explanations for the results of the statistical analysis. Therefore, a checklist of open questions were prepared as a frame for discussion in the interview intended to get further information about the participants' attitudes toward ICT in their English learning.

Reliability of the instrument was examined based on the data from the pilot study through SPSS version 13.0. One item resulting in a lower reliability coefficient was deleted. The overall Cronbach's α reliability coefficient was 0.91; and the individual coefficient for the ICT competence, attitudes toward ICT, ICT confidence, ICT attributes and cultural perceptions were 0.85, 0.91, 0.77, 0.70 and 0.72 respectively. The survey was conducted form November 10th to November18th with a response rate of 97.1%. On the 18th of November, 136 questionnaires were collected altogether, of which six were not analyzed because these six questionnaires were incomplete with unfinished items.

The focus group interview was performed among six participants made up of four males (two majoring in Civil Engineering and two in Law) and two females majoring in Accounting. The interview was conducted and audio-recorded in classroom 109 of Teaching Building No.1 on December 11th. The data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed via SPSS 13.0. The differences and correlations between the two groups were regarded significant if $p<0.05$.

The data obtained from the focus group interview were analyzed using an interpretive approach. The audio-recording was transcribed immediately after the interview and then a categorization analysis was performed.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Summary of Major Findings

In response to the widespread use of and ever-changing nature of ICT, various investigations were carried out regarding

attitudes toward ICT. This study has reported on a survey for investigating college students' attitudes toward ICT at Yangquan College, Taiyuan University of Technology. In general, college students have taken positive attitudes toward ICT and ICT integration into education although ICT are scarcely seen being used in English classrooms on a daily basis and far from being incorporated into curriculum. The study reveals that female college students adopt more favorable ICT attitudes than males and students majoring in the liberal arts are more positive than science students toward ICT. College students' perceptions of ICT attributes, that is, relative advantage, compatibility, simplicity, and observability, explain the major difference in students' attitudes toward ICT and ICT adoption. Moreover, CET4 achievement correlates with students' ICT attitudes in a positive way. Cultural perceptions of ICT, together with the impact of the social environment like the attitudes of others and ICT experience, also influence college students' attitudes to some extent.

Students in this study are fully aware of the advantages of ICT in their English learning. However, both the quantitative and qualitative study show that the complexity/simplicity of ICT negatively affects college students' attitudes toward ICT and their adoption, which is in agreement with the findings of Rogers & Shoemaker. This discovery from the quantitative study has then been confirmed in the findings from the qualitative study, especially in terms of complexity of ICT use and consumption of time. Moreover, the participants in both the qualitative study and quantitative study have reservations about the compatibility of ICT use with the school policy and curriculum goals. Besides, CET4 achievement correlates with students' ICT attitudes in a positive way. The study shows that females have scored better than males in CET4 and display more interest, confidence in English, and therefore adopt more positive attitudes toward ICT in English learning than males. Further analyses make known that students' anxiety and negative attitudes toward English learning, arising from the problem involving improving communicative competence in a real sense and passing CET4 meanwhile as well as the difficulty in balancing the time allocating to major study and English learning, lie in low or failure CET4 marks and contribute partially to students' negative attitudes toward ICT and ICT adoption in English learning.

Warschauer (1998) states that "teachers can enhance student motivation by helping students gain knowledge and skill about using computers, giving them ample opportunity to use electronic communication, and carefully integrating computer activities into the regular structure and goals of the course". However, in this study students' attitudes are not influenced by their teachers in the English classrooms where the traditional way of instruction is prevalent although the social environment like the ICT attitudes of parents, peers and classmates have affected students' attitude toward ICT positively. For the students the deficiency in the actual use of ICT in English classrooms and lack of professional assistance from teachers in ICT use prove to be great obstacles to learning English through ICT in and outside classrooms.

Cultural perceptions of ICT are important predictors of college students' ICT attitudes in this study. The majority of the subjects agree that ICT will make a difference in our classroom, schools, or lives (72.3%). Students in this study are aware of not only the advantages of ICT in their English learning but also the importance of ICT use for their future jobs. As far as the compatibility of ICT with our traditional culture is concerned, almost half of the participants think ICT will not increase our dependence on foreign countries and cultures, 63.9% of the subjects believe using ICT will not hinder Chinese from carrying on their tradition and 59.2% of the respondents think ICT should be a priority in education.

Technology is only a tool. Technology cannot transform teaching by itself (Armstrong and Yetter-Vassot, 1994). ICT itself cannot change the whole educational system and thus more renovations like the testing system and pedagogical change should be made. We still have a long way to go before we could integrate ICT into foreign language education in a real sense.

4.2 Discussion

The result of this study is in agreement with previous researches on the following factors affecting learners' ICT attitudes, i.e., perceived ICT attributes, cultural perceptions of ICT, computer experience and ICT confidence. Perceived ICT attributes predict the largest proportion of variance of students' ICT attitudes. Perceived advantages of ICT as an educational medium account for students' positive attitudes and their willingness to adoption of ICT in their English learning. However, data from the study suggest that students are less positive concerning the simplicity of ICT attributes and that respondents in this study have reservations about the compatibility of ICT use with school policy and curriculum, which is in accordance with Zhang Qi's (2007) researches on Chinese EFL teachers' ICT attitudes. This study also reveals that cultural perceptions of ICT rank the third in predicting students' attitudes toward ICT. In Zhang Qi's study, a majority of the Chinese EFL teachers were neutral about if ICT fit the national and organizational culture, while students in this study are more positive about it. A possible explanation might be that young students and their teachers tend to view new things from different perspectives. A second explanation might be that there exists a gap between EFL teachers' belief, expectation and students' real need as far as foreign language education is concerned. Data from the qualitative study show that computer experience is related to more positive attitudes toward ICT. This is

in agreement with the findings from a survey research conducted by Chantal Bovée, Joke Voogt and Martina Meelissen (2007). They (Bovée, C. et al., 2007) have found the lower social status of the school's students, the schools' low accessibility to computer facilities, and the limited computer experience of the student might have contributed to a lower positive attitude. This is also confirmed in the finding from the quantitative study – students coming from the countryside showed more anxiety and unease about ICT than students from the city.

It has been pointed out that the social environment like the computer attitudes of parents, teachers and their encouragement of students to work with a computer have great influence on students' attitudes. However, in this study students' attitudes haven't been influenced by their teachers in the English classrooms where the traditional way of instruction still prevails although the social environment like the ICT attitudes of parents, peers and classmates have affected students' attitudes in a very positive way. The deficiency of ICT adoption by English teachers in this study serves as a good explanation for this disagreement with previous research findings.

Previous researches are generally consistent on the positive effects of computer competence on participants' attitudes toward technology use in foreign language teaching and learning. However, ICT competence in this study is found to have no significant correlation with ICT attitudes. A possible explanation is that participants in this research do not have significant difference in their knowledge of ICT. A second account may be that the instrument used in this study should be further revised to have reference to language learning rather than solely on the level of technology adoption.

The study reveals that female college students adopt more favorable attitudes toward ICT than males. This result contrasts with the previous studies on gender differences in computer attitudes which were mainly conducted in western countries showing more technophobic and less positive attitudes amongst girls compared with boys. Social and cultural expectations in western societies might explain the sex differences in attitudes, while data from this survey suggest that females perform better than males in CET4 and display more interest and confidence in English than males. Students' anxiety and negative attitudes toward English has been detected by further analyses of English achievement, which account mainly for gender differences in attitudes in this study.

It is also shown that students' attitudes in this study correlated negatively with access to Internet (rho=-0.384), which is in disagreement with previous studies, and students' LEUICT (Learning English Using ICT) (rho=-0.338,$p<0.01$). Rogers (2003) states it is one thing for an individual to decide to adopt a new idea, quite a different thing to put the innovation to use, as problems in exactly how to use the innovation crop up at the implementation stage. In this study the fact might also be related to the school environment. Students have difficulty integrating ICT well into English learning because of the deficiency in the actual use of ICT in English classrooms and lack of professional assistance from teachers in ICT use outside the English classrooms, which results in students' negative ICT attitudes to a large extent. Besides, for most of the students the only motivation to learn English is to pass English tests and CET4 so as to graduate. According to some participants learning English through ICT is not so effective as the traditional way to cope with CET4.

4.3 Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study lead to several implications for pedagogy and administration, as follows:

First, ICT in education is an unavoidable trend. To make the most of the benefits of ICT, policy maker should pay as much attention to the software as the hardware. That is, it's not enough to establish a good technological environment. The more important thing is to train teachers how to apply technology effectively in their domain.

Second, as educators we should not say that we should stop using technology if it does not fit. Instead, we should take an attitude that is fearless in the use of technology, ask ourselves how to conquer these disadvantages, develop full potential of technology in our instruction as students' facilitators and guide them to become lifelong learners.

Third, English instruction should not be test-oriented, instead efforts should be made to improve students' comprehensive ability in a real sense, encourage students to use ICT in and out side class, for example, ask them submit their assignments online so as to promote their motivation and interest of learning English through ICT gradually.

Fourth, in order to make the best of ICT in language teaching and learning, digital literacy should also be reflected in the testing systems (Zhang, 2003). CET4 as a test of college students' English proficiency hasn't covered all the necessary skills needed for a college student, therefore, test reform is necessary and achievements of the test shouldn't be attached too much importance in deciding whether a student will be granted a BA certificate or not. The school authority should take measures from a macro aspect of view to motivate the students by providing a more active, free learning circumstance rather than put too much pressure on students by focusing on CET4.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

The Language Learning Benefits of Extensive Reading: Teachers Should Be Good Role Models

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Abstract

Visioning a world class university is certainly an appropriate target for a university. Realizing this vision would need an expansion of knowledge and greater English proficiency as in this period of history, English is the language of IT which is an important key to acquiring knowledge. Using a sample of 40 level one students from UiTM Dungun this study found that in tandem with studies done elsewhere, extensive reading does seem to make a difference in the proficiency level of the students. Further the study also found that students who have a positive predisposition towards English read more and achieved better grades. However the study found no difference in the amount of reading done by boys and girls. The study discussed qualitatively the ability of teachers to inculcate the reading interest in the students, thus it is a triangular study which employs quantitative and qualitative means.

Keywords: Attitude, Language proficiency, Extensive reading, Reinforcing structures, Teacher quality

1. Introduction

It is a fact that in this globalized era of the new millennium English has evolved into a more vital international language than it was before. The use of English in IT has made it imperative for non-English populations even in those countries such as France, Germany and China to become literate in English. This study accepts the government's wisdom that English proficiency is a necessity for Malaysians. As such, this study would not address the issue of whether English is as vital as we are made to believe. Having accepted the importance of English to the nation as being a settled fact, this study explores whether reading materials in English, on a regular and consistent basis and in sufficient quantity, makes a difference in the English Language proficiency of the students.

There is little doubt that students coming out from our universities are facing English Language proficiency problems. According to government sources, this has affected their job prospects (The New Straits Times, July 18, 2003). The government has responded to this situation by giving English Language courses to jobless graduates of local universities. These classes which began in 2002 and go by the Bahasa Malaysia acronym of SSL was aimed towards improving the English Language proficiency of the students. In late 2002, the government spent more than RM 100 million to give retraining in the English Language to some 15,000 graduates. The government is planning to spend the

same amount in 2003 for the same purpose. It is ironical that universities which exist to equip students with the necessary skills should fail in the task where English is concerned, making it necessary for post university training. Yet the problem did not start at the university. The school system had fed the university with students of questionable English proficiency. So universities, instead of involving students in intellectual discourse during English lessons continue the schools roles of teaching proficiency in the same ineffective manner of workbook work and exercises. This results in many students leaving the university with the English proficiency problems unresolved.

This state of affairs raises serious questions as to why our university graduates fail to acquire the necessary English Language skills after a lengthy period of studying English. A possible factor may be the students' lack of exposure to real life English. The students are exposed to workbook exercises and other forms of exercises in the classrooms. But this is not reinforced by subsequent exposure to real life English. Foreign maids with hardly any education or knowledge of English seem to be picking up a working knowledge of it merely by being exposed to the English language environment of their place of work which may be the home of a professionally qualified couple. Elley (1991) carried out some studies referred to as the 'Book Flood' studies. These studies showed marked improvements in second language acquisition. He gave five reasons why reading extensively results in improvement in proficiency. According to him, extensive reading involves extensive input of meaningful prints giving rise to substantial incidental language input. Elley found that the reader focuses more on meaning rather than on form, thus coming to acquire a high intrinsic motivation if the content interests him. Nation (1997) also found reading to be effective in enhancing second language proficiency. He found that as reading is an individual activity, learners of different proficiency levels can progress at their own pace. Additionally, Nation saw that reading gives the learner the freedom to choose the content area of the reading, this he says plays an important part in maintaining the interest of the learner. Nation stresses that reading outside the classroom allows for language input outside the classroom and this he says effectively reinforces and internalizes structures which may have been learned in the classroom. Without such reinforcement, he feels that whatever learning that has taken place in the classroom would atrophy due to lack of use. He finds that classroom lessons are not tailored to individual levels. Besides being inflexible, the lessons may be boring and may be dealing with content areas not within the learner's scope of interest. Under such circumstances, he feels that credible language acquisition may not occur.

Saragi et al. (1978) have also carried out research on the merits of reading in acquiring second language. They found that extensive reading results in a substantial increase in the vocabulary of the learner which is acquired by grasping the meanings of words in context. They stress that extensive reading is vital for increasing learners' repertoire of vocabulary in context, which cannot be acquired even by referring to the dictionary. Classroom activities do not offer a wide enough scope for the acquiring of vocabulary in context. They feel that unless the learner is immersed in an English speaking environment, he has to read extensively to acquire a usable level of vocabulary in context. Hamp-Lyons (1985) in her studies found remarkable increases in language acquisitions through extensive reading especially when English is a second language. She reported findings that showed that readers become interested in the language because of the reading they do. Readers begin to view language as capable of generating interesting meaning to them, this motivates them to continue reading and the exposure therein achieved serves to fortify and internalize correct structures and meanings. Laufer-Dvorkin (1981) found substantial increase in a learner's vocabulary and discourse generating abilities through extensive reading. He found that syntax becomes internalized through extensive reading. The pattern of the English language appears to become ingrained in the minds of the readers. Thereby they continue producing syntax which conforms to these patterns. Extensive reading imbibes in the readers a wide store of vocabulary. The familiarity of syntactic patterns acquired through extensive reading enables the learners to string together various words to produce their own creative original language which is in conformity to established patterns.

The above by no means exhausts the corpus of data available about the language learning benefits of extensive reading, however the constraints of this brief study does not make it possible to mention more of the available literature. This study will not only focus on the language learning benefits of extensive reading but will also question the teacher's ability to get students to be interested in reading. Ground breaking discoveries that research may uncover leading to more novel programmes by the Ministry will be of no avail if those destinies are to implement these programmes falter in their tasks. The majority of our students do not have an opportunity for such an exposure. They cannot create such an environment. However, it is possible for them to create their own reading environment. Reading is also an exposure to English in its real life form. This study explores whether there is a relationship between the amount of reading and English Language proficiency. This study was designed to seek answers for each of these questions, namely (a) do students who read more English Language materials (outside their course content) possess greater English Language proficiency? (b) does a positive attitude towards the English Language induce students to read more materials in the English Language? And (c) do girls generally read more English Language materials than boys?

2. Methodology

2.1 Framework and definitions

The theoretical framework model depicted (Figure 1) is a derivation of the model used by Spolsky (1989). He explores the influences of attitude and other social factors on language learning. The gender factor indicated in the model is

derived from Spolsky's more global social factors. As the model shows, English Language proficiency will be the ultimate dependent variable whereas the quantity of English Language reading done will be an independent variable in reference to the English Language proficiency. However, both gender and attitude will serve as independent variables to the quantity of English Language reading done. In effect, the quantity of reading done will function as a dependent variable with regards to attitude and gender.

In this study, the achievement indicator which is the dependent variable will be the BEL 100 English grade of the students in the first semester of the 2003/4 academic year. This grade is deemed by the researcher as a legitimate yardstick of the students' English Language proficiency as it tests the students' skills of speaking, comprehension, writing and inferencing. The gender of the students will be either male are female. The quantity of English Language material reading done refers to the amount of the print in English that the student has read outside of his course books of the subject of his specialization. This would include the amount of time the student spends reading newspapers, magazines, books (fiction and non-fiction)) and internet browsing. The amount of time spent by the student in the reading of the above on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis will be accepted as a quantifiable measure of the amount of reading that he/she has done. Meanwhile, the attitude as defined by Deci and Ryan (1985) refers to the state of the mind that determines the behavioural reactions towards external stimulus.

2.2 Population and sample

According to Gardner (1974), a population is a group of individuals who share at least one common characteristic. In this study, the common characteristic is that all of them are first year semester one students of UITM Dungun. This then will comprise the population. Out of this, will be taken a sample of 40 students from whom the information needed for this research will be obtained.

2.3 Instruments

The instrument used contained three material sections, namely Sections A, B and C. Section A was aimed at finding out the amount of reading that the students have done in English. This part of the questionnaire will elicit information about the students' reading habits. The questionnaire used will be a derivative of the one used by Gan (1999). The scores from Section A will enable the researcher to answer the first research question. The score for Section A will be obtained mainly by finding out the amount of time that a student uses to read non-course related materials in English. The time used daily, weekly, monthly and yearly will be obtained to assign a numerical value to the amount of reading done. Menwhile, Section B of the questionnaire would investigate the students' attitude towards reading materials in English. This section will adopt Gan's (1999) derivative of Gardner and Lambert's (1972) attitude/motivation test battery. Gan used her derivation for her study on the relationship between home environment, motivational intensity, desire to learn English and the importance of learning English.

Section C is to determine the descriptive statistics of the students' sex. It will be a two-item section, one to indicate the respondent's sex and the other, his/her achievement grade.

3. Results and discussion

The t-test below showed that there is no significant difference in the amount of reading done by boys and girls. The instrument shows reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.568 and 0.512 as shown in the table above. The *Amount of Reading* 7 would be the highest reading score while 35 would be the smallest count. The sample had a mean of 23.72 (Table 11). Meanwhile, the *Attitude Level a*s indicated in Table 12 has a sample mean attitude score of 25.8. The score which would indicate the most positive attitude will be 10 while 50 would be the least positive score. On the other hand the best *Achievement* possible is grade A and is given a numerical equivalent of 1. The lowest achievement is E which is given the numerical value of 5. The mean for achievement is 2.45 which is between grades B and C (Table 11). It is quite evident that there is no significant difference between the male and female respondents for the amount of reading done (Table 13).

The results showed that students who read more in English as determined by their score for Section A have greater English language proficiency. The results of the score generally indicated that reading materials outside the classroom subject areas do help in the proficiency level of the respondents. This is in line with Bell's (1988) findings that extensive reading increases the exposure level of the learner to the language, thereby enhancing the learner's general language competence. A learner cannot learn English in a vacuum, there has to be exposure to real world English either in the form of the spoken word or the written text. Malaysian school students have wide exposure to workbook exercises. Workbook exercises do not necessarily duplicate real world communication in the form of speech or writing. Workbook exercises may have a place if they are supplemented by exposure to real world English communication. In the Malaysian scenario, students have very wide exposure to filling in the blanks and doing grammar exercises in workbooks, all of which come to naught when they are not internalized by real world experience. This would explain why after years of learning English the student finds that he cannot adequately communicate in English either in the oral or written form although he may have a fair understanding of both the oral and written forms.

In the Malaysian context, a student has very little exposure to the oral form of English. Mostly he does not hear English being spoken in his school or home environment except for a minority who speak English at home. Even those who speak English at home do not really have lengthy discourses as children do not talk a great deal to their parents. This means that the only form of exposure to real world English available to the student will be the printed form. Elley and Mangubhai (1983) found that a group of Fijian children improved their English language proficiency at twice the normal rate, in their "Book Flood" study. Subsequently, Elley (1991) showed striking increases in measures of language use, by students involved in his "Book Flood" studies. The "Book Flood" study involved learners spending the greater part of their class time reading books that interested them. Being aware of the vital role that general reading can play on attaining language proficiency, the Malaysian Ministry of Education had on various instances tried to generate the reading habit among Malaysian students. The period from the mid to the late 80s saw the introduction of The English Language Reading Programme (ELRP) to lower secondary students. The personal observation of the researchers was that many of these books which were produced at great costs, remained in their boxes in mint conditions due to lack of use. Seeing the futility of giving schools a programme which they can use at their own option, the Ministry reintroduced Class Readers into the English Language teaching scenario and the schools were told to use 20 percent of the weekly English Language teaching time of a class for these Readers. These Readers were also produced at great cost and many of them dealt with local folklores such as "Pak Belalang" and "Malim Nawar" in the hope that familiar content would attract students towards reading the books. Elaborate teaching guides called "Files" were prepared for each book to assist teachers in using the Class Readers. The Class Readers project appears to have suffered the same fate as the ELRP. The CDC in the mid 80s also came up with a programme acronymed "DEAR" (Drop Everything and Read). This programme too did not get off the ground. Also in force is a programme named the 'Nilam' project which is aimed at getting students to read? Realising that neither schools nor students would do anything unless instrumentally motivated; the Ministry finally introduced English Literature in 1998 and made it a compulsory component of both the school and national level examinations.

All the ministerial effort towards getting students to read shows that they are sold on the theory of acquiring proficiency through reading. Going by the present English Language scenario, it appears that the Ministry has not failed to plan, just that its plans may have failed to work. The plans are conceptually sound and in line with the corpus of data available on researches about reading. This raises the inevitable question, why did a well-founded plan fail to work? Future researches have to address the question of the school teachers' efforts of getting students to love reading. Whatever the merit of the plans introduced by the ministry, its implementation and by extension its success and failure depends on those on the field, namely the school teachers, whose duty it is to carry out the plans introduced by the ministry. It is now five years since the introduction of the compulsory English Literature programme. Some of the students involved in the programme have already come into the job market. According to newsreports the English Language scenario is as depressing as before. Now that the reading component is a compulsory part of the English curriculum, would the standard of English show an appreciable improvement, given time? If the earlier programmes did not produce the desired results because the English Language practitioners did not zealously promote reading among students as is intended by the letter and spirit of the ministerial plans, would they be successful now with the same practitioners entrusted to implement it, now that it is made compulsory? If the teachers are not converted to the idea of reading as a vital means of improving proficiency, would they be able to get students to be interested in reading just because it is a compulsory component? Is it possible that the English literature book would be treated as a lengthy comprehension exercise meant for passing examinations? If the answers to all these questions are in the affirmative, then very little improvement through reading can be expected as students may not be converted into lovers of reading. If the English literature component is made into a workbook form rather than a piece of interesting prose to be appreciated for its story content, then it is questionable whether the teachers will be able to take advantage of English literature to build up a love for reading amongst the students.

While this study and others before it show the positive proficiency achievement results arising out of reading for leisure, it is prudent to be cautious about the benefits that we can reap from introducing English literature as a compulsory component. If the teachers were to deal with it from a purely an examination perspective, then, the intended aim of getting students to continue reading English Language materials on their own momentum may not materialize. In the face of many sound plans which have failed to produce desired effect, it may not be untimely for the Ministry to focus its attention on those whose duty it is to implement their plans, namely the school teachers. *"The frontline soldiers must believe in the cause that they are fighting for."* The Ministry must convert the "*plan executors"* before they can convert others. Relevant courses for existing teachers of English must be held to get them to realize the importance of reading and to get them to be readers themselves. The teacher training scenario for English teachers has also to be looked into to produce English teachers who are readers and who would zealously encourage their students to read. This is in line with one of Day and Bamford's (2002) 10 principles of extensive reading which postulates that teachers themselves have to be ardent readers for the success of extensive reading among students. At this juncture, it might not be irrelevant to suggest that the quality of the English teachers be improved, new English teachers joining the profession should be

required to sit for the MUET examination and obtain at least Band 5 before they are considered for confirmation. Teachers who have a certain level of English proficiency would more easily be converted to the cause and be more effective implementers of the spirit of the plans laid out by the Ministry.

This study also found out that students with a positive attitude generally read more than students who did not. These students also showed better English proficiency scores. There is already in existence a formidable corpus of data which indicate that attitude and motivation are crucial in producing greater English Language achievement. Therefore where schools are concerned teachers must ensure that students are at all times highly motivated. However going by the frequent laments of teachers that the students are uninterested in learning the language, it can be seen that teachers are unable to sustain or inculcate in students the interest towards learning English. Students may get interested due to the emphasis placed on English by the government and society. However, this will not produce the desired outcome if teachers fail to nurture and sustain their interest. Scarcella and Oxford (1992) as cited in a study done by Kardina and Ridwan (2002) which was presented at the 2002 Academic Conference of UITM Dungun, state that attitude and motivation in most cases, will serve to enhance the learning of L2. Kardina and Ridwan (2002) further stated that: *'This study has shown that the participants are not at all 'unmotivated' and do not have very poor attitudes towards learning ESL. This is clearly something for the teachers to take opportunity of. With such positive attitudes and considerably strong motivation, we believe any carefully thought-out effort made to improve the students' learning will be fruitful.'* This underscores the contention of this study that students by virtue of their very nature of being young human beings come into class with expectation, curiosity and interest. In spite of this, English proficiency has indisputably remained at a lamentable state. Hence, this study further stresses that it is imperative that the Ministry does not just focus on bringing new approaches to students but also reflect seriously on how effectively the executors would carry out the plans. Teachers often lament that the dismal state of English is due to the students' lack of interest. That time has come when teachers have to view the students' lack of interest as their own failure to interest the students. It is not an extreme view to state that not only could teachers have failed to arouse the interest of the students, they could also dampened whatever interest and eagerness that the students might have had at the beginning. Unimaginative teaching methods used by the teacher who lacks personality may have a lot to do with killing the interest with which the students might have started their study of English at the onset.

Many teachers also feel that the Ministry is partially to be blamed for the dismal state of English as the Ministry has not decided to make a pass in English compulsory. These teachers feel that legislation would succeed where teaching methods fail. In a non-academic vein, these researchers might add that *what is good for the goose is also good for the gander*. If by the reckoning of the teachers legislation can work for the students, it should be equally effective in ensuring teacher quality, commitment and motivation. As suggested earlier, a step in this direction could start by making it necessary for all English teachers who do not have an A for the English proficiency papers at the university level to sit for the MUET paper and obtain a band of at least 5. This would ensure that teachers whose English is suspect would redouble efforts to improve their English. Such efforts would include general reading in English. Better quality English teachers who are themselves readers would be better placed to improve the English of the students and get students to increase exposure time to English by reading in English for leisure. These better quality teachers would also be better implementers of the programmes of the Ministry which are generally in tandem which language teaching development all over the globe. If the issue of the instructors of English is not addressed, then the best laid plans would meet an all too familiar fate. Many teachers view the teaching of English as the incessant feeling up of workbooks and leaving no blanks unfilled. The literature component recently introduced by the Ministry is already suffering a similar fate. Teachers should be trained to exploit literature to get students to be interested in reading English materials as a source of entertainment.

In another part of their study, Kardina and Ridwan (2002) had this to say: '*In the absence of a clear relationship between attitude, motivation, and language competence, what can we comment on the much-lamented poor standard of English among our students? Common sense tells us we should begin looking in other directions. Although attitude and motivation are recognized to be important in L2 learning, they are not known to be the only factors.'* This study postulates that one of the important "other factors" that they had intimated should be the teacher factor. Their study also had this to say about the instructors: "*To explain the poor level of English among school students and what can be done where the classroom is concerned, we believe it is useful to reflect on what the teachers usually do. It may be possible to improve the learning of these students by first improving what and how teachers teach. Research often indicates that a sound methodology is one that is dynamic, continually taking into account the various elements present in the teaching-learning environment (Brown, 1987)"* Given that these elements are many and diverse, teachers need to be prepared to effect changes. In the light of this it is imperative that the teacher training of new batches of English teachers be reflectively looked into and in the case of existing teachers, in service courses could be held to re-orientate them. Going by their own reasoning about making a pass in English compulsory, even the best training methods would not work unless aided by legislation, in line with this it should be made compulsory for teachers of English to obtain at least a Band 5 score in MUET. In the early 70s, many teachers were weak in Bahasa Malaysia thereby appearing to

jeopardize the government's plan of having Bahasa Malaysia as a medium of instruction. To redress this, a credit in Bahasa Malaysia was made mandatory for teacher confirmation. True to form Bahasa Malaysia proficiency problems faced by the teachers evaporated and the Ministry was able to successfully switch to Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction. If this method worked for Bahasa Malaysia, it would certainly work for English too, making it compulsory for English teachers to get a Band 5 in MUET would get them to improve their English as much by reading as by any other available method. This then would result in a higher quality pool of English teachers and a higher level of proficiency among students can be expected when teachers start teaching with more confidence and commitment.

According to Hall (1964), *"A teacher must elicit enthusiasm from his pupils by resonance from his own person"*. As the quotation implies, teachers cannot blame students if students are not interested. It is no use merely pulling the proverbial horse to the water without first making the horse thirsty. The standard of the instructor's English has also been variously questioned by many sectors, including in the press. Hence, the mention of it in this study is no shocking revelation. Teachers who have not adequately mastered the language and do not read for leisure cannot be expected to generate students' interest in reading. In the Malaysian context, reading is very important to students as this is the only means by which they can get exposure to reinforce and internalize whatever grammar and structures that they learnt in class. A Malaysian school student may generally be deaf to English as his only audio input of English may be the few words that he listens to, in the classroom. If additionally he does not read in English then he becomes not only deaf but blind to the language. Given these circumstances, it is no mystery why a student can leave university after many years of studying English and yet is only capable of producing flawed and defective speech and writing. The teacher must be a reader first before getting the students to be interested in reading. When Bahasa Malaysia was made compulsory for teachers in early 70s, many of them started reading Bahasa Malaysia materials such as the Utusan Malaysia newspaper and the Dewan Masyarakat magazine. Requiring them to get a Band 5 in MUET would produce the same results, they would read to improve and given the wealth of fiction and non fiction reading materials in English, these teachers may continue to be readers out of their own interest and not because they are forced to. This will also enable them to increase their intellectual development. Such teachers then would be better equipped to get students to start reading and increase their exposure time to English, thereby improving their English proficiency. The students are not in control of his environment and as such merely insisting that he practise his English Language in order to improve, is impractical advice. However the students is in complete control of how much he reads for which reason he has to practise his English by reading English materials and reap the benefits that Elley (1991) spoke of.

Another interesting point to note is that there was no difference in the amount of reading done by the girls and boys. Also there was no significant difference in their English Language achievement. The researchers also orally interviewed the girls and boys in the sample. The oral interview uncovered that the girls generally read more than the boys as they had fewer options when it comes to spending leisure time. However the girls mentioned that most of their leisure time reading was done in Bahasa Malaysia. Hence, the reading record of the girls in English Language was nearly the same as the boys.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, we would like to restate the findings of the research namely, that for a student to excel in any language, exposure time to that language has to be chalked up. In the Malaysian context the best form of exposure is reading. This is so because the student is not immersed in an English speaking environment. He is in no control of his environment. However he can be made to be in control of his reading. If he is made to love reading the dismal state of English in our country may be reversed. Reading is a form of real world communication. A positive attitude towards reading materials in English causes a student to read more and reap its inherent benefits. However the teachers must themselves be converted to this cause before they can be expected to get students to be interested in reading English Language materials, otherwise the best of plans by the Ministry would continue producing the same lack of results as have all the past programmes. Requiring English teachers to obtain a Band 5 in MUET may seem shocking and draconian but it may be the necessary step that might be able to shock the teachers out of their reverie and produce the desired results.

The researchers have over the course of the years interviewed many students who have good English proficiency. Invariably these students come from the homes of educated parents and these students have the habit of reading materials in English. In other words, they did not acquire their proficiency through the school system but it was their home situation that enabled them to have the proficiency that they possess. Thus the school appears to have been ineffectual in producing students with good English Language proficiency primarily because they did not succeed in getting students to be interested in reading. It is the observation of the researchers that many students of the 50s and 60s from labour class homes possessed credible English Language proficiency not only because they came from English medium schools but also because they read a lot in English at a time when other forms of entertainment may be lacking. The Education Ministry's plans are conceptually sound but it should not overlook the human element involved in implementing the plans. The last research question dealt with the issue of gender and reading but as far as the sample taken goes, the two genders did not show a significant difference in the amount of reading done in English.

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Table 1. Demographic Profile of Participants

Demographic Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	18	45.0
Female	22	55.0
Total	40	100.0

Table 2. Distribution of Items in The Questionnaire

Sections	**No. of items**	**Items No.**
A. Amount of Reading in English	7	1 – 7
B. Attitude	10	8 – 17
C. Sex	1	18
D. Achievement in English	1	19

Table 3. Reliability Coefficient of The Study Variables Using Cronbach's Alpha

Group Item	**No. of Items**	**Cronbach's Alpha n=40**
Amount of Reading in English	7	.568
Attitude	10	.512

Note: Cronbach's Alpha 0.8 – 1.00 (very strong reliability)
0.7 – 0.79 (strong reliability)
0.5 – 0.69 (reliable)
0.3 – 0.49 (moderately reliable)

Table 4. Average Time Spent Reading English Newspapers In A Day (N=40)

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
> than 30 minutes	5	12.5	12.5	12.5
20 – 30 minutes	1	2.5	2.5	15.0
10 – 20 minutes	1	2.5	2.5	17.5
1 - 10 minutes	13	32.5	32.5	50.0
0 minutes	20	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Average Time Spent Reading English Newspapers In A Week (N=40)

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
> than 30 minutes	14	35.0	35.0	35.0
20 – 30 minutes	2	5.0	5.0	40.0
10 – 20 minutes	4	10.0	10.0	50.0
1 - 10 minutes	9	22.5	22.5	72.5
0 minutes	11	27.5	27.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. Average Time Spent Reading Magazines in a Week (N=40)

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
> than 60 minutes	10	25.0	25.0	25.0
30 – 60 minutes	0	0.0	0.0	25.0
15 – 30 minutes	2	5.0	5.0	30.0
1- 15 minutes	5	12.5	12.5	42.5
0 minutes	23	57.5	57.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 7. Average Time Spent Reading Magazines in a Month (N=40)

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
> than 60 minutes	17	42.5	42.5	42.5
30 – 60 minutes	2	5.0	5.0	47.5
15 – 30 minutes	0	0.0	0.0	47.5
1- 15 minutes	6	15.0	15.0	62.5
0 minutes	15	37.5	37.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 8. Average Time Spent Browsing the Internet Reading Non-course Related Materials (in English) in a Week (N=40)

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
> than 60 minutes	16	40.0	40.0	40.0
30 – 60 minutes	0	0.0	0.0	40.0
15 – 30 minutes	4	10.0	10.0	50.0
1- 15 minutes	9	22.5	22.5	72.5
0 minutes	11	27.5	27.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 9. Average Time Spent Browsing the Internet Reading Non-course Related Materials (in English) in a Month (N=40)

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
> than 60 minutes	16	40.0	40.0	40.0
30 – 60 minutes	0	0.0	0.0	40.0
15 – 30 minutes	6	15.0	15.0	55.0
1- 15 minutes	12	30.0	30.0	85.0
0 minutes	6	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 10. Number of Fiction and Non-Fiction Books read in a Year (N=40)

	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
> than 6 books	6	15.0	15.0	15.0
5 – 6 books	0	0.0	0.0	15.0
3- 4 books	0	0.0	0.0	15.0
1 – 2 books	12	30.0	30.0	45.0
0 books	22	55.0	55.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Table 11. Mean And Standard Deviation Of Variables Involved In The Study

Variables	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Minimum of Sample**	**Maximum of Sample**
Amount of Reading in English	40	23.7250	5.9999	15.0	34.0
Attitude	40	25.8000	5.3790	10.0	34.0
Achievement	40	2.4500	1.2184	1.0	5.0

Table 12. Analysis Of Correlation Between Variables (Pearson r)

VARIABLES	**ATTITUDE**	**GRADE**
READING HABIT	0.130	0.587**

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

* Correlation is significant at 0.02 level (2-tailed)

Note: r = 1 (perfect correlation)
r = 0.7 – 0.99 (very strong correlation)
r = 0.5 – 0.69 (strong correlation)
r = 0.3 – 0.49 (moderate correlation)
r = 0.1 – 0.29 (weak correlation)
r = 0.01 – 0.09 (very weak correlation)

As shown in Table 12, there is a strong correlation (r = 0.587**) between reading habit and grade. This is also a positive correlation (r = 0.130) between attitude and reading habit although it is a weak one.

Table 13. Independent Samples Test for Gender Differences for Amount of Reading

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	3.516	.068	-2.670	38	.011	-5.1061	1.9124	-8.9775	-1.2346
Equal variances not assumed			-2.717	37.955	.010	-5.1061	1.8794	-8.9108	-1.3013

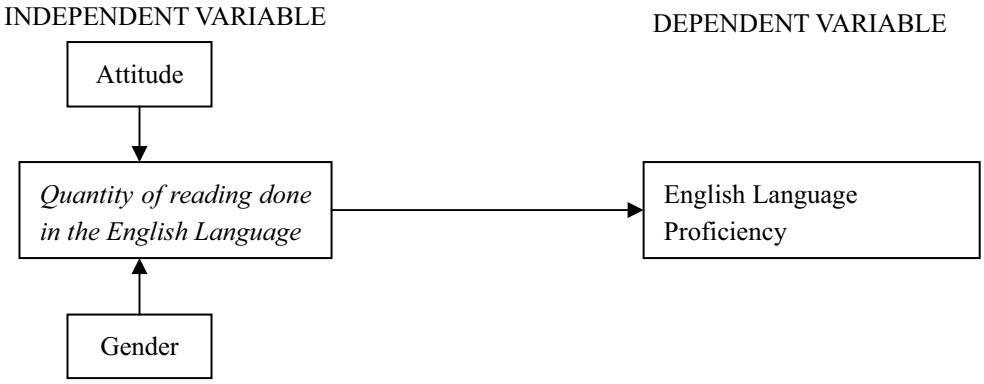

Figure 1. Research Framework: The relationship between the independent variable of *quantity of reading (attitude & gender)* and the dependent variable of the students' *English Language proficiency*.

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Interpreting Metaphor of Modality in Advertising English

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The publication of this research paper is funded by a grant from Jiangsu University for senior research fellows.

Abstract

Based on a review of the historical and current studies on modality, this paper aims at interpreting metaphor of modality and its functions in advertising English according to theories of modality system and metaphor of modality in systemic-functional linguistics with a corpus we have collected. It is pointed out that metaphor of modality, a usual method to scheme modality and allocate modal responsibility, plays pragmatic roles of foregrounding subjectivity and objectivity as well as expressing politeness and text cohesion, hence helping advertisers to establish interpersonal relationship with the readers and to achieve their commercial goals by manipulating them.

Keywords: Advertising English, Systemic-functional linguistics, Modality, Modality system, Metaphor of modality, Pragmatic function

1. Introduction

Language, coming into existence along with that of human beings, has been developed into an important tool for us to describe our recognition of the objective world and to coordinate interpersonal relationships with the development of human society. Due to the unlimitedness of the objective world and limitedness of human cognition, people tend to spare no effort in leaving themselves leeway in their discourse while guaranteeing transmission of information when they express their recognition and understanding of the objective world with their language. Meanwhile, in the coordination of interpersonal relationships with language, because of the diversity of social activities and the complexity of interpersonal relationships, people sometimes offer or ask for information straightforwardly while sometimes blur their attitudes and opinions in an indirect and polite way. All these are involved in modality.

Researches on modality have gone through a long history, appealing to a lot of linguists, philosophers and logicians. It is over 2000 years ago that ancient philosopher Aristotle remarked on the logical relations between the possibility and necessity of modality. In the later half of the 20th century, with the development of modern linguistics, modality attracted more attention from various linguistic shools, spanning from traditional grammar, semantics, generative grammar, pragmatics, semiotics, cognitive grammar to systemic-functional grammar, and achieved substantial accomplishments. However, there is no agreement about the definition of modality yet. Lyons (1977, p541) pointed out that modality refers to people's opinions and attitudes towards propositions expressed with language or circumstances described by propositions. Quirk (1985, p219) regarded it as the speaker's judgment on the authenticity of propositions. Palmer (1986, p16) claimed that modality is the grammarization of the speaker's subjective attitudes and opinions. Jian Li (1999, p21) defined modality as the degrees between right and wrong. In spite of their differences, all these definitions agreed on the relevance of modality to judgments on possibility. Systemic-functional linguistics represented by Halliday (1985, 1994), based on function, sumed these thoeries up and described modality and modality system with the systemic theory and creatively introduced the concept of metaphor of modality, which refuted the opinion that modality is mainly reflected by modal auxiliaries in traditional grammar and extended the socpe of studies on modality, therefore, contributing greatly to researches on the diversity of modality expressions.

Based on the corpus we have collected, this paper employs the theories of modality and metaphor of modality in systemic-functional grammar to analyze metaphor of modality in advertising English to reflect complex semantic connotations and their functions, attempting to reveal how advertisers initiate their discourse with potential customers, establish appropriate interpersonal relationships and achieve their business purposes via metaphor of modality.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1 Modality System

As an outcome of human social activities, language plays a variety of functions in human communication. Halliday claims that language has three meta-functions including conceptual meta-function, interpersonal meta-function and textual meta-function, among which interpersonal meta-function pays more attention to the interactive relationship between the author and the expected readers, that is, the speaker expresses his attitudes with his language and exerts influences on the listener's attitudes and behaviors (Li, 2000, p8). Mood and modality are significant parts in the interpersonal function (Huang, 2001, p79), with the former expressing the speaker's purpose to be achieved with his

speech while the latter being a semantic system expressing the speaker's judgment or evaluation which covers the field between "yes" and "no", hence adding another meaning to the most neuter semantic value of a proposition (Bybee, 1995, p2).

In his book *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday, 1985, 1994), Halliday combines modality and polarity, that is, defining all the possibilities and states lying between the positive pole ("yes") and the negative pole ("no")as modality. All these states dependent on each other constitute a continuum. In addition, he classifies and describes modality categories systematically (as is shown in Figure 1). When summed up, in systemic-functional grammar, modality is made up of four sub-systems: type, orientation, value and polarity.

First of all, according to different communicative functions, Halliday distinguishes modalization from modulation. The former, belonging to the indicative type, plays a role in information exchange and refers to the speaker's judgment on the possibility and frequency of propositions, including rank of probability (possibly, probably, certainly) and rank of frequency (sometimes, usually, always; the latter, belonging to the imperative type, plays a role in article and service exchange and refers to the speaker's judgment on the expectability of a suggestion, including rank of obligation (allowed, supposed, required) and rank of inclination (willing, keen, determined). Due to the relevance of polarity to value, Halliday assigns low, middle and high values to the above ranks respectively.

Finally, he distinguishes two pairs of orientation including subjectivity and objectivity, explicitness and implicitness. In other words, there are four respective choices in modalization and modulation, including subjective implicit, subjective explicit, objective implicit and objective explicit (Halliday, 1994, p356). Modality orientation is related to the speaker's modal responsibility, that is how much explicit responsibility the speaker takes for his attitudes.(Thompson, 1996, p60)

2.2 Metaphor of Modality

It can be revealed that English modality system has its own rules while complexity and uncertainty also exist in the expression of modality meanings, manifested in a variety of means for modalization and modulation. Although modality is mainly expressed by modal verbs and other parts of predicate, they aren't the only means for that. Actually, clauses, nouns, verb phrases or even prepositional phrases can be employed to express modality. The former is regarded as congruent from which is recessive and unmarked; the latter is incongruent form which is dominant and marked, that is, metaphor of modality.

Halliday (1994, p357) claims that it is modality orientation that determines how each modality meaning gets expressed. The relationship between different types of modality and orientation is shown in Table 1.

It is shown in Table 1 that both the subjective explicit orientation and the objective explicit orientation are based on metaphor, that is, expressions of modality are extended from vocabulary to clauses by adding projecting lauses. However, the subjective implicit orientation and the objective implicit orientation are non-metaphorical modality forms, which are expressed by modal verbs, modal adverbs or predicate extensions. Dongchun Chen (2007) summarizes a table of cognitive and agent modal verbs (Chen, 2007, p94) commonly used to compose modality metaphor clauses from the perspectives of type, metaphor and meaning. It is easy to find that in the subjective explicit orientation, clauses expressing modality are mainly used to express a psychological process to give prominence to the speaker's subjective opinions and to make them responsible for their judgments or suggestions while in objective explicit, such clauses generally express a decorative relational process and therefore the speaker's opinions will be lighted and his relevant responsibility will be avoided. Besides, nominalization of modality can also be employed to express the objective explicit orientation. (Chang, 2001, p8) Nouns of this kind include possibility, probability, likelihood, certainty, regularity, intention, desire, determination, need, obligation and so on. By building modality into undeniable facts, the advertiser will succeed in hiding the source of modality and make it objective and explicit. In addition, some prepositional phrases can also be used to express modality, such as in my opinion, to my mind in the expression of subjective explicit and in all probability, to some extent in the expression of objective explicit. (Thompson, 1996, pp60-63) Certainly, we cannot separate metaphorical expressions from congruent ones sharply because they are consecutive. Therefore, specific discourse context and the expected effect should be taken into consideration.

In a word, metaphor of modality can arrange information according to modality responsibility in a reasonable way in order to exert the pragmatic functions of modality in discourse and therefore to achieve the purpose of communication effectively.

3. Metaphor of Modality and Its Functions in Advertising Discourse

Advertising is a persuasive and dominant communicative activity (Gold, 1987, p121) with the purpose to establish certain relationships between the buyer and the seller to persuade consumers into buying commodities and services. Therefore, the interpersonal function seems particularly important. As a marked manifestation of modality, metaphor will create special interpersonal and discourse effects, hence helping the advertiser to persuade and dominate consumers.

3.1 Preposing Subjectivity and Objectivity

In advertising English, advertisers often need to made some judgments or explanations on their products or enterprises. In order to emphasize their own opinions, they tend to employ the subjective explicit orientation to emphasize the subjective nature of their opinions and take great modality responsibility, as a result, they succeed in emphasizing the core advantage and ideas of their enterprises or products, increasing consumers' understanding about them, satisfying the target clients' demands and taking the dominant place in their communication with consumers. For example:

(1)At Covidien, *we believe* innovation is the key to helping medical professionals and patients find effective treatment. For more, visit covidien.com.

(The Economist, Sep 13th-19th,2008)

(2)Redefining the Way We Live

…At NTT DOCOMO, *we're confident* that blue-sky thinking can redefine the way we live our lives---for the better. (Fortune, Feb 23,2009)

In Sample (1), a subjective explicit metaphor expressed by "we believe" emphasizes the advertiser's perseverant pursuit for medical technique innovation, hence fulfilling patients' demands for high-quality medical services. In the modern society filled with illusive advertising, such advertisement will win consumers' trust without any difficulty. Similarly, in Sample (2), NTT DOCOMO expresses its humanistic care for consumers by emphasizing its operation principle to pursue nature and environmental protection, hence shortening the psychological distance between its consumers and it. As a result, they will have strong belief that this company can provide healthy, low-radiation mobile telephone services and be glad to be its consumers.

Sometimes, advertisers may employ objective explicit metaphor on demands, making its judgments or suggestions facts with fixed characteristics or undeniable ones. Consequently, advertisers will hide their real modality source, hence keeping away from their corresponding modality responsibility. For instance,

(3)…It is hoped that the successful candidate will be able to take up the post no later than Easter 2009. (The Economist, June 21st-27th,2008)

(4)…it is possible for a skilled master blender to produce a spirit with a balance of character and smoothness that can be just as satisfying as the finest single malts, whilst exceeding them in richness and complexity… (The Economist, July 5st-11th,2008)

In Sample (3), the advertiser embodies modality into a projecting clause by employing objective explicit metaphor, impersonalizing its subjective attitudes with indirect and covert orders and grammaticalizing its order sources, hence lightening the pressure on the candidate by the advertiser, avoiding his modality responsibility and therefore avoiding the candidate's possible objection. Sample (4), an advertisement for Johnnie Walker Whisky, intentionally widening the distance between their evaluation on the products and the advertiser himself by employing a sentence " it is possible…" to express a relational process, hence adding the subjective opinion that "to produce a spirit with a balance of character and smoothness that can be just as satisfying as the finest single malts, whilst exceeding them in richness and complexity…". As a result, greater persuasive force can be produced and the advertiser's corresponding responsibility can be avoided.

In addition, nominalization can be employed to express objective modality. For instance,

(5)Chances are your favorite music, film or TV show was produced with our help…

(Fortune, Nov 10, 2008)

(6)The truth is that for many individuals and corporations, a jet makes sound business sense…

(Fortune, May 5, 2008)

In Sample (5) and Sample (6), two advertisements for an electronic product and private airplanes respectively, nominalization is employed to eliminate the advertiser's involvement, keeping the possibility and certainty of modality meanings out of the advertiser's reach. As a result, consumers will find it more reliable since they feel that the advertisement is based on facts instead of the advertiser's subjective opinions.

3.2 Expressing Politeness

According to Brown and Levinson's Face-Saving Theory (2003), advertisers' behavior may threaten consumers' negative face. Therefore, in the current fierce competition, they will spare no effort to show their politeness in order to lesson their threat to consumers' face and promote them to buy products.

Subjectivity and objectivity of metaphor of modality play an important coordinating role in the politeness degree of verbal communication. Linguist Leech (1983) proposes the concept of pragmatic scales, according to which indirectness is proportionate to politeness. That is to say, with greater indirectness, there is higher degree of

politeness.(Leech, 1983, p108) Objective explicit metaphor of modality helps to form a wider distance between advertisers and their evaluations by constructing the participants' concept resources, which causes a wider psychological distance between advertisers and consumers, hence higher degree of politeness. therefore, advertisers tend to employ objective metaphor if they hope to employ equivalent modality expressions while not to sound impolite. For example,

(7) *It seems that giving a wide selection of first run movies, music videos, news, games and sports will make your trip relaxing and enjoyable…* (Wang, 2007, p48)

In this advertisement for Virgin Atlantic Airliner, objective explicit modality makes consumers feel that the judgment on a proposition doesn't come from the advertiser, lessening their pressure or constraint. Even if they have no interest in the entertainment activities during their trip, they will have no aversion or confusion due to enough leeway has been left.

In addition, the value of metaphor of modality will also influence the politeness degree of advertising. The greater value of modality is shown, the more positive attitudes the advertiser has toward the proposition or suggestion, the lower degree of politeness is given. Conversely, lower value of modality will lead to more euphemistic mood, more options for consumers to decide whether to accept the advertiser's opinions and higher degree of politeness. For example,

(8) Growth. At FedEx, we believe that differentiating your company from the competition is the best way to facilitate growth… (Fortune, Feb 18, 2008)

(9) Can we find opportunity in the turbulence? We think we can… (Fortune, Nov 10, 2008)

(10) At Grant Thornton, we understand that the big decisions you have to make are sometimes difficult, often finely balanced, always with you… (Fortune, Dec 22, 2008)

The above are three advertisements made by FedEx, Lombard Ordier Darier Hentsch Investment Company and Grant Thornton Consultant Company respectively in *Fortune*. In the three common subjective metaphors of modality, "we believe" has the highest value of modality, "we think" ranks second and "we understand" ranks third. Obviously, Sample (8) gives the strongest mood, expressing the speaker's affirmation and subjective assertion, and leaving little space for readers and therefore revealing lowest degree of politeness. On the contrary, Sample (10) gives the most gentle mood and the highest degree of politeness by expressing the speaker's understanding.

3.3 Discourse Cohesion

In English advertising, metaphor of modality offers a strategy for discourse cohesion, that is, proper use of non-congruent modality expressions will achieve a natural and coherent organization of discourse. The nominalization of modal verbs will not only express the objective explicit orientation, but serve as a cohesion signal. For example,

(11) More of what you travel for. Every trip is a chance to discover exciting places and to reconnect with the people who are important to you. At Sheraton Resorts, there are endless opportunities to explore it all. From invigorating theme park rides to serene beach villas. From spa getaways to reef dive outings. *Chances* are one of our Asia-Pacific Sheraton Resorts will connect you with all of the reasons you love to travel. At Sheraton, you don't just stay here, you belong. (The Economist, July 12th-18th, 2008)

In this advertisement for Sheraton Resorts, "chances" carries on the text by summarizing all the modality possibilities involved in the above sentences, hence combing the modality meaning in the whole passage as a cohesion means.

In addition, advertisers can choose from a variety of sentence patterns one fit for specific context according to discourse cohesion, information distribution and structural balance and so on. For example,

(12)…To offer the assurance of unmatched quality, we control the total supply chain of our products and demonstrate full GMP accreditation in every process we undertake. It is no wonder our customers trust no other name but Eu Yan Sang. (Time, Feb 25, 2008)

In this advertisement for Eu Yan Sang, the advertiser employs skillfully an objective explicit metaphor form "it is no wonder" in the last sentence, with which, on one hand, the modality source is hidden and therefore objectivity is revealed, on the other hand, its complex sementaic function of cause and effect puts this advertisement into a more cohesive and logical whole.

4. Conclusion

From the functional perspective, systemic-functional linguistics represented by Halliday have constructed an open grammatical framework and expanded the scope of research on modality by introducing the concept of metaphor of modality. This liguistic device enables modality to be expressed not only by modal verbs but by nouns, adjectives, prepositional phrases, verb phrases and so on, which is a remarkable breakthrough in functional grammar. (Hu, 2000, p32) The rank shift of sentence and corresponding conversions in grammatical structure and category are regarded as the source of metaphor of modality, which supports the idea that grammar can be constructed in different ways in the

meaning system and reflects the development in human cognition.

Based on an introduction to Halliday's theory of modality system and with a focuses on metaphor of modality and its functions in advertising English, this paper has reached the conclusion that metaphor of modality can be employed in English advertising to foreground subjectivity and objectivity, to express politeness and to unite discourse into cohesion. With the help of this advanced liguistic device, advertisers can arrange information according to desired modal responsibility in order to avoid relevant legal responsibility and restriction while establish interpersonal relationships with consumers to exert influences on their attitudes as well as behaviors so as to correctly convey their communicative intentions and achieve their commercial purposes.

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Table 1. Modality orientation and Types (Hu, 2005, p149)

	Subjective explicit (Metaphor of modality)	Subjective implicit	Objective implicit	Objective explicit (Metaphor of modality)
Modalization: Probability	I think(in my opinion) Mary knows	Mary'll know	Mary Probably knows	It isn't likely Mary Knows
Modalization: Frequency		Fred'll sit quite quiet	Fred usually sits quite quiet	It's usual for Fred to sit quite quiet
Modulation: Obligation	I want John to go	John should go	John's supposed to go	It's expected that John goes
Modulation: Inclination	(I undertake for Jane to help)	Jane'll help	Jane's keen to help	It's pleasure for Jane to help

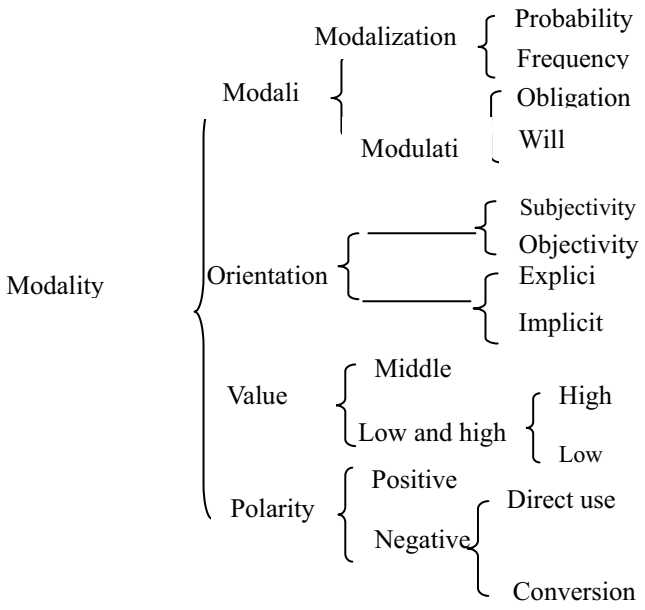

Figure 1. Modality System in Systemic-Functional Grammar (Hu, 2005, p150)

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Metacognitive Strategy Training and Vocabulary Learning of Chinese College Students

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Abstract

This paper attempts to tap the relationship between metacognitive strategy training and vocabulary learning of college students through a five week training program. It aims to answer the following question: Can metacognitive strategy training facilitate vocabulary learning of Chinese college students? Both questionnaire and tests were used in the study. One hundred and thirty-four students participated in the study; one class of 68 which received both cognitive vocabulary training and metacognitive training comprised the experimental group; the other class of 66 students served as the control group and received only cognitive strategy training without metacognitive component. The metacognitive strategy training for vocabulary learning of these students proved to be effective. The experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-training vocabulary test and the questionnaire displayed in what aspects the students improved on these metacognitive strategies.

Keywords: Metacognitive strategies, Vocabulary learning, Strategy training

1. Introduction

Within the field of education over the last few decades, a gradual but marked shift has taken place, resulting in less emphasis on teachers and teaching but greater stress on learners and learning. In a word, language teaching has become more learner-focused and interactive. Thus, there has been more emphasis on helping students assume more responsibility in their language study. A consensus has been reached that learning will be facilitated and students will become more autonomous if students are explicitly trained to become more aware of and proficient in the use of language learning strategies. Metacognitive strategies, which have an executive function by means of planning, monitoring and evaluating the whole learning process, are essentially important.

Abundant studies have demonstrated the great effect exerted by metacognitive strategies both in reading (Baker & Brown, 1984; Carrel et al, 1989; Talbot, 1995) and listening (O' Malley & Chamot, 1985; Schwartz, 1992; Yang, 2004). However, there is little research available to scrutinize the relationship between metacognitive strategies and vocabulary learning though conspicuously, vocabulary is central to language learning. The mastery of vocabulary plays a key role in the whole process of the second language learning and is of critical importance to the learners. Without a solid mastery of vocabulary, listening, reading, translation and writing are all attics in the air. Contradictory to the great importance of vocabulary, nevertheless, in the present English classroom in China, problems pile up in vocabulary teaching and learning. The popular model for college teachers to teach vocabulary is asking their students to read after them the whole word list in the text followed by the teacher's translation of each word or the teacher chooses some basic words and just gives the Chinese equivalents. Students are really passive in this process and they just commit the new words into memory by rote. Though the past decade saw a host of studies on vocabulary strategies (Gu, 1996; Schmitt, 2002; Fan, 2003), most of them emphasized either on the cognitive aspect or focused on the identification and classification of vocabulary strategies.

This paper attempts to tap the relationship between metacognitive strategy training and vocabulary learning of college students through a five-week training program. Practically, the present study is significant in three ways: first, it attempts to explore to what extent the college students employ metacognitive strategies for their vocabulary learning. Second, it bridges the gap between metacognitive strategy training and vocabulary learning of college students. Research conducted on exploring the effect exerted by metacognitive strategies on vocabulary learning is scarce. Third, it is useful to cultivate the field of research on metacognitive strategy training by college students. In China, most of researches on metacognitive strategies are mostly descriptive. There was little experimental research on metacognitive strategy training for college students.

2. The current research

2.1The research question

The research question to be addressed in the current study is:

Can metacognitive strategy training promote the vocabulary learning of Chinese college students?

2.2 Subjects

The subject sample consisted of 134 freshmen who were from two natural classes and were under the instruction of the same teacher. One class of 68 students comprised the experimental group and received both cognitive vocabulary strategy training and metacognitive strategy training. The other class of 66 students served as a control group and received only cognitive strategy training.

2.3 Instrument

2.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed by the present writer based on the literature about metacognitive strategy employment (Oxford, 1990; Wen Qiufang, 1996). The questionnaire included 28 metacognitive strategies and was designed to measure the students' employment of metacognitive strategies of planning (1-10 items), monitoring (11-20 items) and evaluating (21-28items). The questions were of the five-scale Likert-type, consisting of a statement to which subjects would indicate one of the five responses: 1=never or almost never true of me; 2=usually not true of me; 3=somewhat true of me; 4=usually true of me;5=always or almost always true of me.

In order to avoid language barrier or possible misapprehensions and to achieve validity of questionnaire administration, all items were written in Chinese. In addition, the questionnaire items were identified by the present writer on the basis of authoritative works (Oxford, 1990; Wen Qiufang, 1996) on testing metacognitive strategies which assure the face validity and the construct validity of the questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was also assured. It underwent a split-half reliability test and the correlation of the two parts was significant (r=0.817) and this proved that the reliability in terms of inherent consistency was fairly good.

The questionnaire was administrated to the experimental group pre-training with the purpose of examining their current employment of metacognitive strategies. In addition, it also has the function of raising the students' awareness of metacognitive strategies. After the metacognitive strategy training, the same questionnaire was distributed to the experimental group again. We could elicit from the questionnaire whether the metacognitive strategy training is effective and in what aspect the students improve their metacognitive strategy employment.

2.3.2 Tests

Pretest and posttest are used in this study.

In order to check the homogeneity of the two groups in terms of vocabulary learning, a pretest was used. The pretest comprised of 50 multiple-choice items. The words contained in the pretest were already taught by the teacher before the metacognitive training. The posttest was also a 50 item multiple-choice test of vocabulary and it was used as the measurement of the training outcome. It was given immediately after the metacognitive strategy training. The words tested were all selected from new words taught and exposed to during the training process. The reliability and validity of the tests were checked. Two internal consistency estimates of reliability which included coefficient alpha and a split-half coefficient expressed as Spearman-Brown corrected correlation were computed for the vocabulary test. For the split-half coefficient, the test items were split into two halves based on an odd and even numbers to nullify the effects of unwanted factors. The value for coefficient alpha was .73 and the value of the split-half coefficient was .80, each indicating satisfactory reliability. The validity of the tests was also assured. Most of the vocabulary items in both the pretest and the posttest were selected from the new vocabulary items of the book and were used in the glossary and the accompanying book.

2.3.3 The procedure of the training

The training lasted for about five weeks.

First, the vocabulary strategy training was given to both experimental and control groups. This session lasted for about seven days, one strategy for each class. The seven vocabulary strategies are consulting dictionary; repetition; guessing from context; word card; association; using word part strategy; consolidating the word by applying the word to conversation and writing. After the training, the teacher asked the students to brainstorm other vocabulary strategies they employed and then the experimental group and the control group shared their ideas.

The second part of the training concerned with metacognitive strategy training. For this part, only the experimental group participated and the control group only received normal instruction. The detailed procedure for metacognitive strategy training would be illustrated, based on the three components of metacognitive strategies (planning, monitoring,

evaluating) as follows:

Planning: in the first class, the teacher told the students what metacognitive strategies are. Then she emphasized the facilitating role of metacognitive strategies on vocabulary learning. After that, the teacher distributed the metacognitive strategy questionnaire to all the students to enhance the students' awareness of the metacognitive strategies. In the second class, the teacher delivered a lecture on how to make appropriate plan for vocabulary learning. The items in the plan included how many words to remember during a specific time frame, how to accomplish the plan and the detailed time allocation of the vocabulary learning. Then, homework of a detailed plan of vocabulary learning was assigned to the students and the teacher collected them and gives feedback.

Monitoring: the teacher divided the students into several groups according to students' will. Four students formed a study group to monitor each other's vocabulary learning and the plan enforcement process. The teacher asked the students to write working diaries for recording how the words were remembered and what vocabulary strategies were employed. In addition, the working diary also included the following items: what difficulties students encountered during the vocabulary learning process, how the students overcame the difficulties, what remained unsolved and whether the vocabulary strategies were useful in every case. Each study group had a discussion every three days to talk about each others' working diaries and they attempted to solve the problems left by each other. During this step, the teacher continuously reminded the students of whether their plans had been accomplished.

Evaluation: four weeks later, the teacher guided the students to evaluate their vocabulary learning process by handing out a checklist. The checklist was written in English.

The checklist includes 12 questions:

Have I achieved my goal?

What vocabulary strategies have I employed during the training?

Which vocabulary strategy have I found the most useful?

Which vocabulary strategy have I found the most difficult to deal with?

Have I known clearly when and how to use specific vocabulary strategies?

What problems have I met during the vocabulary learning process?

Why do these problems occur?

How can I solve the problems or how can my group members help me solve these problems?

Have I altered my vocabulary strategy when I find it is not useful?

How can I modify my plan according to the real situation?

What can I learn from my group members about their vocabulary learning?

How can I draw lessons from this process and try to do a better job next time?

The teacher then asked students to write a summarizing report with aids of these hints and next morning the class discussion was carried on. Students were given opportunities to share their own experience with their peers.

3. Data analysis and discussion

3.1 Analysis and discussion of the two questionnaires

The first questionnaire demonstrated that the experimental group did use some metacognitive strategies in their vocabulary learning, but their overall level of metacognitive strategy employment was relatively low.

Insert Table 1, Table 2 Here

From the tables above, we could see that the students rarely use the metacognitive strategies in their vocabulary learning because the mean scores of planning, monitoring and evaluating are all below the average 3. From the above statistical analysis, several tentative conclusions could be drawn.

First, students did not frequently use metacognitive strategies in their vocabulary learning and among the three categories of metacognitive strategies, planning was the least used. Second, most of the students had the awareness of the importance of vocabulary learning and they attempted to do a better job in vocabulary learning (MO3 mean=3.84; MO 9 mean=3.03; EV 5 mean=3.00; EV 8 mean=3.54). However, they failed to learn vocabulary in an effective way and they did not know how to appropriately use vocabulary learning strategies. Third, most students could not study cooperatively. They were reluctant to share their learning experience with their peers (MO 7 mean=2.04), nor were they willing to ask for the teacher's help (MO 6 mean=2.03). What is awful is that so few of them liked to ask teachers, parents and their peers to scout their implementation of their plan. (PL10 mean=1.92).

The reason why students did not frequently use metacognitive strategies could be various. One interpretation was that

the students were not aware of the importance of metacognitive strategies and were not trained in this area before. In addition, they had little free time which could be managed by themselves. For most students, their time was managed by their teachers and parents.

After the metacognitive strategy training in vocabulary learning, the same questionnaire was distributed to the experimental group again with the purpose of digging out in what aspect the metacognitive strategy training changed the students' employment of metacognitive strategies.

Insert Table 3, Table 4 Here

It is evident that the strategy training exerted a significant effect on students' use of metacognitive strategies in terms of vocabulary learning. The mean score of the second questionnaire greatly improved on all the 28 strategy items except MO3 (in the first questionnaire, mean=3.84; in the second questionnaire, mean=3.52). Moreover, only 4 strategies did not attain the average mean score 3 (PL4 mean=2.87; MO7 mean=2.90; MO6 mean=2.95; PL8 mean=2.96). Note that the last three strategies (PL8, MO7 and MO6) were also among the most rarely used strategies in the first investigation, i.e. their original scores were very low and far below the score of the average. Though they did not attain 3, their score improved compared to the first questionnaire. The 5 strategies whose improvements are more significant than those of the first questionnaire are: PL6, PL10, EV3, MO6 and EV1. All of the five items achieve a margin of at least 0.90. In accordance with the result of the first questionnaire among the three categories of planning, monitoring and evaluating strategies, evaluating strategies still hold the first place while planning strategies hold the last. However, the mean score of planning strategies improved from 2.5620 to 3.211, with a margin of 0.649, far surpassed 0.590 of monitoring strategies and 0.490 of evaluating strategies.

3.2 Analysis and discussion of the two tests

Statistical analysis of t test was used to test possible differences between the two groups at the beginning and the end of the study.

In order to establish the homogeneity of the two groups in terms of vocabulary knowledge, an independent sample t-test was carried out to examine the differences between the performance of the two groups on the vocabulary test before the metacognitive strategy training. The result indicated that there is not any significant difference ($t(134) = 0.889$ $p > .05$) between the mean scores of the subjects in the control group and the subjects in the experimental group. In simple words, the two groups were homogenous in terms of vocabulary knowledge at the beginning of the training. The t-value was analyzed by independent sample t-test and displayed in Table 5:

Insert Table 5 Here

Both groups took part in a posttest after completing the training in which only experimental group received metacognitive strategy training. The results of the vocabulary test in the two groups were compared by using independent samples t-test statistical procedure. The result showed that the mean scores of the experimental group (Mean=47.4688) were significantly ($t(134) = -2.05$ $p < .05$) different from the control group (Mean=43.9412).

Insert Table 6 Here

As it is shown, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the vocabulary test. Thus, the explicit metacognitive strategy training seemed to have contributed to the improvement of students' vocabulary learning.

4. Conclusion

4.1Major findings of the study

The present study has adopted a descriptive design with quantitative data gathering and analyzing methods to investigate the use of metacognitive strategies and to explore the influences of metacognitive strategies on vocabulary learning. The major findings of this study are summarized as follows:

(1) These college students do not frequently use metacognitive strategies in learning vocabulary. The questionnaire pre-training shows that the students' overall use of metacognitive strategies is very low. They rely much on teacher's interpretation of vocabularies rather than manage their vocabulary learning by themselves. They are very weak in all the planning, monitoring and evaluating strategies.

(2) Metacognitive strategy training could facilitate students' vocabulary learning. The quantitative data show that experimental group has made big and significant progress after they receive metacognitive training. The students enhance their metacogntive strategy use on the planning, monitoring, evaluating without exception. Moreover, explicitly describing and discussing metacognitive strategies in the classroom can have a direct payoff on students' outcomes. The use of learning strategies is more enduring when students are informed of the significance of the strategies and given reasons for their potential effectiveness.

4.2 Limitations of the study

The present study is merely a tentative one. Owing to the limitations of the present writer's academic knowledge and

objective conditions, there is much room to improve. Firstly, the metacognitive strategy training on vocabulary learning should be a long-term educational process, with constant attention and support over long period of time. However, the training program in the present study lasts for only five weeks, which may be too short to report the results of training. Second, the analysis of the questionnaire suffered some inherent methodological defects of the design itself. The analysis of the two questionnaires just emphasized the influence exerted by the metacognitive strategies, while ignoring the effect brought by cognitive vocabulary strategies. And the cognitive vocabulary strategies are just chosen from the authoritative books and academic papers by the present writer and they are not comprehensive. Third, questionnaire was the only instrument used in the study to investigate the learning process. If it had been used with interviews or verbal reports, a clearer picture of students' thinking process in terms of metacognitive strategy training would have been obtained.

In short, this metacognitive strategy training program is only a trial study. Further research is needed to make improvement, to develop a more appropriate training program in Chinese colleges.

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Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of metacognitive strategy use in vocabulary learning (the first questionnaire)

Name	Strategies	Mean	SD
PL1	I have a clear goal in vocabulary learning.	3.00	0.893
PL2	I have the awareness of drawing a vocabulary learning plan.	3.12	0.796
PL3	I have a short term plan and a long term plan.	3.04	0.833
PL4	I would spend some time memorizing vocabulary every day.	2.69	0.934
PL5	I would consider how to better accomplish my plan.	2.62	0.740
PL6	My plan is detailed, including the deadline of accomplishing all the tasks.	2.00	0.748
PL7	I would predict the difficulties encountered and the ways of solving it.	2.65	0.853
PL8	I would check whether the plan is implemented in time.	2.12	0.908
PL9	I would continuously adjust the plan according to the present situation.	2.46	1.102
PL10	I will ask teachers, parents and peers to scout the implementation of my plan.	1.92	0.976
MO1	Before carrying through a vocabulary activity, I would think of the purpose and requirement of the activities, including what strategies to use.	2.61	0.982
MO2	I know when to use certain vocabulary strategies and how to use them.	2.62	0.674
MO3	I attempt to find out the best way of learning vocabulary.	3.84	0.899
MO 4	When starting to learn a new word, I would consider to what extent I can master the word.	2.65	0.897
MO5	After class, I immediately review the vocabulary learned during the class.	3.03	0.992
MO6	I frequently discuss the learning experience with teachers.	2.03	0.982
MO7	I would share vocabulary learning strategies with peers.	2.04	0.988
MO8	I always check the disparity between the present situation and the goals set in the plan.	2.38	0.877
MO9	I will listen to the vocabulary learning experience of my peers.	3.03	0.858
MO10	When finding my vocabulary strategies no longer effective, I would adjust them in time.	2.88	0.991
EV1	I would check my improvement on vocabulary learning at certain time intervals.	2.54	1.030
EV2	I will fix a date to check whether my vocabulary strategies are used smoothly and effectively.	2.68	0.766
EV3	I always summarize the ways of learning vocabulary.	2.54	0.844
EV4	I always summarize my vocabulary learning in order to find out the achievement made and deficiency existed.	3.03	0.941
EV 5	After accomplishing a certain task, I will consider how to do it better the next time.	3.00	0.903
EV6	I often evaluate my vocabulary learning strategies to find out the problems existed and the ways of solving them.	2.96	0.962
EV7	I usually think why I make a mistake in vocabulary learning.	3.32	0.900
EV8	I could draw a lesson from the previous mistakes in vocabulary learning.	3.54	0.797

Note: PL stands for planning strategy; MO stands for monitoring strategy; EV stands for evaluating strategy.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of planning, monitoring and evaluating (the first questionnaire)

	Mean	S D
Planning strategies	2.562	.4337
Monitoring strategies	2.711	.4385
Evaluating strategies	2.951	.3592

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of metacognitive strategy use in vocabulary learning (the second questionnaire)

Name	Strategies	Mean	SD
PL1	I have a clear goal in vocabulary learning.	3.56	0.992
PL2	I have the awareness of drawing a vocabulary learning plan.	3.65	1.112
PL3	I have a short term plan and a long term plan.	3.34	0.982
PL4	I would spend some time memorizing vocabulary every day.	2.87	1.058
PL5	I would consider how to better accomplish my plan.	3.22	0.994
PL6	My plan is detailed, including the deadline of accomplishing all the tasks.	3.08	0.883
PL7	I would predict the difficulties encountered and the ways of solving it.	3.21	0.902
PL8	I would check whether the plan is implemented in time.	2.96	1.053
PL9	I would continuously adjust the plan according to the present situation.	3.13	0.919
PL10	I will ask teachers, parents and peers to scout the implementation of my plan.	3.09	1.212
MO1	Before carrying through a vocabulary activity, I would think of the purpose and requirement of the activities, including what strategies to use.	3.30	0.875
MO2	I know when to use certain vocabulary strategies and how to use them.	3.09	0.900
MO3	I attempt to find out the best way of learning vocabulary.	3.52	1.023
MO 4	When starting to learn a new word, I would consider to what extent I can master the word.	3.47	0.842
MO5	After class, I immediately review the vocabulary learned during the class.	3.43	0.844
MO6	I frequently discuss the learning experience with teachers.	2.95	1.099
MO7	I would share vocabulary learning strategies with peers.	2.90	1.163
MO8	I always check the disparity between the present situation and the goals set in the plan.	3.17	0.982
MO9	I will listen to the vocabulary learning experience of my peers.	3.35	0.714
MO10	When finding my vocabulary strategies no longer effective, I would adjust them in time.	3.53	0.937
EV1	I would check my improvement on vocabulary learning at certain time intervals.	3.44	1.053
EV2	I will fix a date to check whether my vocabulary strategies are used smoothly and effectively.	3.34	0.884
EV3	I always summarize the ways of learning vocabulary.	3.30	0.988
EV4	I always summarize my vocabulary learning in order to find out the achievement made and deficiency existed.	3.39	0.891
EV5	After accomplishing a certain task, I will consider how to do it better the next time.	3.36	1.033
EV6	I often evaluate my vocabulary learning strategies to find out the problems existed and the ways of solving them.	3.45	0.822
EV7	I usually think why I make a mistake in vocabulary learning.	3.47	0.730
EV8	I could draw a lesson from the previous mistakes in vocabulary learning.	3.78	0.902

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of planning, monitoring and evaluating (the second questionnaire)

	Mean	S D
Planning strategies	3.211	.2470
Monitoring strategies	3.301	.2254
Evaluating strategies	3.441	.1488

Table 5. Result of the independent sample t-test in vocabulary pretest

Group	N	Mean	SD	Standard Error Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	68	47.0000	11.2582	.5676	.376
Control	66	47.2121	12.0189	.5292	

Table 6. Result of the independent sample t-test in vocabulary posttest

Group	N	Mean	SD	Standard Error Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	68	47.4688	9.3806	.6756	.042
Control	66	43.9412	10.3294	.7442	

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Characteristics of an Effective English Language Teacher as Perceived by Iranian Teachers and Learners of English

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Abstract

This study attempted to characterize qualities of an effective English language teacher (EELT) as perceived by Iranian English language teachers and learners. For this purpose, a tailor-made questionnaire was administered to 59 English language teachers and 215 learners of English at universities, high schools and language institutes in Iran. The results indicated significant differences between teachers' and learners' views on some characteristics of EELTs. Teachers seemed to agree more strongly than students that an EELT should assign homework and integrate group activities into the classroom. Other areas of significant difference in opinions included preparing the lesson well, using lesson plans and assessing what students have learned reasonably. Students, on the contrary, agreed more than teachers that teaching English in Persian (first language of the learners) was one of the prominent characteristics of an EELT. The qualitative analysis indicated that teachers perceived the features like mastery of the target language, good knowledge of pedagogy and the use of particular techniques and methods as well as a good personality to make an EELT, whereas, learners gave more weight to characteristics relating to a teacher's personality and the way he behaves toward his students.

Keywords: Teacher characteristics, Effective teacher, English language teacher; English language learner

1. Introduction

Good and qualified teachers are essential for efficient functioning of educational systems and for enhancing the quality of learning. Research supports this notion that a good teacher and actions to be taken on his part in the classroom play a vital role in provoking effective and efficient learning on the part of the students (Markley, 2004). Teachers also have a fundamental role in their learners' academic achievement and their quality can highly influence student outcomes (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijsc & Robinsona, 2004; Lasley II, Siedentop & Yinger, 2006; Rockoff, 2004).

English language teachers are by no means an exception and their key role in effective language learning cannot be overlooked. Special attention must be paid to this link between teachers and learners in countries like Iran where language learning happens mainly in formal classroom settings (Kariminia & Salehizadeh, 2007), and teachers, as the main source of language input to students, affect their learning directly.

Although effective teachers in general may share some characteristics, there are certain qualities that differ among them depending on the subject matter they teach. Some researchers believe that it is the nature of the subject matter that makes language teachers different from teachers of other fields (Hammadou & Bernhar, 1987). Some others even go beyond this and claim that diverse subject matters are not the only distinction between teachers of various subjects (Borg, 2006). Rather a teacher's beliefs, perceptions and assumptions about teaching and teacher efficacy affect the way he/she understands and organizes instruction (Chacón, 2005). It is also important to study the perceptions of learners about learning and teaching. Their beliefs about language learning seem to have obvious relevance to understanding their expectations of the course, their commitment to the class as well as providing them with the opportunity to be successful and satisfied with their language learning program (Horwitz, 1988). Moreover, investigation of the student beliefs about different behaviors in the language classroom is useful in informing teachers about different types of learners that need to be catered for (Cotterall, 1999).

According to Noora (2008), the culture of teaching in Iran is primarily teacher-centered; and accordingly, there are limited opportunities for learners to have their say about their expectations of a good and effective teacher. Studying characteristics of an effective English language teacher from the learners' point of view in such a context is worthwhile in that it is in fact a kind of needs analysis intended to help teachers improve the quality of their teaching in an attempt to meet their students' needs. To the best knowledge of the authors, no previous study has been conducted on the characteristics of an effective English language teacher in Iran neither from the perspective of teachers nor from that of learners. It was therefore the aim of this study to investigate the characteristics of an EELT as perceived by Iranian teachers and learners of English in order to find out if there are any differences between the perspectives they have on

the issue in question. While this study is genuinely exploratory in the Iranian context, it is expected to contribute to our better understanding of the issue by confirming or rejecting findings of other researchers in other parts of the world.

1.1. General characteristics of an effective teacher

What makes a teacher effective has been a subject of prime importance to many scholars concerned with education. In 1957, secondary-school principals in New York were asked to nominate effective teachers of academic subjects. The most frequently mentioned qualities were: subject-matter mastery, motivation, dedication, co-operation, sense of humour, creativity, efficiency, control, discipline, standards, promptness with reports, methods and generosity with personal time for students (Calabria, 1960). Effectiveness in teaching was reported to be directly related to mastery of subject matter in the selected teaching field. In addition, a long apprenticeship of teaching in one's academic field was thought to be a necessary pre-requisite for effectiveness.

Feldman (1976) analyzed seventy two studies on characteristics reported by college students as associated with ideal teachers and as important for effective teaching. Across this large body of research, he found the following characteristics to be consistently associated with superior college teachers or teaching: stimulating interest of the learners; being clear and understandable; being knowledgeable in subject matter; being prepared and organized for the course and being enthusiastic about the subject matter and teaching. Friendliness, helpfulness, and openness to others' opinions were traits that students said they preferred in teachers especially when they freely described their ideal or best teacher.

In a later study, Feldman (1988) reviewed thirty one other studies in each of which students and faculty had specified the instructional characteristics they considered particularly important to good teaching and effective instruction. Students placed more importance than faculty on teachers being interesting, having good elocutionary skills, and being available and helpful. They also emphasized the outcomes of instruction more than faculty did. Faculty placed more importance than did students on teachers being intellectually challenging, motivating students and setting high standards for them, and encouraging self-initiated learning.

1.2. Characteristics of an effective language teacher

Some clues can be gleaned from previous research about the qualities of a good and effective language teacher. Pettis (1997) identified three main characteristics for a professionally competent teacher. According to her, an effective teacher must firstly be principled and knowledgeable in addition to being skillful. Secondly, professional needs and interests of an effective language teacher must change over time and develop during his/her teaching. Thirdly, a teacher must be personally committed to his/her professional development.

In an attempt to understand what it means to be a foreign language teacher and in what sense they are different from other teachers, Borg (2006) examined the definitions of over 200 practicing and prospective English language teachers from a variety of contexts about the distinction between language teachers and those of other fields. His analysis also included the opinions of mathematics, history, science and chemistry teachers on the extent to which characteristics claimed to be distinctive of language teachers applied to their own subjects. His participants believed that subject matter and the medium were the same in language teaching and that there was no clear distinction between them as in other subjects. Moreover, language teachers inducted learners into ways of thinking and being which reflect those of the target culture. In terms of content, language teaching was regarded to be more complex and varied than other subjects. In terms of methodology, in the afore-mentioned study, the methods, the activities and the material used by or available to English language teachers were reported to be different from those in the other subjects. It was also found that English language teaching methodology was more progressive than that of other subjects, and consequently, English language teachers needed to be more up-to-date to cope with advanced and progressive nature of language teaching methodology. English language teachers were also supposed to have closer, more relaxed, and generally more positive relationships with learners in comparison to other teachers. One further source of distinction between English language teachers and teachers of other fields was that the former's language proficiency and command of the language was usually compared to that of native speakers of the target language (Borg, 2006). However, it is not clearly stated if this final point is a merit or a demerit for language teachers.

Effective language teachers have been described in the literature as having not only a profound competence in the target language but a set of personal qualities like sensitivity, warmth and tolerance (Vadillio, 1999). In an investigation of the characteristics of good language teachers, Brosh (1996) found the desirable characteristics of an effective language teacher to be: having knowledge and command of the target language; being able to organize, explain, and clarify, as well as to arouse and sustain interest and motivation among students; being fair to students by showing neither favoritism nor prejudice; and being available to students. Both language teachers and learners counted command of the target language and teaching comprehensibility as the most important characteristics to be possessed by an effective foreign language teacher. Moreover, the teachers gave more weight to items related to developing motivation and research orientation, whereas the students counted items relating to treating students fairly and making lessons interesting more important as compared with the teachers' ideas on these very issues.

Research has recently been conducted on the development of standards in Foreign Language Teacher Preparation in Croatia (Kalebic, 2005). As a result, possession of fourteen competences was reported to be needed by would-be language teachers. Those characteristics reported to be highly valuable for a beginning language teacher were: linguistic and communicative competence; communication and presentation skills; ability to motivate learners for learning; ability to choose appropriate teaching strategies; ability to deal with unpredictable situations and to maintain discipline; ability to plan the lesson; ability to organize learning activities; ability of pedagogical action; ability to create friendly atmosphere in the classroom; ability to respond to learner abilities and needs (flexibility); knowledge about teaching strategies; knowledge about the culture and literature in of the target language; ability to assess learner language knowledge/competence; and knowledge of methods and theoretical concepts in English language teaching (Kalebic, 2005).

And finally, Park and Lee (2006) investigated the characteristics of effective English teachers as perceived by teachers and students in high schools in Korea, with a self-report questionnaire consisting of three categories: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills. Their findings indicated that on the whole the teacher's perceptions of characteristics important for an English language teacher to possess differed significantly form those of the students in all three categories, with the teachers ranking English proficiency the highest and the students ranking pedagogical knowledge the first.

Although most of the research conducted on the qualities of a good teacher (a small sample of which was reported above) has mainly focused on teachers' perceptions only and although there has been little work of comparative nature where the views of both teachers and learners have been compared, knowing about what other stake-holders (including learners, parents and authorities) expect from teachers will greatly contribute to effective fulfillment of teachers' duties. No doubt, learners are the most important individuals for teachers to cater for (since without learners, there will be no teachers), and understanding their expectations as who a good teacher is will of course help teachers to rethink the techniques they use for teaching, especially if learners' views show teachers that each learner is a unique person with his/her unique likes, dislikes, preferences and learning styles. As such, the ideas and opinions of learners will help teachers to better live up to the expectations of the most important stake-holders in a teaching-learning process (Sadeghi and Babai, 2009). This paper, accordingly, furthers our understanding of the teacher-student relationships by investigating characteristics of an effective English language teacher from the perspective of both teachers and learners.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Participants of this study who were selected as a convenience sample were divided into two main groups of English language teachers and learners and each group consisted of three subgroups. The teachers group consisted of 11 university professors teaching English Language and Literature and English Language Teaching at different Iranian universities, 18 High school English teachers and 30 teachers of English working at language institutes.

The learners group was also combination of 99 university students majoring in English Language and literature, 89 pre-university students and 27 English learners from language institutes.

English was the foreign language for all the participants. The major characteristics of the participants are illustrated in the Table 1.

2.2 Instrument

A paper and pencil questionnaire comprising two sections (44 items based on Likert Scale and 6 open-ended questions) was developed by the authors after a thorough review of the literature about qualities of an EELT. The questionnaire was developed in English and Persian and both versions were revised 4 times with the help of colleagues and peers before being used in a pilot study to investigate how different items functioned and to find out whether there was a need to revise, add or drop any items. With comments received after pilot testing, two items were added to each section. The final version of the questionnaire which was administered along with a covering letter was made up of two sections. The first part of the questionnaire included 46 statements about the characteristics of an EELT (the internal consistency index of which was calculated to be 0.94 using Cronbach's Alpha), and the participants were asked to express their agreement or disagreement based on a five-point (strongly disagree, disagree, no idea, agree, strongly agree) Likert Scale. They were asked to select the choice which best represented their reaction to the statement. The second part consisted of 8 open-ended questions to be answered by the participants. The questionnaire appears in full in the appendix.

2.3 Data collection and procedure

The authors contacted English language professors/teachers teaching at Urmia University, two high schools in Adjabshir (a city in East Azarbayjan province, Iran) and three language institutes namely Iran Language Institute (ILI), Jahad Daneshgahi and Shokouh Language Institute in Urmia and administered the questionnaire to each of them in person. The questionnaire was also sent by email to 550 other teachers including all academic members of English language

departments of University of Tehran, Shahid Beheshti University, Tarbiyat Modares University, University of Shiraz, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, University of Semnan, University of Kashan, University of Sistan and Baloochestan, University of Yazd, University of Arak, University of Shahrekord, University of Isfahan, University of Ilam, Razi University of Kermanshah and a Yahoo Group named "Creative English Teachers", which has about 400 members who are all English language teachers working in language institutes. Out a total of 800 questionnaires distributed among English language teachers and learners, only 274 questionnaires (34.25 %) were returned.

The questionnaire was also given to all freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior and MA students majoring in English Language and Literature or TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at English language department of University of Urmia, all Pre-university students in Razi and Fazilat high schools of Adjabshir and a cohort of learners at ILI, Shokouh and JD language institutes of Urmia.

The questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the spring semester of academic year 2008-2009 and it took about 20 minutes to complete. All the teachers and the university students were given the English version of the questionnaire. The learners studying English in language institutes were provided with both English and Persian versions of the questionnaire and they were given the option to answer the one they preferred. The high school students were provided with the Persian version of the questionnaire due to their lower English Language proficiency level. Even in the English version of the questionnaire, the participants were allowed to answer the open-ended questions in Persian if they so desired.

2.4 Data analysis

2.4.1 Likert Scale items

To begin the analysis, the responses agreeing or disagreeing strongly with *all items* were excluded. Then, the following values were assigned to responses provided for Likert Scale items: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree= 4, No Idea = 3, Disagree= 2, Strongly Disagree= 1. Then the mean values and standard deviations for each item were calculated using the MatLab statistical package. To compare the differences between students and teachers in their views on the characteristics of an EELT, the statistical analysis technique of Wilcoxon's rank-sum was applied (Dickinson Gibbons & Chakraborti, 2003; Mackey & Gass, 2005) using the Statistical Toolbox of MatLab.

2.4.2 Open-ended questions

The responses to open-ended questions were analyzed mainly qualitatively. This involved a process of tabulating, coding and categorizing the written responses. First of all, responses to each question were transferred to a separate grid. Then the responses were analyzed through open technique of analysis and they were read carefully to identify reoccurring themes and concepts and to code them subsequently. These themes were then sorted into broader categories as the next section shows.

3. Findings

3.1 Quantitative results

Following the application of Wilcoxon's rank-sum test, *P*-values for each item were calculated, and it was noted that the responses of teachers and learners were significantly different on eight items out of a total 46 regarding the characteristics of an EELT. The significant differences were marked at two levels, i.e. $P < 0.05$ and $P < 0.005$. Table 2 illustrates the items which showed statistically significant differences between the views of teachers and those of learners on the criteria used for judging the quality of an English teacher.

Responses of the teachers and the learners were significantly different at $P < 0.005$ level of significance to items 13, 14 and 21. In other words, the teachers agreed more strongly than learners that an effective English language teacher should assign homework and integrate group activities to class (items 13 and 14). However, students agreed more strongly than teachers that teaching English in Persian (students' native language) is a characteristic of an effective English language teacher (item 21).Other areas of difference at $P < 0.05$ level of significance were shown by items asking about lesson preparation, being up to date, using lessen plans, assessing what students have learned reasonably and being neat and tidy in appearance (items 9, 15, 17, 22, 35 respectively). In all of these items, teachers agreed more strongly (with the difference being statistically significant) than students on the relevant item serving as a yardstick for judging teacher-effectiveness. These differences between the perspectives of the teachers and those of the learners are better illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, which include information about the mean values and corresponding error bars for Standard Deviations of responses provided by each group of subjects. Items marked with one asterisk at the top of the bar are those which show a significant difference between the views of teachers and students at $P < 0.05$ level of significance. Those items which show a higher statistically significant difference between teachers' and students' opinions on qualities of a good English teacher (at $P < 0.005$ level of significance) are marked with two asterisks at the top of the relevant bar.

3.2 Qualitative results

Open-ended items were mainly meant to gather data on characteristics of an effective English language teacher other than those included in the Likert Scale items and also on qualities which were barely addressed in the literature. The items eliciting qualitative information were in fact intended to produce further complementary ideas adding to the opinions surveyed quantitatively rather than to substitute or to triangulate quantitative data. Except for questions number 1 and 2, the other questions were designed to elicit opinions of the participants in relation to particular aspects that may affect an English teacher's efficacy like the teacher's or the learners' gender, the teacher's age, fame or origin. The first question was aimed to determine the characteristics of an effective English language teacher other than those mentioned in the Likert Scale questions. The second question asked them about the possible differences between English language teachers and teachers of other subject areas. Answers to each question were analyzed independently, and the most important issues emerging from the responses are discussed in the course of the following paragraphs.

Both the teachers and learners regarded the following as desirable characteristics of an effective English language teacher apart from those cited above in the quantitative part: being patient and flexible, caring about the students' needs, having positive attitudes towards the learners and being smart and creative. However, the students mentioned a point which was completely ignored by the teachers and which may be not so welcome for teachers. According to the learners, besides the characteristics mentioned above, being to the point and not speaking a lot about one's personal experiences was a characteristic of an effective teacher. As an answer to this question, one of students wrote, "*Effective English language teachers must be open minded and use a variety of methods in teaching without sticking to a particular method. They must also have a positive view toward their students.*" And a teacher, as an example, commented, "*He should be optimistic. He should also welcome student's mistakes and try to put himself in his students' shoes*."

Regarding the differences between English language teachers and those of other subject matters, both groups counted being familiar with a foreign language and culture and teaching in a medium other than students' mother tongue as the most important distinctive feature between English language teachers and those of other subject areas. One of the teachers argued along the following lines, for instance: "*English language teachers differ from teachers of other subjects in that they teach a language other than the learners' mother tongue and are therefore familiar with a foreign culture. They are the only source of that language available to their students.*" Although the teachers regarded being up-to-date as a favorable characteristic of an effective English language teacher, they did not consider it exclusive to English language teachers. In other words, they perceived being up-to-date as a factor affecting a teacher's efficacy but not as being a distinctive characteristic of English language teachers. However, the students believed that English language teachers were distinct from the teachers of other subjects because the former group were more up–to-date.

On the whole, it seems that both groups equally perceived gender as a neutral factor in the efficacy of a teacher, and that the majority of teachers and students reported that a teacher's or the learners' gender did not affect a teacher's efficacy. However, the participants' own gender seems to have affected their answers to two questions about the learners' and the teachers' gender and its effect on a teachers' efficacy. Interestingly, the majority of male participants from both groups admitted that female teachers were more effective. Similarly, the majority of the females believed that male teachers were more effective and described male teachers as being stricter and having better control of the class. Male respondents regarded characteristics such as being flexible and kind, being more attentive in the class and paying attention to even minor errors of the students, being more friendly and having a good rapport with their students as positive characteristics of female English language teachers that caused them to be more effective than males. A male participant, for example, commented, "*Female teachers are more kind and flexible towards students and because of these characteristics they create a more friendly and non-threatening atmosphere in their classes.*" A female participant's counter-idea was put in this way: *"Male teachers are more effective since they could control the class better than female ones and they are more skillful in conveying their knowledge to their students.*"

While the learners gave more weight to personality of a teacher and the way he behaves his students, the teachers believed that besides personality factors, a good knowledge of the language and pedagogy characterize an effective English language teacher.

In terms of a teacher's age, although both groups indicated some characteristics like being more up-to-date and energetic for young teachers and being more experienced for old teachers as the points of contrast between young and old teachers that may affect their performance, both groups admitted that factors like motivation and being interested in teaching are more important in a teacher's efficacy, and that age is not so much a crucial factor in this regard as one of the learners expressed, "*Because young teachers are more ambitious they tend to shine better and be more effective*" and as one of the teachers acknowledged, *"Young teachers understand their students better but they are weak in managing the class.*"

While the students regarded the fame of a teacher as a factor affecting a teacher's efficacy negatively, the teachers believed that fame causes the teachers to feel more responsibility about their students and to try to improve their performance and efficacy.

Generally, both the teachers and students counted the origin of an English teacher (i.e. where he comes from) as not having much effect on a teacher's efficacy. Some of the teachers also mentioned some factors like better payments and more educational facilities in bigger cities that may cause English language teachers to be more effective than those teaching in other cities.

4. Discussion

As the above findings show teachers and learners of English hold different views toward some characteristics of an effective English language teacher. As Pettis (1997) notes, professionally competent English teachers are profoundly knowledgeable in language, and in line with the findings of Park and Lee (2006), Brosh (1996), and Kalabic (2005) most of the teachers in this investigation perceived knowledge of language to be a crucial factor in characterizing an effective English language teacher. This also confirms the findings of Calabria (1960), Feldman (1976) and Feldman (1988) who had founded mastery of subject matter as a characteristic of an effective teacher. On the whole, the teachers perceived features like high knowledge of pedagogy and the use of particular techniques and methods such as preparing the lesson well, using lesson plans, unbiased assessment of what students have learned, integrating group activities to class and assigning homework to be possessed by effective English language teachers. However, the learners assigned more weight to characteristics relating to a teachers' personality and the way he behaves his students. Moreover, whereas the teachers only concentrated on the positive characteristics of an effective teacher, such as being patient, being flexible and caring about students' needs, being optimist and having positive attitude toward the students, and being smart and creative, the students – considering these positive qualities important – focused also on the characteristics that may affect a teacher's efficacy adversely like speaking a lot about his/her personal experiences. All these observations indicate that teachers look at an effective teacher from the professional point of view and their responses are more informed reflecting their knowledge and expertise on theories and methodology of language teaching. The students' perspectives also seem very realistic and the fact that they consider both strong and weak points of their teachers can help teachers to reflect on their own behaviors in the classroom and try to overcome the possible problems resulting in deficiency.

Similar to findings of Brosh (1996), one of the most striking points in the learners' responses was their emphasis on an effective teacher's personality traits. As one of them wrote:

"*Being of good character and behaving the students in a friendly manner is very important for a teacher to be effective. This provides the learners with a non-threatening environment for learning and makes them think positively about the teacher and the subject matter taught by him/her. Therefore, they learn as efficiently as possible*."

The responses of the learners were replete with ideas of this kind showing that many of them associate subject matter with the personality of the teacher, and that the teacher's positive and favorable personality psychologically influences the learners' effective learning. It could even cause the students to decide to choose a particular field of study, as one of the university students argued:

"*A teacher's personality is very important and could influence their efficacy a lot. When I was in high school I had an English teacher who was very knowledgeable as well as kind and caring about her students. She was loved by her students and everybody was learning her lessons well. She had such a good personality that I always wished to be a teacher like her. So, I made her a role model for myself and came to university to study English*."

Teachers must be aware how momentous their responsibility is and try to give a positive and favorable impression to their students to reach the best result.

The other significant area of differences between the views of the teachers and the learners was about the medium of teaching English. The observation that most learners expected an effective English language teacher to teach English in their mother tongue indicates their possible weakness in communicating via the target language. Although further research is needed in order to explore the reasons for this finding, some pertinent issues will be discussed in the course of the following lines.

In the world of language teaching and learning, and especially after the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), there appears to be a general consensus on the maximal use of target language in the language classes, and the desirability of target language as the medium of teaching is emphasized (Crawford, 2004). Apart from the use of target language in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, the appropriate level of difficulty for students should also be considered (Polio & Duff, 1994). Motivated by the principles dictated by CLT, the teachers surveyed here thought that an effective English language teacher should teach English in English. However, the students felt that teaching English via Persian (or in the learners' mother tongue) is a characteristic of an effective English language teacher. Iranian EFL learners find it difficult to communicate freely in the target language and this is one of the major problems they have in communication (Kariminia & Salehizadeh, 2007). Kariminia and Salehizadeh attribute this weakness of Iranian EFL learners to school and English language departments curricula, teaching methodology, lack of target language environment and the learners' motivation. In a similar vein Razmjoo (2007) counts lack of attention to

communicative language teaching features in high school textbooks as a pitfall and claims that Iranian high school English textbooks do not fit EFL communicative teaching and do not fulfill language learners needs. This trend usually continues in most universities in Iran where the curriculum for general English is mainly grammar and vocabulary based and less attention is paid to communicative skills. Moreover, lack of audio-visual and multimedia facilities go hand in hand with other factors mentioned above to cause many problems for learners in developing good communicative skills. The other issue that should be touched here is the level of target language used in the classroom. Besides students' weaknesses, the teachers' lack of attention to gearing the target language to the appropriate level of the learners might be one further reason for such preference on the part of the learners, i.e. the desire to receive instruction in L1.

Both the teachers and the learners indicated that the most important factor to distinguish English language teachers was their familiarity with a foreign language and culture. They also admitted that English language teachers differed from the teachers of other fields in exploiting different teaching methods. Unlike the findings of Borg (2006), the participants were not concerned about unanimity of subject and the medium but, both the teachers and the learners believed that teaching a language other than students' mother tongue is very special about the language teachers and distinguishes them from the other teachers. However, only the learners felt that English language teachers should have closer and more positive relationship with their students and should also be open to a variety of thoughts, suggestions and criticisms. This finding again confirms those of Feldman (1976), where he found that students perceived superior college teacher to be more friendly, helpful and open to other's opinions.

The other issue to be considered relates to the gender of an effective English language teacher. In this relation, Feldman (1992) reviewed a number of laboratory and experimental research on college students' preconceptions of male and female college teachers. He noticed that in the majority of studies, students' global evaluations of male and female college teachers as professionals were not different. A year later he published the second part of his review stating that when statistically significant differences were found across studies, more of them favored women over men (Feldman, 1993). However, he found an average association between gender of the students and overall evaluation, while favoring females was too trivial in size to be significant in practical terms. Our findings partly confirm his review. From the learners' and the teachers' point of view (without considering their gender), neither male nor female teachers were perceived to be more effective than the other, and gender of a teacher was regarded as a factor having little or almost no effect on his/her efficacy. However, regardless of being a teacher or a learner, more males than females perceived female English language teachers as more effective and reversely more females than males acknowledged male English teachers to be more effective. This finding which differs from what Feldman found in the second part of his review, needs more in-depth investigation and it might also be analyzed from a psychological point of view.

5. Conclusion

The discussion in the preceding section leads us to the conclusion that teachers and learners of EFL may have overlapping and at times divergent perceptions on desirable qualities of a good language teacher. To make their teaching activities more effective for learners, caring and responsible language teachers should therefore feel a need for discovering what their peers believe to be favorable features of their career as well as what their customers' needs are. As such, the findings discussed above have far-reaching implications primarily for language teachers as well as for authorities in different educational settings, particularly in an Iranian context.

Regarding the emphasis of the teachers on target language knowledge, teacher education programs should invest more than what they previously did on improving teachers' English proficiency if they would like to contribute to the process of training effective teachers. As teachers are the main source of language available to students, their richer knowledge of and better proficiency in the language can help learners to overcome their difficulties in communicative skills too. Moreover, attending to students' needs will not only mean that teachers should seek to meet the learners' needs with regards to personality (whereby more attention must be paid to educational psychology), it will also mean that teachers will need to offer individualized instruction as far as possible in an attempt to cater for idiosyncratic learning styles of different learners. This latter concern will be taken care of more effectively if the teachers are willing to take the learners' level into account and try to use right techniques and procedures at the right proficiency level to suit their learners the best, all of which will materialize only when the teachers make themselves committed enough to their teaching duties by rigorously preparing themselves for the battlefield.

This study is by no means comprehensive and there are some limitations which may be addressed in future studies. The data were collected at one point in time in Iran, and as the nature of research in social settings entails, the views of English teachers and learners towards the characteristics of an effective English language teacher could change over time. The findings are therefore open for confirmation through replicating the research using more in-depth qualitative analyses. Furthermore, besides the positive characteristics to be possessed by an effective English language teacher, the qualities that could influence a teacher's efficacy negatively should also be studied and investigated. The study did not

either look at what other qualities English language teachers may have been supposed to possess as far as other communities such as parents, educational authorities, etc. were concerned.

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Appendix

In the Name of God

A Questionnaire on Qualities of an Effective English Language Teacher

This questionnaire is going to be used to investigate the qualities of an effective English language teacher from the perspective of Iranian English language teachers and students. Findings of this study are hopped to be beneficial to both Iranian English language teachers and learners. English language teachers will be able to check the suitability of their own and their colleagues' beliefs regarding foreign language teaching and learning, trying to enhance their teaching practice regarding the needs and purposes of their learners as far as possible. Learners will similarly be able to understand their teachers' beliefs and change their own wrong beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning, trying to develop more positive attitudes towards English language learning. It is worth mentioning that your participation in this research is voluntary and the data collected by means of this questionnaire will be kept confidential. Should you wish to contact the researchers during the process of research, please feel free to contact them through the following e-mail address: Homababai@yahoo.com. Thank you for your participation.

Age: …… Sex: Male☐, Female☐

Status: Teacher of English at University ☐, Student of English at University ☐, High school teacher of English☐, High school student☐, Teacher of English in language institute☐, Student of English in language institute☐(You can mark more than one box above.)

❖ Fill in the following part if you are teaching English:

University Degree: Lower than BA☐, BA☐, MA☐, PhD☐.

Years of English Teaching: First Language:

Name of institute/ university/ school where you teach:

❖ Fill in the following part if you are studying English:

Years of English education: First Language:

Name of institute/ university/ school where you Study:

I. Please read the following list carefully. For each statement, select the response that best represents your Agreement or Disagreement. SA, A, NI, D and SD stand for Strongly Agree, Agree, No Idea, Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively. If you have any additional comments to add about any of the following statements, please do so in the blank space provided at the end of this table.

	An effective English teacher is someone who should:	**SA**	**A**	**NI**	**D**	**SD**
1	Understand spoken English well.					
2	Know English culture well.					
3	Read English well.					
4	Have a high level of proficiency with English vocabulary.					
5	Write English well.					
6	Pronounce English well.					
7	Speak English well.					
8	Be fully familiar with English grammar.					
9	Prepare the lesson well.					
10	Follow syllabus tightly.					
11	Use particular methods and techniques in teaching.					
12	Manage the class time well.					
13	Assign homework.					
14	Integrate group activities to class.					
15	Be up-to-date (e.g. use internet and recent technologies in teaching).					
16	Teach how to learn English outside the classroom (teach language learning strategies).					
17	Use lesson plans.					
18	Teach English adapted to students' English proficiency levels.					
19	Maintain good classroom atmosphere using authority, if necessary.					
20	Teach English in English					
21	Teach English in Persian(students' native language)					

22	Assess what students have learned reasonably.					
23	Provide opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities.					
24	Provide activities that arouse student's interest in learning English.					
25	Be helpful to students in and outside the classroom.					
26	Be available for students.					
27	Alleviate students' anxiety in English class.					
28	Listen to student's opinions and let them express themselves.					
29	Help students to develop self-confidence in order to learn English well.					
30	Be friendly to students.					
31	Have a good sense of humor.					
32	Not discriminate between students and treat them fairly.					
33	Arouse students' motivation for learning English.					
34	Show interest in students (by remembering students' names) and their learning.					
35	Be neat and tidy in appearance.					
36	Pay attention to the personal needs of students.					
37	Be polite and respect the personality of the students.					
38	Be disciplined.					
39	Be punctual.					
40	Be open to criticism.					
41	Be flexible.					
42	Be attentive in the class.					
43	Be interested in his/her career.					
44	Not lose temper and get angry.					
45	Stick to administrative rules and regulations.					
46	Assess his/her work regularly.					
Your further comments: (either in Persian or in English).						

II. Please answer the following questions. You can answer them either in Persian or in English.

1. Are there any particular characteristics that you believe an English Language Teacher must possess besides the characteristics that you agreed with above?

2. Are there any differences between English language teachers and other teachers in general? In what senses? Please explain.

3. Does the gender (being male or female) of an English teacher matter in his/her efficacy? How? Please explain.

4. Does the gender (being male or female) of the learners affect the English teachers' efficacy? How? Please explain.

5. Generally speaking, which of the following characteristics make an English teacher the best: knowledge of language, knowledge of pedagogy or his/her personality and the way he/she behaves the students? Why? Please explain.

6. Does the age of an English Language teacher affect his/her efficacy? Do young English Language teachers outperform older ones or vice versa? Why? Please explain.

7. Does fame (being well-known) of an English language teacher affect his/her efficacy? How? Please explain.

8. Does an English teacher's origin, for example being from Tehran or any other particular city, affect his/her efficacy? How?

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants (* One of the teachers and four of the students did not mention their first langauge background)

		Teachers	**Students**	**Total**
Gender	Male	29	78	107
	Female	30	137	167
Teaching or learning English at	University	11	99	110
	High school	18	89	107
	Institute	30	27	57
First language*	Azeri	39	182	221
	Kurdish	6	9	15
	Persian	13	20	33
Age	-	29.21 ± 9.85	19.43 ± 2.96	-
Years	Teaching English	6.74 ± 7.03	-	-
	Learning English	-	5.31 ± 2.50	-
Degree	Pre-University	-	89	89
	Lower than BA	-	103	103
	BA	34	16	50
	MA	18	7	25
	PhD	7	-	7

Table 2. Means, Standard deviation and P-values of each question

Item	Teachers Mean ± SD	Students Mean ± SD	P-value
An effective English teacher is someone who should: 1. Understand spoken English well.			
	4.61±0.67	4.39±0.88	0.07
2. Know English culture well.			
	4.27±0.81	4.14±0.96	0.45
3. Read English well.			
	4.63±0.69	4.53±0.79	0.36
4. Have a high level of proficiency in English vocabulary.			
	4.34±0.80	4.25±1.03	0.94
5. Write English well.			
	4.29±0.87	4.36±0.86	0.42
6. Pronounce English well.			
	4.53±0.86	4.60±0.77	0.59
7. Speak English well.			
	4.58±0.72	4.36±1.04	0.23
8. Be fully familiar with English grammar.			
	4.42±0.81	4.34±0.90	0.56
9. Prepare the lesson well.			
	4.56±0.77	**4.24±1.05**	***0.02**
10. Follow the syllabus tightly.			
	3.75±1.14	3.73±1.21	0.98
11. Use particular methods and techniques in teaching.			
	4.19±0.92	3.93±1.01	0.06
12. Manage the class time well.			
	4.31±0.99	4.22±0.88	0.24
13. Assign homework.			
	3.98±1.12	**3.46±1.22**	****0.001**
14. Integrate group activities to class.			
	4.34±0.96	**3.81±1.16**	****0.0003**
15. Be up-to-date (e.g. use internet and recent technologies in teaching).			
	4.32±0.90	**3.99±1.14**	***0.05**
16. Teach how to learn English outside the classroom (teach language learning strategies).			
	4.22±0.87	4.15±0.93	0.70
17. Use lesson plans.			
	4.12±1.02	**3.85±0.94**	***0.01**
18. Teach English adapted to students' English proficiency levels.			
	4.22±0.93	4.16±0.95	0.66
19. Maintain good classroom atmosphere using authority, if necessary.			
	4.22±0.93	3.96±1.12	0.13
20. Teach English in English			
	4.05±1.01	3.79±1.24	0.27
21. Teach English in Persian (students' native language)			
	2.22±1.42	**2.69±1.35**	****0.009**
22. Assess what students have learned reasonably.			
	4.32±0.78	**4.03±0.92**	***0.026**
23. Provide opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities.			
	4.44±0.82	4.31±0.83	0.14
24. Provide activities that arouse student's interest in learning English.			
	4.58±0.72	4.47±0.82	0.36

25. Be helpful to students in and outside the classroom.			
	4.20±0.83	4.27±0.88	0.34
26. Be available for students.			
	3.92±0.97	4.12±0.90	0.15
27. Alleviate students' anxiety in the English class.			
	4.29±0.89	4.26±0.94	0.90
28. Listen to student's opinions and let them express themselves.			
	4.36±0.92	4.44±0.75	0.82
29. Help students to develop self-confidence in order to learn English well.			
	4.68±0.54	4.47±0.80	0.09
30. Be friendly to students.			
	4.31±0.84	4.49±0.76	0.06
31. Have a good sense of humor.			
	4.05±0.99	4.13±1.04	0.40
32. Not discriminate between students and treat them fairly.			
	4.46±0.77	4.48±0.82	0.58
33. Arouse students' motivation for learning English.			
	4.63±0.61	4.40±0.88	0.09
34. Show interest in students (by remembering students' names) and their learning.			
	4.51±0.63	4.37±0.84	0.44
35. Be neat and tidy in appearance.			
	4.49±0.70	**4.20±0.95**	***0.04**
36. Pay attention to the personal needs of students.			
	3.92±0.93	3.69±1.13	0.24
37. Be polite and respect the personality of the students.			
	4.63±0.61	4.52±0.78	0.46
38. Be disciplined.			
	4.25±0.96	4.10±1.07	0.34
39. Be punctual.			
	4.47±0.88	4.23±1	0.06
40. Be open to criticism.			
	4.27±0.89	4.32±0.82	0.80
41. Be flexible.			
	4.12±1.12	4.19±0.88	0.84
42. Be attentive in the class.			
	4.47±0.68	4.22±0.97	0.12
43. Be interested in his/her career.			
	4.46±0.95	4.33±0.88	0.13
44. Not lose temper and get angry.			
	4.39±0.64	4.11±1.05	0.21
45. Stick to administrative rules and regulations.			
	3.59±1.19	3.56±1.21	0.88
46. Assess his/her work regularly.			
	4.20±0.76	4.03±0.89	0.19

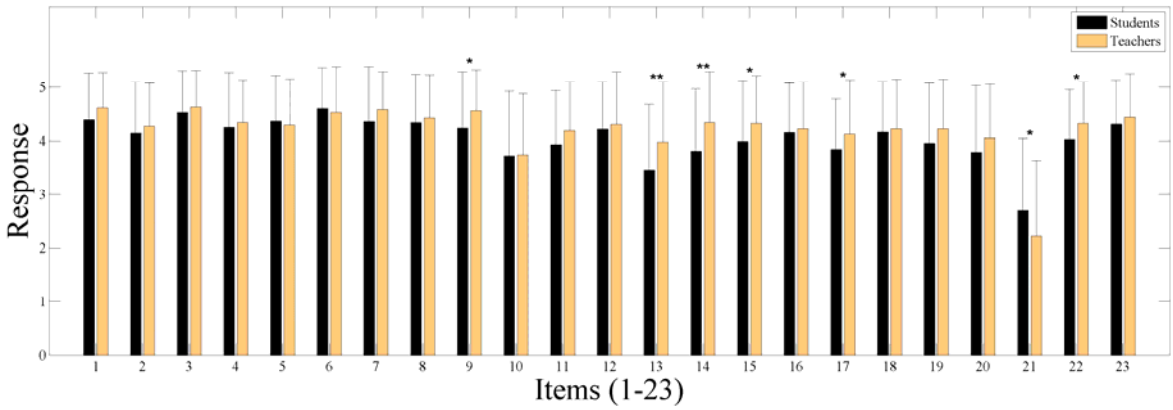

Figure 1. Means and standard deviations of participants' responses to items 1-23

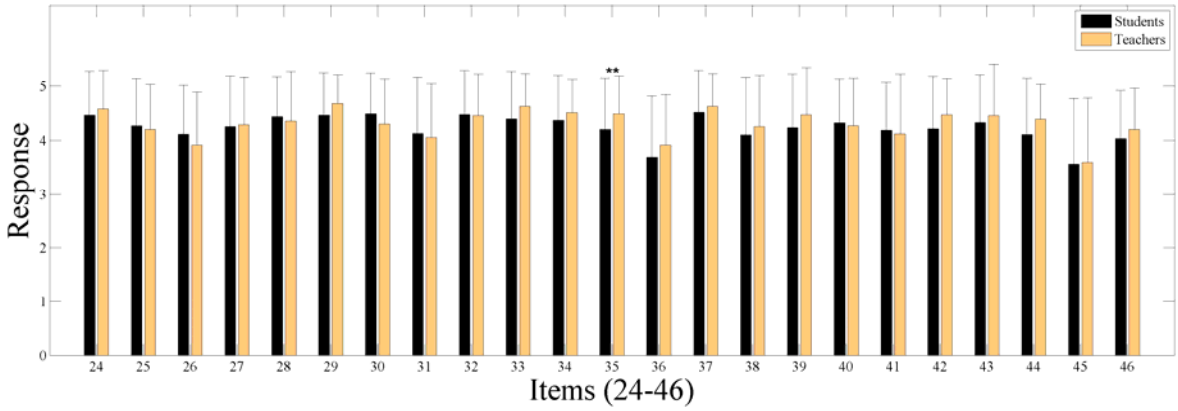

Figure 2. Means and standard deviations of participants' responses to items 24-46

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Teaching Culture Within and Beyond Language

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This research is financed by following funds: Teaching and Reform Programs of Jingjiang College, Jiangsu University (JJ08C034); Social Science Program of Institutions of Higher Learning, Jiangsu Province (06SJD750023), Teaching and Reform Program of Jiangsu University (JGYB2009076).

Abstract

This paper attempts to make a thorough examination of the factors that necessitate and influence the teaching of culture in the EFL classrooms with an aim to present a mode of culture teaching in China.

Keywords: Culture, EFL, China

1. Introduction

The teaching of culture has aroused great interest in the EFL (English as a foreign language) curriculum but it has remained "insubstantial and sporadic in most language classrooms" (Omaggio, 1993, p357). The problems confronting most language teachers are invariably the lack of time, uncertainty about which aspects of culture to teach, and lack of practical techniques. The dilemma is further complicated by the great importance attached to scores in most language proficiency tests, such as TOFEL, IELTS, CET, TEM and etc., held by authorities of different kinds worldwide. Such tests are designed either for students who want to study abroad or for those who want a certificate that will enhance their opportunities in landing a good job, all of which test for the most part examinees' skills in sitting in for tests, leaving, therefore, the aspect of culture intact.

The case is true with the EFL teaching in China, where there is an overwhelming fever for grasping certificates of CET 4, CET 6, TEM 4 and TEM 8. Cultural factors concerning the language of English, as well as the English-speaking countries, are more often than not neglected in the EFL classes at primary stages. Culture is taught purposefully only at places of higher education like colleges and universities, where only a small portion of students of English majors are privileged to receive such an education on culture. Even among this very small number of students majoring in English, culture receives undue attention partly because of the insufficient of culture-oriented realia and materials, and partly because of the unreasonable and impractical teaching syllabus that leaves out cultural knowledge in most tests.

It is a relief that from 2005 on, humanistic knowledge about culture and language is to be included in TEM 8 and there will be more tests and trials on the teaching of culture in the EFL classrooms at different levels of education throughout China. Therefore, it is due time for people to reconsider the importance and substantialization of the teaching of culture. This paper attempts to make a thorough examination of the factors that necessitate and influence the teaching of culture in the EFL classrooms with an aim to present a mode of teaching culture in the EFL classroom in China.

2. The Rise of Teaching Culture in the EFL Classroom

Current interest in teaching culture worldwide owes much to the inter-disciplinary efforts made in cultural studies. It made its first appearance in the 1940s in English literature studies and has entered the forefront of academia since the latter part of the 1980s. Meanwhile, the study of English literature as an academic discipline is gradually on the decline and its heyday has been over. Just as Simon During has observed, "English is losing ground to a wide spread of contemporary culture forms from advertising and the internet to cartoons and art movies—what we call cultural studies". (During, 2004)

What During is trying to argue here is not that people worldwide are no longer interested in English as a language, but that cultural studies concerning English have been of most significance in the age of economic globalization as symbolized by the blurring of the boundary between high culture (of English literature) and popular culture (of advertisements, cartoons and art movies). In accompany with economic globalization, there is a tendency of cultural globalization, which in finality will annihilate the cultural idiosyncrasy intrinsic to each nation that comprises the world as a whole by changing the rest of the world into markets for cultural products produced by the few hegemonic powers. Whereas, English been used, first by Britain in the colonial period, and then by America in the postcolonial period, as a vehicle in the construction of "western capitalist hegemony and globalization" (Jones, 2002). For this reason, the English language has been regarded by some as a form of hegemonic power, and the learning of it, due largely to the

cultural superiority it represents, will possibly lead to the loss of cultural identity of the learners through the process of acculturation imposed upon them by the hegemonic powers. Cultural studies, on the other hand, are able to break the hegemony, if there is any, imposed by the English language, by adopting a multicultural policy of applauding "the wide spread of contemporary culture forms from advertising and the internet to cartoons and art movies." The study and maintenance of one's own culture in process of learning English as a foreign language will help the learners maintain their own distinct cultural identity. Hence the great significance of cultural awareness in today's world of globalization.

Rather than one's own culture, the EFL learners shall also develop an awareness of the cultures belonging to all the English-speaking countries, or even other cultures. Such a cultural consciousness is often referred to as intercultural awareness, which has always been talked about as thought it were a 'fifth skill' - the ability to be aware of cultural relativity following reading, writing, listening and speaking. There is something to be said for this as an initial attempt to understand or define something that may seem a difficult concept but, as Claire Kramsch points out:

"If...language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching. Cultural awareness must then be viewed as enabling language proficiency…. Culture in language teaching is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing" (Kramsch, 1993).

Or just as Hudson argues, language itself is defined by and contained within its culture and a society's language is an aspect of its culture (Hudson, 1980: 84). We cannot be competent in the language if we do not also understand the culture that has shaped and informed it. We cannot learn a second language if we do not cultivate through teaching an awareness of that culture, and how that culture relates to our own first language/native culture. It is not only therefore essential to have cultural awareness, but also intercultural awareness.

Consequently, great significance has been attached to the teaching of culture in the teaching of English as a foreign language. The exposure to cultures both of the EFL learners' and of the ones related to the English language is considered by many linguists much in consistence with the language-acquisition process manifested in our first language learning and acquisition. Though not testified, the seemingly effortless child language acquisition underlies undeniably the importance of the culture in the acquisition of human language. This assumption is best echoed in the findings by psycholinguist Thomas Scovel: Among the four stages (i.e. the stage of crying, the stage of cooing, the stage of babbling, and the production of the first word) of children' first language acquisition, the stage of babbling is the first stage where we have strong evidence that infants are influenced by all those months of exposure to the cultural environment they are living in (Scovel, 1998:11). It is therefore justified to conclude that the teaching of culture in the EFL classrooms will be of same positive influence upon the second language acquisition.

The ultimate goal of teaching culture is to nurture the intercultural communicative competence that will complement with language competence to accomplish to a fuller extent the communicative function of language. To R. Wardhaugh, language is a system of arbitrary symbols used for human communication (Wardhaugh, 1972: 3). In actuality, every action concerning English as a foreign language, either in the aspect of listening (to audio or audiovisual materials in English) or speaking (either with persons with English as their first language, or with persons who speak English as a second or foreign language), or in the aspect of writing or reading (materials in English), can be regarded as intercultural communication, for in each of the actions, there is an encountering of the native culture embodied in the EFL learners and the exotic culture(s) carried either in the English materials or by the persons who communicate with the learners of EFL. Intercultural communicative competence is an attempt to raise the learners' awareness of their own culture, and in so doing, help them to interpret and understand appropriately other cultures. In other words, the EFL learners will be able to predict the behavior patterns of the peoples from the target cultures. As a result, the intercultural communication will be greatly facilitated.

3. Teaching Culture in China's EFL Classrooms

In China, the issue of teaching culture in the EFL classrooms was first put on the agenda in the 1980s when China entered a new era of reform and opening to the outside world (Hu, 1997). The rapid increasing of the volume of foreign trade and the burgeoning of intercultural communication and cooperation with other countries raise the need to study foreign languages and cultures, amongst which, English and the English-speaking countries' cultures have captured the greatest attention.

However, the result of decades of foreign language teaching in China turns out to be both unsatisfying and uncomfortable, due largely to the afore-mentioned reasons of score-oriented teaching and impractical teaching syllabus. The score-oriented or certificate-oriented teaching of English wears the energy of both the teachers and the students in drilling the skills for various examinations and tests that focus on the four basic skill of listening, speaking, reading and writing, leaving them no spare time to cultivate a cultural consciousness that would have made the teaching and learning of English both entertaining and highly effective.

The teaching methods and techniques used in China's EFL classrooms have also contributed to the failure of teaching culture. The conventional way of teaching English in China is what Martin Wedell defines as Grammar Translation

Method (Wedell, 1996). In classes where such method is adopted, grammatical rules are explained and are then practiced by exercises consisting first of sentences and later texts, to be translated into and out of the foreign language. It is believed that if learners could manipulate the rules they would be able to read and produce grammatically right written language. Therefore, great emphasis is laid on the reading and writing skills, with the other two language skills of listening and speaking being recognized only recently. The fifth skill of intercultural awareness is not at all mentioned at any EFL classes at different levels.

Although most of our extant English textbooks at primary levels start with everyday spoken English intended for intercultural communication, most of the patterns designed for initiating dialogues with foreigners are, nevertheless, out of joint with the actual situations in which they are to be used. The sentence "where are you going?" in "wh-patterns" (which also include "what's your name", "what's your parents", et.) introduced to beginners is not explained in detail about in which circumstances to use, for instance. You will not get a satisfactory answer if you ask a foreign friend you run into about where he is going, for it is impolite for people to ask this kind of questions in English-speaking countries, though it is quite common for people to raise such questions when they come across one of their friends. Such problems arise directly as a result of the lack of cultural awareness either of our native culture or of the cultures pertaining to the English language.

Language learners studying in such an environment of the EFL teaching and learning, when confronted with the actual situation of intercultural communication with native speakers or English speakers form other cultures, though they might have a competent knowledge in speaking and listening, will in most cases fail to converse successfully if the topic of discussion touches on the culture(s) of the English language. It is most evident in a conversation listed below between a Chinese girl Miss Chen and her American boy friend Mr. Steven.

Mr. Steven: Hey, Puppy, you look lovely today!

Miss Chen: What? I am your pet dog?

Mr. Steven: Oh, I mean baby, please. (Peccei, 1999:19)

The lack of knowledge about "Puppy" as a pet name in American culture obviously offends the girl, whose culture has attributed unfavorable meanings to dogs.

Similar misunderstandings also occur in the aspects of reading and writing for English language learners who lack an intercultural awareness. In a reading material of acknowledgements to a book, there runs a line that "I owe many thanks to my students at Roehanmpton Institute who were the guinea pigs for many of the exercises used in the units" (Peccei, 1999: F7). The ignorance of the usages of the culture-loaded word "pig" in American culture will unmistakably leads to the confusion and puzzlement of Chinese learners of English: in American culture, pig can mean wise and loyal and innocence; whereas in Chinese culture, the image of pig usually symbolizes stupid and greed.

4. How to Teach Culture in China's EFL Classrooms

Insomuch as the two examples given above are concerned, there are words in the vocabulary of language that inform people's ways of behavior. Just as G. Lazar has argued, "our students' comprehension is frequently impeded not by linguistic features, but by cultural ones…. Language can never be divorced form culture" (Lazar, 1993:66). To make a better understanding of the English language both in written and spoken form, and to ensure the success of intercultural communication that takes place with increasingly high frequency in today's globalization, it is imperative to reconsider the importance of cultural factors in the EFL classrooms and to incorporate the teaching of culture into the teaching of English, namely to teach culture within and beyond language. Such a model of teaching culture is determined by the inseparable relationships between language and culture: language is transmitted by and transmits culture.

The teaching of culture within and beyond language can be realized by two steps. They are teaching culture embedded within language and the teaching of culture that is beyond language. To implement successfully the two steps of cultural teaching, it is necessary to arrive at a detailed knowledge about what is culture within language and what is culture beyond language. According to Raymond Williams, culture consists of three parts that are in correspondence with the three different definitions given to culture, namely cultural values and beliefs, cultural artifacts taking various forms that document cultural values and human life, and fixed patterns of behavior ordained by cultural values (Williams, 1975: 41). Plausibly, the first part and the third part are the parts of culture that lies hand in glove with language, as there are culture-loaded words and expressions that betray people's values and behavior patterns. In contrast, the second part of culture, except the artifacts that document cultural values and behavior patterns with language as their medium, is the part of culture that lies beyond language. At a closer analysis, however, the distinction between culture within language and culture beyond language is not clear-cut. The artifacts with painting and sculpture as their expressive forms, for instance, can be regarded as of the same communicative function of the system of symbols that constitute language. What's more, there are in language words to recapitulate the cultural values and behavior patterns embodied within such artifacts. Therefore, the division of the teaching of culture into two steps is made not to emphasize the distinction between culture within language and culture beyond language, but rather the great necessity to develop a

comprehension cultural awareness in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in China.

Following is an excerpt of a reading passage, "The British Isles", drawn from senior middle school English textbook Book 2A, Unit5. It is to be used to exemplify exactly how culture can be taught both within and beyond language.

The idea that England stands for Fish & Chips, Speakers' Corner, Big Ben and Tower of London is past. Though many people around the world study its language, their view of British culture is sometimes narrow. The fact that Great Britain is made up of three countries is still unknown to many.... The climate of the British Isles is mild with a lot of rain. In general, Scotland... ... (Fors, 2004: 35).

In this short piece of excerpt, there are several points that will trigger much cultural association both within and beyond language. Fish & Chips, Speakers' Corner, Big Ben and the Tower of London, which belong specifically to the English language as culture-loaded expressions, are at the same time cultural artifacts. The exhibition of the pictures of these things, together with the telling of the stories behind each of them, will inform, just as the excerpt states, part of British people's way of life and their cultural values.

Due to the limit of class period, the teacher can choose just one picture, Big Ben, for instance, and tell students the interesting story behind it. As for the stories behind the rest of the pictures, the teacher can ask the students to find out about them after class and make a report of them during the next period of class. Meanwhile, the students can be encouraged to find similar culture-loaded phrases (like John Bull, the Sun that never sets, etc.,) to replace Fish & Chips, Speakers' Corner, Big Ben and the Tower of London in the first sentence of this excerpt so that the statement will still be of validity. In this way, the sentence structure of Noun Clause will be practised and mastered by the students in the mean time when culture lies within language is learned.

As my teaching experience of this passage as a cadet teacher has shown, such a mode of teaching greatly aroused students' awareness of British culture, so that when I asked what would be predicted of the characters of British people according to the passage, one student immediately responded that because of the changeable weather, British people were prone to be prudent and conservative, and they would always take an umbrella with them. Such a prediction about English people's disposition and character well proved that the cultural awareness had been aroused among the students and it enabled them to make a better understanding of the English language as well as the culture (s) beyond language.

Rather than reading materials, stories (to be told orally), and pictures to be used as sources for cultural information both intrinsic and extrinsic to language, there are other things that will help the EFL learners get a panoramic view of the target culture(s). The list below shows some of the other sources of information, which can be used as materials to develop the EFL learners' awareness of the exotic culture by utilizing one or a combination of some of the learners' five natural powers of sight, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling (During, 1997):

Foods or Fruits Culturally Specific to the English Language

Art Works Shown in Museum

Video

CDs

TV

Songs

Internet

Souvenirs

…

The exposure of all these cultural factors to language learners is not sufficient in cultivating the intercultural awareness. It is suggested in the example given above that students should be encouraged to take an active part in the revealing of the cultural information. For this purpose, certain types of activities should be designed to make students sensitize to every touch of cultural aura. Apart from prediction I mentioned earlier, other activities like discussion, research, and celebration of foreign festivals can also be used in the cultural consciousness-raising process.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the teaching of culture both within and beyond language should be considered as an integral part of teaching English as a foreign language in China. Syllabus concerning the EFL instruction should be further renovated to include the cultivation of intercultural communicative awareness, rather than simply the testing of cultural information. Meanwhile, teachers should develop in the first place an acute awareness both of the traditional Chinese culture and of the cultures related to the English-speaking countries, so that they would be able to present the foreign cultures as they are to help students form a positive attitude in the bombardment of the exotic cultures.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Second Language Theories and Their influences on EFL in China

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Abstract

This article begins by accounting the development of Second language theories .It describes major ESL theories ever since the 18th century to those currently adopted in ESL field. Then it proceeds to demonstrate their influences on EFL teaching in China, like nowadays an increasing awareness of non-cognitive factors in teaching foreign languages, reforms in some traditional teaching methodologies to satisfy the current demand for temporary EFL learners and ever-increasing case studies in new teaching modes. Lastly the author points out some problems existed in current EFL teaching and learning in the hope of drawing the attention of teachers and researches in this field.

Keywords: EFL theories, Cognitive, Influence, Integration, Flexibility, Diversification

1. Introduction

Second language theories have come a long way since the bad old days of rote learning. Here the author generally reviews the history of major ESL theories ever since 18th century to currently practiced in ESL field. An understanding of second language acquisition can improve the ability of mainstream teachers to serve the culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms Significant professional development is necessary to gain a full understanding of second language acquisition theory, and some key concepts can be understood and applied in the classroom.

1.1Grammar -Translation Method

The grammar translation method is a foreign language teaching methodology derived from classical (sometimes called traditional) methods in teaching Greek and Latin. The method requires that students translate whole texts word for word and memorize numerous grammatical rules and exceptions as well as enormous vocabulary lists. The goal of this method is to enable students to read and translate literary masterpieces and classics.

Classes were conducted in the native language. A chapter in a distinctive textbook of this method would begin with a massive bilingual vocabulary list. Grammar points would come directly from the texts and be presented contextually in the textbook, explained elaborately by instructors. Grammar thus provided rules for assembling words into sentences. Tedious translation and grammar drills would be used to exercise and strengthen the knowledge without much attention to contents. Sentences would be deconstructed and translated. Eventually, entire texts would be translated from the target language into native languages and tests would often ask students to replicate classical texts in the target language. Very little attention was placed on pronunciation or any communicative aspects of the language. The skills exercised were reading and translation, but only in contexts.

1.2 Direct Method

The Direct Method, sometimes also called Natural Method, is a method for teaching foreign languages which refrains from using learners' native languages and just uses target languages. This method was established in Germany and France around 1900. Characteristic features of the direct method are teaching vocabulary through pantomiming, realia and other visuals, teaching grammar through an inductive approach (i.e. having learners find out rules through the presentation of adequate linguistic forms in the target language). Centrality of spoken language (including a native-like pronunciation), focus on question-answer patterns and teacher-centeredness also characterize this method.

The Direct Method was an answer to the dissatisfaction with Grammar Translation Method, which teaches students in grammar and vocabulary through direct translations and focuses on the written language. There were attempts to set up similar conditions as would imitate the mother tongue acquisition. For this reason these attempts were marked the Natural Method. At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, Sauveur and Franke proposed that teaching language should be undertaken within the target-language system. This was the first stimulus for the rise of the Direct Method. Later, Sweet recognized limits of the Direct Method and proposed a substantial change in the methodology and introduced the Audio-Lingual Method.

1.3 Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method is based on behaviorist theory, which professes that certain traits of living things, and in this case humans, could be trained through a system of reinforcement—correct use of a trait would receive positive feedback while incorrect use of that trait would receive negative feedback.

This approach to language learning was similar to the Direct Method. Like the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method advised that students be taught a language directly, without using the students' native languages to explain new words or grammar rules. However, unlike the Direct Method, the Audiolingual Method didn't focus on teaching vocabulary. Rather, teachers drilled students in the use of grammar.

With the Audio-Lingual Method, instructors would present correct models of sentences and students would have to repeat them. Teachers would then continue the process by presenting new words for students to sample in structures. In audio-lingualism, there is no explicit grammar instruction—everything is simply memorized in its form. The aim is to train students to practice particular constructs until they can use them spontaneously. In this manner, lessons are built on static drills in which students have little or no control on their own output. Teachers are not providing responses that will result in negative feedback. This type of activity, for the foundation of language learning, is in direct opposition with communicative language teaching.

1.4 Audio-Visual Method

The term Audio-Visual (AV) refers to works with both sound and visual components, the production and the use of such works, or the equipment involved in presenting such works. Movies and television shows are examples of Audio-Visual presentations.

In a typical presentation, presenters provide the audio by speaking, and supplement it with a series of images projected onto a screen, either from a slide projector, or from a computer connected to a projector. Early audio-visual courses consist of taped dialogues, accompanied by film -strips designed to act as visual cues to elicit responses in foreign languages.

1.5 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is an approach that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning second/foreign languages. It is also referred to as "communicative approach to the teaching of foreign languages" or simply the "Communicative Approach ". Historically, CLT has been seen as a response to the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), and an extension or development of the Notional-Functional Syllabus. Task-based language learning, a more recent refinement of CLT, has gained considerable popularity.

As an extension of the notional-functional syllabus, CLT places great emphasis on helping students use target languages in various contexts and learning language functions. Unlike the ALM, its primary focus is to help learners create meanings rather than help them develop perfectly grammatical structures or acquire native-like pronunciation. This means that successful learning of a foreign language is assessed in terms of how well learners have developed their communicative competence. Successful learners can loosely be defined as possessing abilities to apply knowledge of both formal and sociolinguistic aspects of a language with adequate proficiency to communicate. Any teaching practice that helps students develop their communicative competence in an authentic context is deemed an acceptable and beneficial form of instruction. Thus in the classroom, CLT often takes the form of pair and group work requiring negotiation and cooperation between learners, fluency-based activities that encourage learners to develop their confidence, role-plays as well as judicious use of grammar and pronunciation which are in the form of focused activities.

1.6 Cognitive Approach

As the Audiolingual Method was on the decline in the 1960s and many shortcomings were found in it, the Cognitive Approach developed as an alternative, in response to criticisms leveled against audiolingualism. In the meantime the structural linguistics gave way to the generative linguistics and turned the attention from mechanistic conditioning to meaningful leaning. One of the major proponents of the generative-transformational school of linguistics is Noam Chomsky, a famous American linguist. The generative linguists are interested not only in describing languages but also in explaining languages. In other words, they attempt to find what as well as why in the study of languages.

The Cognitive Approach insists that learning is based on understanding. Language learning is a creative process. Students can only perform after they have understood the system of the language. We can't imitate without activating a cognitive process. In a Cognitive Approach classroom, meaningful learning and meaningful practice are emphasized during the entire learning process.

The Cognitive Approach utilizes all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing from the beginning of language courses. This agrees more with the nature of real communication, in which people seldom use one skill. In real life, communication is carried through all possible channels: listening involves speaking, reading might involve writing

and etc. When a foreign language leaner can resort to all the possible target language resources, learning will be more effective.

2. Development of EFL in China

Ever since 1950s till before The Economic Reform, influenced much by ex-Soviet Union EFL teaching models, Chinese EFL teaching lays great emphasis on the system and the inter-structure of target languages, which just satisfies with static teaching like memorizing new words and grammar explanation. We used to propose rote-learning and mechanical training and considered EFL teaching as a process of imparting knowledge. Later we found out that our traditional concept no longer met the higher demand for current society. As Lenin puts it, language is an important communicative tool……Communication is the essential characteristics of languages. Looking back on our ESL teaching, our traditional teaching methods overstated the accuracy of grammar and ignored students' language creativity and learning initial, which eventually led to students' lack of communicative competence. As our vice premier once said in a conference," We have spent too much time learning a foreign language, but our English language proficiency is far worse than we expect". The ultimate aim of foreign language teaching is to train learners' communicative competence. Foreign language is actually a tool in communication. Ever since CLT was introduced into China, its basic theories and principles have become major influential methodologies that have a strong impact on the field of foreign language teaching in our country.

With the advent of modern society and the era of new economy, we gain an ever-increasing chance to cooperate with the outside world, and English become significantly important in Chinese people's life. They need to master the tool to communicate with foreigners. How to improve foreign language teaching quality so as to produce fine quality "products" has therefore become the number one task for EFL teachers in China.

3. Influences of ESL theories on Current EFL teaching in China

With the introduction of EFL theories into China, like Direct Method, Audio-Lingual, Audio-Visual, Communicative Language Teaching and Cognitive Approach and etc, our thoughts in language teaching are greatly activated. These pose great challenges to our traditional teaching concepts. Chinese EFL teachers begin their researches in both theories and practices in this field. They all agree the development of students' foreign language competence does not stand alone, it depends on various factors.

3.1 Emphasis on non-cognitive factors

Non-cognitive factors in learning foreign languages have been one of the researches in EFL field. We realize that in EFL teaching teachers should not ignore students' initiatives. Factors like stimulating students' enthusiasm, self-consciousness and creativity turn out to be of vital importance in foreign language teaching. Compared with traditional methods and concepts, this is a qualitative leap .Our traditional methods emphasize "filling", ie, paying much attention to the knowledge delivery in language teaching, which would to some degree attribute to students' incompetence. After 8 to 10 years of learning English, students still feel embarrassed when it comes to expressing themselves and completing simple writing tasks. Students know little about communicative strategies. As a consequence, they are easy to violate communicative rules without realizing them. Of course the weakness in basic language training also contributes to students' difficulties in their communication and writing tasks. However, another case does seem to be more dangerous: fluency in oral English and failure to understand communicative rules, since in this case students may be misunderstood in authentic communication. And hurt native speakers feelings. To some extent, we have to confess our traditional EFL teaching has produced too many "dumb and fluency idiots", which will not at all satisfy the modern demand for foreign language specialists. However it is gratifying to note that with the introduction of modern EFL theories into China, Chinese EFL teachers are realizing defects in their practices and are beginning researches in case studies on the influences of non-cognitive factors on foreign language learners, which will surely "fill into fresh blood" into Chinese EFL field.

3.2 Curriculum integration, flexibility, and diversification

Reform in current curriculum also belongs to one of the experimental projects in China's EFL field. Based on language learning and teaching theories, we devise our curriculum and set up new goals for EFL learners in the new century. The new curriculum tends to be

Integrated, Flexible and Diversified.

As for integration, we mean to combine listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks into one integrated course. While traditionally we usually separated these skills. We have devised 5 modes in integrated language teaching:1) integrating language learning strategies into major courses 2) organizing tasks on specific topics 3) learning a language by participating various kinds of activities 4) learning foreign languages via series of events 5) learning foreign languages through completion of "tasks".

As for flexibility, we mean that we have more flexibility when arranging our curriculum, totally different from

traditional rigid mechanical approaches before. Based on recent researches in second language acquisition and second language psychology, we are considering transferring some university courses into high school curriculums. Thus students may set sound foundation for their basic language skills while in high school. University curriculum may then consider setting up courses like English literature, western cultures, secretary English, business English and etc .This can not only reduce the quantity of compulsory courses in university, but also enable college students to have more free time to enrich language knowledge and widen their vision of target languages. In this case students can not only learn theoretical knowledge but also practical skills. All these may help lay a solid foundation for their learning and employment in the future.

3.3 The Reform in Teaching Methodologies

Since 1980s, foreign languages teaching in China was gradually moving towards its maturity both in theories and practices. Teachers realize differences in learners, teaching styles and teaching environment. To achieve success in language teaching, EFL teachers are advised to apply dynamic, adjusted "open policy" to foreign language teaching. They realize that learning outcomes rely much on factors like ultimate goals, professional levels of teachers, teacher's personality and difficulties in learning materials. They all agree teaching methodologies should vary from person to person, from time to time. Never will there be an effective methodology. We didn't have it before, and we will never have it in the future. Gradually foreign language educators begin to reflect on EFL teaching in China and start reforms in this field. Their main concerns are to abolish traditional "fillings" and encourage heuristics in classroom teaching. Current EFL in China are now experiencing its reforms in the following aspects: 1) Cooperative trend. Break the domination of teachers in classrooms and start to attach importance to cooperation between teachers and learners. Such cooperation not only helps brainstorming, but also enhances communication between teachers and learners. When learning a language, it is strongly advised that students understand the successful experience of other language learners. Also teachers may help students to form their own learning pathways.2) Place importance to emotional factors. Teachers should especially care about new "self-images" of foreign language learners and help them improve their self-confidence. Integrating language teaching with its culture will also help arouse learners' interest. The interaction between teachers and students helps to create a pleasant and relaxed learning environment and will accordingly increase the efficiency of teaching and learning.

3.4 Strengthen Researches and Experiments in Teaching Modes

Researches in EFL teaching mode have been carried out in China only in recent years. There are divergent views on the nature of EFL teaching, its mode, its concept and its characteristics.EFL researches and teachers all agree on the significant role that teaching modes play in EFL teaching theories. Since teaching modes embody both theoretical and interoperability characteristics, they are supposed to be the best link between teaching theories and teaching practices. Under the guidance of teaching theories, teaching modes combine various aspects in the teaching process and supply information for teaching strategy system. They are also reflections on teaching principles and laws and thus can make general teaching theories concrete and workable. They provide teachers with a set of teaching methods and strategies. Conducting an extensive and in-depth researches and experiments in teaching modes can not only help to enrich and develop foreign language theories, but also offer solutions to long-time detachment between foreign language teaching theories and teaching practices in China.

4. Several Problems Existed in Current Foreign Language Teaching

History of modern foreign language teaching has proved that the emergence of any new theories and methodologies is closely related to demands for that time and promoted by progresses in related subjects. Due to the ever-increasing contacts and exchanges between nations, the demand for EFL talents has reached an unprecedented degree. Although in ESL theories, we have Cognitive Psychology, Chomsky's linguistics rationalism, Context Linguistics and etc, but there is still to much to improve in ESL theories. A lot of problems in teaching practices remain to be solved.

4.1 Modern pedagogy vs traditional pedagogy s

Researches in teaching pedagogies in EFL are to meet requirements for contemporary society, to cultivate new ways and thus train more learners to meet new demands. However when new methods are not perfect, we should still hold on to old ones that have proven to be effective all through the history of EFL teaching practices. Discarding old methods thoroughly is not a good choice, since any new theories and methodologies are make-ups for their past. Adopting new theories and methodologies does not mean to cancel traditions. Anyway, ever since many ESL theories coming into China, many EFL teacher home think all existing methods are backward and out of date. Thus, they pushed modern ESL theories to its extreme. A case in point is the Communicative Approach.

In fact, every methodology has its merit. Take Direct Method and Audio-Lingual Method for an example, they are still very useful to children learners and beginners since they know little about their target language and do not have any communicative competence. Generally excluding these two methodologies is not conducive to EFL teaching.

As for Grammar-Translation Method, though we appraise and deny the ups and downs of this methodology, it is still an

important supplement to current EFL teaching methods. Regardless of foreign language learning in classroom or self learning, learners often achieve understanding of meaning of words or contexts with the help of grammar analyses. Sometimes it is very difficult to explain abstract words in target languages. Foreign language learners believe grammar analyses will certainly help them to understand contexts, long and complicated sentences. For example, when professionals in other fields consult their difficulties with EFL teachers, more often their problems are not meaning of words, but sentence structures, grammar points, or relationships between sentences.

4.2 Call for reforms in CET 4 & CET 6 national examination

Tests, mostly in writing, are the major means to test the ability of students who learn English in universities or high schools. And implications of EFL test modes, especially like CET 4 and CET 6 national examinations, are tremendous to English teaching and English language learning. To some extent, it is a baton. Usually test questions are objective ones and in the form of multiple choice. Testees are required to select one correct answer among four choices. Although this test method can facilitate assessments, the credibility of such scores is questionable. For example, there are three students who have made correct choices to the same question: We can assume three possibilities in this situation: one is that the testee gets the correct answer because he can tell the reason why he makes it; another is testee get the score by trying his luck because he is not quite sure about the correct answer; the third possibility is testee doesn't know anything about the correct answer at all and simple makes his blind guesses. The result is that they all got one score since they all made the correct choice. Although they get the same score in that question, their knowledge and abilities are different. Since we all know there is 25% of the guess rate, the objectivity of this score should be discounted in this case. These test modes can mislead students and encourage their guessing. Therefore various ways of guessing skills are quite popular among students. There are researches in topics like Know-how-to-guess, guessing principles and etc. Actually these phenomena have been in existence for quite a period of time in China. As a consequence, quite a number of students' foreign language ability and knowledge are still very weak although they have got high scores in examinations. The negative effects that current test modes bring can never be ignored. Nowadays we can see some changes in CET 4 and CET 6 examination. We see more subjective questions in exam papers. But we have to confess that the volume of objective questions has not been reduced. Defects have not been eliminated, only slightly been made up. We need further reforms in test modes and we hope reforms in CET4 and CET6 can change in the direction that will help students to improve their EFL practical abilities and knowledge.

4.3 Differences between Learning First and Second Language

Language acquisition theories advocate that children learn discourses in natural environments. Current researches in how learners learn to talk and how they use languages for social communication will no doubt be a great inspiration to EFL filed. Although there are some similarities between kids learning to talk and beginners learning a foreign language, differences do exist between them. College students are adults. They have learnt English language for six years before they come to universities. We also believe students who are learning foreign languages have different social roles from children. Examining these differences will help to achieve effectiveness in EFL teaching and learning.

First, there is a cognitive difference between them. As children acquire their first language, they learn concerning cognitive areas like time and space, cause and effect relationship and etc. at the same time; While foreign language learners do not have to re-experience above processes. Second, when kids learn first languages, they also learn how to use set ways to express love and hate. Consequently, they obtain their social identities and try to develop their own personality in this framework; And foreign language learners, no longer need to learn the stereotyped concept of what to say in certain situations .

To sum up, we can see differences between first language acquisition and foreign languages learning. Therefore, when teaching foreign languages, there is no need for EFL teachers to repeat the known areas of students' cognition. Instead they should provide a "language rich" environment and supply stimulation to guide students to attain their self-study.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Learner Perceptions of Instruction in L2 Pragmatics

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Abstract

In Taiwan, pragmatic competence has often been a neglected area in English education. Learners may be linguistically competent, but do not know how to use L2 appropriately. Through the teaching of complaint behaviors, the author demonstrates how pragmatic components can be incorporated into a college-level language classroom. After the instruction, the self reports of the forty participants showed a positive attitude toward such instruction. They also reported that the teaching materials were suitable, but suggested that the instruction would have been more interesting if videos or films had been included. When it comes to learning difficulties, most learners reported that more instructional time was needed to turn knowledge about L2 complaints to actual productions. These findings can serve as offering advice to language teachers when they plan their lessons in L2 pragmatics.

Keywords: L2 pragmatics, Instruction, Complaint

1. Introduction

Teachers in Taiwan generally pay a great deal of attention to grammar to help learners internalize linguistic rules. Learners therefore have fewer opportunities to encode their intent in the language they are learning. This can cause trouble when Taiwanese students go abroad to pursue advanced study in an English speaking country. The following example is a real-life story happening to one of my students—John, who was admitted to an American university with 580 TOEFL scores at that time. One day, John was invited to his advisor's house for dinner. The professor and his wife welcomed him, and they had a wonderful meal during which John talked at lot about Taiwan. Before he knew it, John realized it was 11:00, and he thought it was time for him to leave. Therefore, he said to the professor, "It's very late. Thank you for the dinner. I think I should go now because you might need to go to bed." Though grammatically perfect, John's utterance upset the elderly couple. The professor's wife even responded in unfriendly terms: "You may go home if you want to. Don't say it is because we want to go to bed!"

What had John done wrong? His mistake arose not from violations of grammatical rules, but from inadequate pragmatic knowledge in the target language. As Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1991) put it:

Language learners interacting with speakers of a target language must be exposed to language samples which observe social, cultural, and discourse conventions—or in other words, which are pragmatically appropriate. Speakers who do not use pragmatically appropriate language run the risk of appearing uncooperative at the least, or, more seriously, rude or insulting. This is particularly true of advanced learners whose high linguistic proficiency leads other speakers to expect concomitantly high pragmatic competence. (p.4)

This assertion has two implications that, first, learners' pragmatic proficiency may not go hand in hand with their linguistic proficiency. Rather, learners at various proficiency levels may use inappropriate language in a given situation. What differentiates advanced learners and beginners is that the former are expected to have a better understanding of situational appropriateness in their L2 discourse. Second, an environment with rich, authentic language samples is important in that it helps learners in the acquisition of pragmatic conventions in the target language. Unfortunately, in a monolingual environment like Taiwan, it is not easy for learners to surround themselves with large amounts of L2 input, thus inhibiting pragmatic proficiency. In addition, teachers, even in a communicatively oriented classroom, do not pay particular attention to developing learners' sociolinguistic competence (Yu, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to show how pragmatic components can be incorporated in the language classroom and what learners perceive about such instruction.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Rationale for Teaching L2 Pragmatics

In SLA research, there has been a consensus that the learner, no matter in a tutored or an untutored learning environment, must pass through a certain stage regardless of their age and L1 background (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). Since the routes of learning for all the language learners are identical, researchers such as Krashen (1982) argue that learners can benefit most if they are allowed to construct their interlanguage system along a natural route. However, a large body of morphosyntactic studies has demonstrated that although formal instruction cannot change the order of

acquisition, it has two advantages. First, formal instruction has a beneficial effect on the process of language development, rate of acquisition and ultimate level of attainment. Second, through practice, routinization and consciousness-raising in the classroom, formal instruction can transform from learning to acquisition, from explicit to implicit knowledge, and from controlled processing to automatic processing (Bialystock, 1982; Pavesi, 1984; Sharewood Smith, 1981, Tarone, 1983).

Compared to the morphosyntactic studies, relatively fewer experiments compare L2 pragmatics acquired in natural and classroom settings. The most significant experiment was conducted by Bouton (1999). He found that although implicature can be acquired in a natural setting, the process took as long as 33-months to 4-7 years. However, through instruction, the process can be shortened. In his study, Bouton categorized two types of implicature. Idiosyncratic implicature is unconventional and requires listener's ability to draw inferences, while formulaic implicature can be interpreted by convention. Idiosyncratic implicature was found to be easier for the newcomers prior to the instruction. However, after six hours of formal instruction, the learners' interpretations of formulaic implicature reached the same level as those who have resided in the United States for seventeen months to seven years. Bouton's findings lend support to the fact that teaching L2 pragmatics may not alter the route of acquisition, but can accelerate the process of acquisition.

2.2 Approaches to Teaching L2 Pragmatics

The research on instructional approaches in L2 pragmatics has started to take shape since the early 1990s, but the relevant reports are not very many in comparison with those on how instruction influences other aspects of second language acquisition. In these studies, researchers often ask the question: "If instruction improves learners' pragmatic competence, which teaching approach is the most effective?" To answer this question, they generally compare two kinds of approaches in teaching L2 pragmatics: explicit and implicit. The major difference is that explicit teaching provides learners with detailed metapragmatic information, while implicit teaching does not. Despite a few exceptions, most of the intervention studies to date have demonstrated that the learners who receive explicit instruction outperform those who receive implicit instruction (Rose, 2005).

Explicit instruction of pragmatic rules in general follow the traditional "Three P's methodology" (Presentation-Practice-Production) (McCarthy, 1998). At the presentation stage, the native speaker model (the NS model) is important because it offers examples of language in use. The model can be short extracts derived from authentic materials such as films, telephone conversations, and television programs. It can simply be interactions between two native speakers of the target language (usually the instructor and another native speaker) or explanatory handouts which identify metapragmatic details necessary for the acquisition of the target form (e.g. Rose & Ng, 2001, Takahashi, 2005).

At the practice stage, learners are given tasks which can reinforce the pragmatic knowledge they have acquired. At this stage, both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic information of the given tasks are encouraged to be clarified by the learners. In this way, learners have the opportunities to ask the instructor about the cultural information, vocabulary and structures associated to complete the tasks (Yoshimi, 2001).

Finally, at the production stage, teachers may use discourse completion test (DCT) or role plays to elicit learners' performance. In the DCT, learners have time to plan what they intend to express on a written format, but there is no interlocutor involved. On the other hand, in role plays, learners can acquire interactional skills such as conversational management, manipulation of turn-taking mechanism, use of intensifiers and downgraders, and accurate choice from a range of strategies (House, 1996). Olshtain & Cohen (1990) suggest that corrective feedback and discussion are useful teaching techniques after learners present their talks. The instructor, together with the whole class, can comment on the appropriateness of the performances in terms of coherence of organization, strategy use, as well as lexical and grammatical productions, or the learners can be invited to contrast their perceptions, expectations, and awareness of L1 and L2 cultures.

In addition to the three P's methodology, raising learners' awareness as a warm-up activity is important, too. Bou-Franch & Garces-Conejos (2003) claim that awareness raising tasks can promote learners' sociopragmatic knowledge about the target feature under investigation. One feature that is frequently observed in the awareness-raising phase is the discussion of the target feature represented in both L1 and L2, which makes pragmatic concepts easier to access (Rose & Ng, 2001). For example, in Liddicoat and Crozet's (2001) study, where the French utterance "Did you have a good weekend" was taught to a group of Australian students, learners were first asked to talk about the stereotypes they held for both Australian and French people. Then the teacher and learners worked out possible Australian and French equivalences to the question under study. Finally, the teacher explained how this question functions differently in Australian and French contexts. Through constant practices, learners are believed to gradually possess the ability to observe and analyze sociological variables in real encounters. Eslamin-Rasekj (2005) pointed out that teacher presentation and discussion as well as student discovery are the two useful teaching techniques to raise learners' awareness. In teacher presentation and discussion, the teacher can inductively or deductively relay information

derived from pragmatic research findings. For example, the teacher may introduce how participants, their status, the situation are connected together. In the activity of student discovery, learners become ethnographers and are asked to observe or record naturally occurring data. This activity will help learners become keen to how a particular feature is used in L1 and L2.

3. The study

3.1 The Setting

The participants of the study were 40 English majors who enrolled in the "Speech and Communication" course provided by the Department of Applied Foreign Languages of Ling Tung University in Taiwan. One section of this course was planned for this study, which aimed to teach the learners how to make complaints appropriately in English. This speech act was chosen because it receives comparatively less attention than other acts such as apologies, requests and compliments in the textbooks on the market. The other reason for choosing this speech act is that without knowledge about L2 complaints, learners may avoid expressing dissatisfaction and remain frustrated when facing an offense, or they may make an inappropriate complaint which endangers the speaker-hearer relationship.

3.2 The Teaching Materials

The primary teaching material used in this study was entitled *Say It Naturally: Verbal Strategies for Authentic Communication (Level 2)* (Wall, 1988). Chapter 4 of this book specifically addresses how to make complaints. The chapter starts with an introduction of American complaints and discusses the social contexts in which complaints are most likely to be employed. In the section of *Verbal Strategies*, the author arranged the complaint strategies from formal to informal with regard to setting, audience, speakers and gender. Learners may also listen to *Situational Dialogues*, which provide native speaker models demonstrating how these verbal strategies are used in natural, true-to-life situations. There are three questions following each conversation, with which learners may discuss the language as well as the cultural aspects of dialogues. *Practices*, *Dialog Completions*, and *Role Plays* are exercises to help reinforce newly learned strategies. They are arranged from easy to difficult, and from controlled to open-ended.

In addition to the textbook, supplementary handouts were designed to compensate for the lack of metapragmatic information in the book. There were two major topics on the handouts. The first topic introduces the notions of power, distance and degree of imposition as well as the effect of these social parameters on strategy choice. The second topic addresses a series of decision making procedures after evaluating social context and the corresponding strategies are also introduced. It deals with linguistic realizations of each strategy and concerns how strategies can be combined together to make complaints more complete.

3.3 The Teaching Procedures

Building on the 3P's methodology, I designed seven teaching steps and used them in my class. The entire lesson lasted 10 hours.

<u>Step 1: Awareness-raising session</u>

In the first class, I asked the learners to organize into groups and discussed the two questions on the board.

1. *Under what circumstances is it necessary for you to make complaints? According to your understanding of the American culture (e.g. contacts with Americans or seeing American movies), do you think Americans make complaints in similar situations as Chinese do? Please answer the question based on your experiences or observations and illustrate with example(s).*

2. *When making complaints in Chinese, do personal factors such as age, gender, social status, and degree of intimacy of the hearer make any difference to you in the choice of language? If so, which factor(s) do you think would affect your speech the most? Please illustrate with example(s). Are the same factors determining your making complaints in English? Please illustrate with example(s).*

The purposes of this brainstorming session were to ask the learners' stereotypical impression of how Americans and Chinese make complaints and to activate their interests in learning American complaint behaviors. The learners were given fifteen minutes to discuss the two questions. After the discussion, each group selected a representative to report their conclusions. The entire discussion session was conducted in Chinese and lasted about thirty minutes.

<u>Step 2: Social contexts session</u>

Bou-Franch & Carces-Conejos (2003) contend that sociopragmatics should be introduced before pragmalinguistics because "developing L2 sociopragmatic knowledge will result in the improvement of the production and interpretation of L2 pragmalinguisitc strategies" (p.2). Therefore, in this step, I drew on Brown & Levinson's Politeness Model and presented to the learners how power, distance and severity of offense are intertwined to affect choice of language. I also showed to the learners such interplay may be different in the western and Chinese cultures.

Step 3: Strategy session

At this stage, I told the learners that they were faced with three basic options after evaluating the social contexts: *Do not make complaints, Make complaints less directly* and *Make complaints directly*. I also analyzed the payoffs of the three options for the learners. After the analysis, I presented to the learners the complaint strategies for each option. The corresponding strategy of *Do not Make Complaints* is *Opting out. Make complaints less directly* includes *Dissatisfaction* and *Request for repair* with *I* as subject. Finally, *Make complaints directly* includes *Interrogation, Accusation* and *Threat*, with *You* as subject. For each individual strategy, I provided the learners with functional, situational and linguistic information. Functional information refers to what intention the speaker may convey by using this particular strategy. Situational information refers to the social context in which a given strategy can be used appropriately. Finally, linguistic information refers to the pragmalinguistic aspect of a strategy, which may include tense, sentence patterns, or reference to speaker or hearer. Table 1 shows the strategies.

Insert Table 1 here.

Step 4: Practice session

At this stage, I asked the learners to do *Practice* 1 and 2 on pages 56-58 in the textbook. Each practice is composed of five scenarios. I demonstrated how to do the practice. After I demonstrated how to do the practice, the learners were asked to read the scenario, evaluate the social contexts in which the scenarios occur, and then write down the responses to the scenarios within one turn. The writing tasks have two advantages. First, though in the written form, the DCT elicits representations of spoken language (Rintell & Mitchell, 1989) and the learners had more time to plan what they would say. According to Cohen (1996), learners who do planning before production are prone to follow sociocultural and sociolinguistic conventions than those who do not. Second, the learners could have the opportunity to focus on form in addition to meanings. Krashen's Monitor Model (1982) states that there are three conditions for a performer to be conscious of linguistic forms—the performer has to have enough time, the performer has to be thinking about correctness and the performer has to know the rule. After the learners knew how to respond to an offense within one turn, I asked them to do *Dialogue Completion* in the textbook on pages 63-65. Again, the learners were asked to evaluate the social contexts before writing down the responses. During their writing, I circled around the classroom to see if the learners had any questions about strategy use. *Practice* and *Dialogue Completion* provide more controlled activities and help the learners to extend making complaints from a single to multiple conversational turns, which pave the way for more open activities like role plays.

Step 5: Role play session

After the learners understood how the complaint strategies could be appropriately used, they were asked to perform the role play tasks on pages 66-67 in the textbook. Unlike *Practice* and *Situational Dialogue*, these role plays are open ended. I asked the learners to work in pairs, to take on the imaginary roles and respond to the scenarios orally. At this stage, the learners were asked to do impromptu planning without writing down the responses.

Step 6: Feedback session

In this session, I nominated several pairs to come to the front to perform the role plays. The whole class watched the role play performances. After each role play, the class gave feedback, which included the appropriateness of language use, norms of interactions, or even body language. The feedback session was important since research shows that learners generally benefit from the comments they receive (Olshtain & Cohen, 1991).

Step 7: Wrap up

In order to reinforce what was taught in class, I asked them to think of five situations in which they could make complaints in American English as homework assignments. In addition, the learners had to write down why they responded in this way. These situations could be imaginary or real-life situations. I selected some of the assignments and discussed them in class.

Table 2 shows the instructional steps, accompanied by the materials used and time allocation.

Insert Table 2 here.

4. Results and Discussion

After the instruction, the forty learners were asked to write self reports concerning their perceptions of explicit instruction. The three questions are:

1. *Do you think you benefited from instruction in making complaints in English? Why or why not? Please state your reasons.*

2. *Do you think the teaching materials are suitable? Why or why not? Please state your reasons.*

3. *During instruction, what difficulties did you encounter? Please state your reasons.*

4.1 General Impressions

In the learners' self reports, thirty-four out of the forty learners (85%) reported that the instruction was a special and new experience for them because complaint behaviors had never been fully discussed in previous English courses. For example, Rita said,

(1) **I think the teaching of complaint strategies was special**. We have never had any course which said particular attention to this. We might have a little understanding of how to make complaints from the English conversation courses we have taken before, but there was surely no specific teaching of these strategies.

Lisa also commented,

(2) **I think the instruction was a fresh experience to me.** In other conversation classes, the teachers did not explain any strategies or rules. They just wanted us to follow the textbook models and do the role plays. So I feel that the teaching is different from the one we had before.

Twenty-one out of the forty learners (53%) also mentioned that the treatments were helpful to them in that they started to think of interlocutor relationships before they issued the complaints. For example, Dan remarked,

(3) **I think the course content was really useful because I've learned how to make complaints more appropriately.** I have the idea of social power and social distance when I make complaints in Chinese. I know that I should use more polite language when I speak to the chairperson, and I may use less polite language when I speak to my brother. But I have difficulty complaining in English, not to mention thinking about if the other person is higher in status or we have a close relationship. From the instruction, at least I know that I should develop the habit of considering the context in the first place before uttering the complaints in English.

Nineteen out of the forty learners (48%) reported that the linguistic strategies provided allowed them to vary their complaints under different circumstances. For example, Paul said,

(4) It has been difficult for me to complain in English. This may be because English is not my native language. Usually I don't know how to express my complaints to an American. The complaints I made were usually Chinese like, and I tended to use the same expression over and over again in different situations. This is because I didn't know that there are other ways to make complaints. **This class has taught me strategies which I can use based on the situations I encounter.** Although they are somewhat formulaic and take me a while to remember them, I think they can improve my English ability in this respect.

The learners' feedback supports the call for incorporating the teaching of L2 pragmatics into language curriculum. For the past decades, many interlanguage pragmatics studies have indicated that even advanced L2 learners deviated from the target language norms. They may produce grammatically correct but pragmatically inappropriate utterances. One of the reasons to explain the deviations is that learners do not always transfer from what has been available to them, for example, from pragmatic universals or L1-based knowledge (Kasper, 1997). The other reason is that certain language-specific features need to be drawn to attention because simple exposure to sociolinguistically appropriate L2 input is not sufficient for learners to acquire L2 pragmatic knowledge (Schmidt, 1993).

The learners' positive attitudes towards the explicit instruction can also be observed in other studies. For example, Olshtain & Cohen (1990) reported that most students in their study highly valued the teacher's explanations of English apology realizations and the information sheets pertaining to the main points of the lesson. They attributed the learners' preference for formal presentation to the fact that adult learners may have felt more comfortable with explicit presentation of realization patterns than with experiential types of activities. Tateyama (2001) also noted in her study that almost all the students in the explicit group favored the teacher's explicit explanation about the use of routine expressions. They also mentioned that input-only instruction would not have been sufficient for them to understand a variety of expressions.

4.2 Teaching Materials

Thirty-five learners (88%) felt that the main textbook and the supplementary materials provided them with sufficient information about how to make complaints in American English. For example, Judy said,

(5) **I think the instructional materials are rich in content. The textbook contains many complaint situations, and the supplementary materials provide us with many rules and useful expressions.** Before the instruction, I could only use a few sentences to express myself. I think the handouts we used are clear and understandable. They meet our current level of proficiency and clearly convey what the teacher was trying to teach us. Compared with the textbook, the handouts explain the rules very clearly and the examples relate to daily conversations. I can learn how to make complaints through the handouts.

Peter also commented,

(6) **I think the handouts were very useful to me**. Through the handouts, I could clearly understand what the teacher

was trying to convey. I felt that I was learning something. The textbook was ok. There were not so many rules, but it had many role play activities.

The learners' evaluations of teaching materials reflected the complementary functions of textbook and supplementary materials. Basically, the textbook provides learners with an array of scenarios for communicative practices, which range from the most controlled DCT type of activities to the least controlled role play activities. On the other hand, the teacher's materials provide the learners with detailed metapragmatic information to supplement the textbook which does not seem to give a complete picture of L2 complaints.

Although most learners highly valued the teaching materials used in the instructional sessions, twelve out of the forty learners (30%) suggested that the use of videos or movies may have made the instruction more interesting. For example, Edward remarked,

(7) **Maybe the teacher can let us watch movies to help us better understand how Americans make complaints.** I think it would be more interesting than just stating the rules or practicing conversations.

It is true that the use of authentic audio-visual materials such as television dramas, movies, or commercials in language classrooms give the learners a much better understanding of cultural and linguistic norms of the target language. These multi-media audio-visual materials have the following advantages. First, they make classroom teaching more interesting. Second, they provide a great number of conversations with a variety of expressions spoken in the target language. Third, they help enhance not only learners' pragmatic competence, but also strategic competence because through authentic materials, learners may learn how to control topic, take turns and repair communication breakdowns. Finally, they supply not only verbal behaviors but also nonverbal communication strategies such as gestures and eye contact between interlocutors (Soler, 2005).

However, the use of authentic movies or television programs may be a good teaching approach, but it also poses problems for language teachers who attempt to teach the speech act of complaining. Compared with speech acts such as apologies, requests, excuses and closings, it is more difficult to capture what counts as complaints since they have no stereotypical forms and no corresponding second part. Edmonson (1981) claims that the perlocutionary intent of a complaint is negotiable because a hearer cannot identify by convention what behavior will satisfy the act of complaining. Moreover, complaint as the first part of an adjacency pair can be followed by denial, rejection, justification or making excuses (Laforest, 2002). Such complexities increase the degree of difficulties of finding suitable film segments for instruction. Therefore, the better option for language teachers may be to use audio-visual materials with tailor-made complaint scenarios. As long as efforts are made to preserve naturalness, these audio-visual materials can meet the learners' needs and achieve teaching outcomes more successfully than natural film segments, soap operas or movies.

4.3 Learning Difficulties

When asked about if there were any difficulties in learning how to complain in English, thirty out of the forty learners (75%) reported that they needed to learn a lot during a short period of time and that they were not used to the newly learned strategies. For example, Richard commented,

(8) **I think the problem for me is that there are too many complaint strategies. It is easy for me to get confused with those strategies.** I cannot digest all the information I learned in class. I need to take some time to distinguish these strategies and remember how to use them appropriately. Though I've learned the rules, it is not easy for me to speak the language as well as native speakers do.

Lily also remarked,

(9) **The strategies are useful, but it seems that I couldn't take in too much at a time. Sometimes I would forget what the teacher taught us in the last hour.** Before the instruction, I didn't have to think about these strategies. The sentences may have popped into my mind, although I knew they might not be right. Now I have to think about which strategy to apply in which situation. I know it's good for me, but I need some time to get used to it.

The learners' reports showed that they needed more time to digest what they had learned. Faerch & Kasper (1984) distinguished between declarative pragmatic knowledge and procedural pragmatic knowledge. The former is "knowledge that" and deals with "an individual's knowledge of the rules and elements of one or more language(s), not related to specific communicative goals or to language use in real time", while the latter is "knowledge how" and "selects and combines parts of declarative knowledge for the purpose of reaching specific communicative goals, observing constraints imposed by language processing in real time" (p.215). The components of declarative pragmatic knowledge include linguistic knowledge, speech act knowledge, discourse knowledge, sociocultural knowledge, context knowledge and knowledge of the world. On the other hand, the components of pragmatic procedural knowledge include goal-formation and context-analysis, verbal planning and monitoring execution. The speaker must establish a communicative goal based on context-determining factors, plan and select linguistic knowledge to meet the communicative goal, and monitor the feedback provided by the other interlocutor in the interaction.

Educational psychologists such as Anderson (1985) have claimed that learning is a process where declarative knowledge gradually becomes procedural knowledge. It holds true for interlanguage pragmatics as well. Drawing on Anderson's work, Ellis (1990) classified learning into three stages: the cognitive stage, where learners are conscious of the rules; the associative stage, where they begin to proceduralize the knowledge they acquire; and the autonomous stage, where they perform the language automatically and errors disappear. The learners' self-reports showed that the instruction may have been enough to give the learners declarative knowledge about L2 complaints, but it may have been insufficient for the learners to transform all the rules they had acquired to actual productions.

In fact, treatment lengths vary among previous intervention studies, ranging from two or three 20-min sessions to nine week instructional period (Rose, 2005). Kasper (2001) argues that very short period of treatment can be effective if there are learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. However, her suggestion may not be applicable to the foreign language environment because there is no such input outside the classroom. Therefore, EFL teachers should allocate more instructional time than ESL teachers in improving learners' pragmatic competence. The more complicated the targets (e.g. complaining) are, the more instructional time is required.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I demonstrated seven steps in teaching L2 complaints and reported learner perceptions of the instruction in light of general impression, teaching materials and learning difficulties. The findings revealed that instruction in L2 pragmatics is feasible and beneficial because most of the learners held a positive attitude towards the instruction. The English teachers in Taiwan are therefore encouraged to include L2 pragmatics into their curriculum. They are also encouraged to consider the use of audio-visual information and the problem of instructional length when they do lesson planning, as suggested by the learners in the self reports.

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Table 1. Complaint strategies

Options	Formulas	Functions	Examples
Do not make complaints	Opting out	The speaker ignores the offense to avoid conflict.	N/A
Make complaints less directly	Dissatisfaction	The speaker describes the offense, but avoids explicit mention of the hearer.	My letter was opened.
	Request for repair	The speaker asks the hearer to make up for the offense or to stop the offense.	Could I have some privacy?
Make complaints directly	Interrogation	The speaker questions the hearer about the offense.	Why did you open my letter?
	Accusation	The speaker accuses the hearer of the offense.	You opened my letter.
	Threat	The speaker asserts immediate or potential sanctions against the hearer.	If you open my letter again, I'll move out.

Table 2. Instructional steps, materials used and time allocation

Steps	Activities	Materials	Hours
1	Awareness raising	Brainstorming questions	0.5
2	Introducing social contexts	Handout 1	2
3	Introducing complaint strategies	Handout 2	2
4	Practicing complaint strategies	Textbook	2
5	Performing role plays	Textbook	2
6	Giving feedback	Teacher/peer evaluation	0.5
7	Wrapping up	Learners' assignments	1
Total			10

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

A Study of Policy for Providing Feedback to Students on College English

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The research is supported by Yunnan Education Science "Eleven Five" Layout project (GY080024).

Abstract

Feedback is central to the development of effective learning in college English. This article presents a study on feedback to students on college English. The purpose of providing feedback to the students is to help teachers and students to identify their strengths and weaknesses .The author offers different kinds of feedback in her teaching. There is no such thing as perfect feedback; different types of assessment require different sorts of comments. But good feedback should encourage the students' deep approach to learning.

Keywords: Formative feedback, Effective feedback, Summative feedback, Deep approach to learning

1. Introduction

Feedback is an essential component in the learning and explains the gaps in knowledge and understanding, providing for reflection and development. Feedback at its best is pivotal in the learning and assessment process. (Orrell, 2006).

"Feedback may operate both to improve learning of individual students, and to improve teaching." (Biggs, 2003 p141).

'The purpose of providing feedback to the students is to help teachers and students to identify their strengths and weaknesses as they learn and to improve those areas. The feedback should not merely be to make things better next time. Giving feedback can itself be turned into part of learning experience.' (Race, 2007, p192-204). So providing feedback to students is one of the most important aspects of teaching.

Good feedback comprises not just commentary about what has been done, but suggests for what has been done next. (Brown, 2007) Good feedback can encourage and motivate students, clear up misunderstandings or confusion and improve the students' performance. Good feedback is recognized as being prompt, is related to the learning outcomes of the assignment, individualized to the student, but manageable for the lecturer. (Race, 2001). However on writing effective feedback academics complain that many students are poor at using feedback. Often they are more interested in their grade or marks and sometimes they pay little attention to read what we have written. When receiving feedback, they frequently fail to remember what is said to them, except for when their views of how they have done are confirmed. So a study of policy for providing feedback to students on college English is useful. How can we get students to make best use of feedback? We should find ways to help students make good use of the hard work we put into giving them feedback.

We considered Biggs(2003) SOLO taxonomy and assessing for learning quality II practice as an assessment guide, particularly the relational thinking as we were looking for the students to compare , contrast and analyses within their work. It is important and useful to analysis a range of methods for providing feedback to our students. Reflect upon our own experiences of both providing and receiving feedback and evaluate the importance of these experiences of feedback within our own teaching.

2. The feedback analysis

2.1 Why provide feedback?

"…it makes sense to ensure that a lot of feedback is given to students very early on in the process when they are being coached to perform well; as they progress towards the end of a module, when they are well aware of what is required of them, they need less feedback." (Brown and Knight 1994, p.99)

2.2 Why give feedback?

"It is impossible to overstate the role of effective comments on students' progress in any discussion of effective teaching and assessment." (Ramsden, 2003, p.187)

2.3 Purposes of feedback

·Justify the mark or grade awarded – to various audiences

·Show the student where their strengths and weaknesses lie

·Identify a profile of attainment against the criteria established for the assessment

·Identify how the student might achieve a heightened performance

·Help the student identify where they might focus their efforts for future development and assessment

·To identify where they might get further help

·To promote learning and facilitate improvement by encouraging students to reflect upon their performance

·Motivate and reward students

·To aid staff in monitoring the assessment ---validity, reliability

·Provide information to aid the external monitoring process

There is no such thing as perfect feedback, different types of assessment require different sorts of comments. However, as I think feedback should

·be positive;

·give 2 or 3 powerful pieces of advice as the bulk of the comment;

·avoid insisting that your view is necessarily the right one;

·mark points of error in the text, including where assertion is made without evidence;

·advice on structure and organization should be freely given;

·check how you think the advice given is going to help the learner do better next time. (Brown and Knight 1994, p.113).

Different types of feedback seem to encourage the students' surface or deep approaches to learning. The teacher should give feedback to make the students deep approach to learning. So students may have positive feelings: interest, a sense of importance, challenge, even of exhilaration. As a teacher, I give students effective feedback, which should be fast, focused, relevant to assessment criteria, developmental and personal to the student.

During my teaching, I have had to provide formative and summative feedback, depending on different kinds of assignments and examinations. Especially I pay more attention to the formative feedback, for it helps the students identify 'gaps'in their knowledge, understanding and skills set.

3. Formative feedback

Formative feedback is principally a mean by which tutors can let the students know how learning is proceeding. It refers to constructive feedback offered to students in an attempt to develop their learning language. Formative feedback and link to deep learning (feedforward) (Higgins, Hartley and Skelton 2002 in Carless), it checks ongoing understanding and instructs the students about their error, leading to better understanding in future. The important problem is how I can get students to make use of formative feedback. So different kinds of formative feedback is very useful to the students. The following is the formative feedback I have provided.

3.1 Timely feedback:

'Students generally find timely feedback far more useful than delayed comments' (Ramsden, p.88).Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. Students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. So in class students need timely feedback to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

3.1.1 Face to face feedback

In listening course, I often give them timely feedback. I give praise'good, very good, excellent 'for their correct answers or point out the errors, saying 'you may listen to the passage again and try to find the right answer', together with brief explanations--- you should pay attention to the number , which you must calculate, and recommend them to write down some key words while listening.

I also give face to face feedback to a small group of students or to an individual. Face to face communication made the feedback more clear and the response from the student made reflect my teaching.

3.1.2 Verbal feedback

For the assignment as oral practice, presentation and retell, I usually gave the feedback verbally in class, such as *'Well done. Congratulations. You summarize the text better than last time; I hope to see your perfect performance next time.'* Sometime I do interview, one-to-one; one-to-group in class; but after class I may be do lunch & discussion to exchange the views between the students and me.

3.1.3 One- to- one feedback

For some errors in the assignment, I provide one to one formative feedback as shown in the following:

Tutorial record: Formative feedback to students

Subject: New Horizon College English Book I

Students name: Gao Hua Tutor: Chen Liping

Module Title: Composition--- View on Generation Gap

Key point for discussion:

Paragraph Topic Sentences about the composition.

- Generation gap exists in our life
- People have different opinions on the reason why generation gap comes into being.
- Both generations should be responsible for solving the problem.

Agreed target and action:

Write about 150 words composition next week.

Additional Staff Comments:

Grasp the hints of the composition.

Staff Signature: Chen Liping **Student Signature**: Gao Hua

Date: 25/10/2007

Formative feedback of one to one tutorials is to encourage the student with their work and provide agreed targets and actions. Askew and Lodge(2000) identify three accounts of feedback, the dominant where the teacher help the student to learn, the constructivist view to connect old and new experiences where teacher and learner can make a dialogue , the feedback is more descriptive. The discussions between the teacher and the students are constructivist in the approach, reflecting back on previous sessions and connecting the old and new experiences.

3.2 Useful feedback: A marks system, a correction code or written comments

In my teaching I use a marks system to define the grading categories, such as A (A+, A, A_), B (B+, B , B_), C and D for students homework, dictation and translation.

For written compositions, I usually make a correction code on the writing that guides and encourage students to think about their mistakes. Here is an example: T = wrong tense, G =wrong grammar,? = I don't understand, ^ = missing words. Sometimes I write some comments that should be a better balance between positive and critical feedback.

For example, I write *""You have written a well-structured and clearly argued essay. Furthermore, you have used a lot of these complex sentences and high-level grammar. Unfortunately, the main problem is that a typical example of Chinglish. You have thought about what you want to say in Chinese and then translate it literally using the 虽然(shui ran)……但是(dan shi)construction. The problem with using this construction is that it cannot be literally translated into English. We only use 'although' in English, not 'although … but'.*

Then the students try to correct themselves. After that I will give them model writing. Marking is time consuming so rapid return of scripts is not always possible. I often find that I correct the same mistakes and writing the same comments many times. Providing rapid, effective feedback to students is important, allowing engagement which makes easy or less difficult learning and improves subsequent performance. Giving students detailed and developmental formative feedback is very useful for our students.

Ramsden (2003) argues that effective comments on students' work represent one of the key characteristics of quality teaching. The students may learn faster, and much more effectively, when they have a clearly sense of how well they are doing and what they might need to do in order to improve.

Here is a comment I give to the students on their composition, who like English very much, but she does not work carefully. I comment:

This is a nice piece of writing which describes your experience well. The only real problems with it are the following four types of minor errors.

— missing words or unnecessary additional words;

— unnatural English ;

— some of the badly expressed English;

— grammatical errors, such as"I am willing to devote my life to this career so I make a decision: to be a good teacher in the not far future." the sentence should be "…so I have made a decision … ".

The feedback helped them to write more effectively, improve the structure of their composition and increase confidence.

Peer feedback

Learning is conceived as a social practice situated in a specific context where informal learning is more important than formal instruction. Students can often learn more from formal or informal assessment by their peers or themselves (Ramsden, 2003, p.189). It can help to reduce the assessment tasks of staff, and make a valuable contribution to their learning.

For some exercises in the textbook, I ask the students to offer feedback to each other, from which they can review and improve their learning.

4. Summative Feedback

As for summative feedback, it stresses the result of the teaching at the end of the programme or a unit when it is completed. It is just as Sadler (1998) said: "Summative contrasts with formative assessment in that it is concerned with summing up or summarizing the achievement status of a student, and is geared towards reporting at the end of a course of study especially for purposes of certification. It is essentially passive and do not normally have immediate impact on learning…."

It is to see how well students have learned what they were supposed to have learned. The grade is final. The final grade is often the sum of separate ratings. It is helpful to give students feedback on how well they are doing on component aspects of a course. For instance, in the middle examination, the student got 85 marks, namely, he has learned the content before the mid-exam well. He masters the main points of these parts.

The mid-term and the final exams

The school gives these exams. The summative feedback usually includes several parts:

	Percentage of final
Mid-exam 2 hours	20%
Final 2-hour exam	50%
Spoken English exam	20%
Homework	10%

The result of the final summative feedback is the most important feedback that students get. Summative feedback provided by me is too limited, and I think it is important to be positive, even when the grade is low I want try to balance the other parts to encourage the students if the students work very hard.

I hope I can find out a better way to give a feedback that can ensure our students would benefit from it.

5. Some thoughts on feedback

Feedback is a social process that may be interpreted in different ways. Some students may view oral comments as feedback, but some students may consider this form of feedback __written comments. I made a question to do a survey, which asked students to identify barriers to effective feedback, revealed feedback that they lack of feedback or lack of follow-up was a key problem. For example:

1) Few comments on the feedback are given. Feedback seems like a means of giving a grade rather than helping me to learn.

2) Lack of follow- up guidelines to correct mistakes made.

3) I am interested in my mark and grade only. I use it to see how well I've done, especially compared to others.

I give them some detailed comments on some of the compositions, but I have not enough time to provide more detailed feedback on most of assignments for such large class sizes. Students complained they rarely received any feedback on examinations other than grade. Maybe I thought it was the institutional phenomenon, the university wants to keep the examination paper. Although students want to learn from feedback, they often found this difficult. Anyway, teachers who provide feedback should focus on formative feedback and link to deep learning and make reflection and independent learners increased emphasis on feedback.

6. Summary

The teacher should provide constructive feedback, which is positive and gives some powerful piece of advice comprising not just commentary about what has been done, but suggestions for what can be done next. An understanding feedback can lead to the design of opportunities for students to make mistakes and advance their understanding through making these mistakes.

The formative feedbacks that I provide are sometimes limited, as an example , just comments for composition is not clear enough for students to understand. I feel that is strength, which I have written some comments; I encourage the students by providing positive comments or constructive criticism. Nevertheless, it took me much time to assess the composition and write feedback because my experience in higher education is not rich. So I should give more detail and clear feedback to them. I will try to printed feedback for students to consult it later. I will use e-mail feedback for them to read again later, even file it.

The summative feedback is usually a form of scores; the students are only interested in the mark. I think I should try to give students detailed and developmental feedback to let the students evaluate and examine themselves correctly and timely, which can stimulate their learning interest. The proper feedback can give students the confidence and encouragement to carry out their further learning. I want to find some more kinds of feedback the students like. I want to generalize some practical feedback to students with specifying the relevant purposes encourage the students' deep approaches to learning.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Kate Chopin's View on Death and Freedom in *The Story of an Hour*

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This research is supported by the Education Department of Jiangsu Province, China from 2008 to 2010, among the Directing Projects on Philosophy and Social Sciences in Universities of Jiangsu Province, whose code is 08SJD7500021.

Abstract

The Story of an Hour, written by the American woman writer, Kate Chopin (1851-1904) fully shows us the tremendous conflict between life and death among those women who had the more self-awareness, the less social living space according to the established social norms 100 years ago in a dramatic way. The heroine's strong desire for freedom and sudden death remind us of the philosophical thought on life and death of Zhuangzi, ancient Chinese thinker and Martin Heideggar, which deconstruct and transcend the conflict between them.

Keywords: Kate Chopin, self-awareness, death, freedom, *The Story of an Hour*

In *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster (1974, p. 57) says, "The main facts in human life are five: birth, food, sleep, love and death" and "birth and death" are "the two strangest", for "death is coming even as birth has come, but, similarly, we do not know what it is like. Our final experience, like our first, is conjectural. We move between two darknesses". So it's no wonder that many novelists often take birth and death as the themes of their novels. It is also reflected in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*.

On April 19, 1894, Kate Chopin wrote "The Story of an Hour," a truly remarkable tale about a subdued wife's vision of intending to live only for herself. Louise Mallard, who suffers from heart trouble, is gently told the news of her husband's death in a railway-accident. She "wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment"; then, "when the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone." As she sat looking as the spring life outside her window, her young face, "whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength," showed that something was coming to her which she tried in vain to hold back:

When she abandoned herself, a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!"…She did not stop to ask if it were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial…

She saw…a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory…But Mr. Mallard had not been involved in the accident at all, and his unannounced return an hour later proved fatal to his wife:

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease---of joy that kills (Seyersted, 1980, pp. 57-58).

Louise Mallard was among that kind of women who were different from the traditional ones such as her sister. Facing the unexpectedly bad news, she was of course sad, however, at the same time she felt free, body and soul free. Her sister, Josephine, reminded us of her conventional thought that women should attach themselves to their husbands. She told Mrs. Mallard the shocking news in broken sentences, veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Apparently, she would thought Mrs. Mallard could not bear the sadness when her sister closed herself in the room. In fact, Mrs. Mallard was drinking in the very elixir of life through that open window though she had blocked the door.

This astonishing story strongly indicates that how deeply Mrs. Mallard desired her own freedom, but there was a conflict between her life and death. She had her own contemplation about life such as love, marriage and freedom. But it was not an appropriate thing over hundred years ago for a lady to have her own ideas against the established ones. The story suggests us that Mrs. Mallard could live well if she had been a traditional lady, but she was not. On hearing the news, she was not alone with her sister and her husband's friend, Richard, but she was lonely. In real life, at that time, the social living space was large, but for Mrs. Mallard so small. No one could share her thoughts which were free. Therefore, she shut the door shedding those who disturbed her thinking even if they were her sister and her husband's friend, Richards.

"It is certain that 'Death' is coming", since the 'dying' of others is something that one experiences daily. Death is an undeniable 'fact of experience" (Heidegger, 1999, p. 301). However, the thing seems a little different to Mrs. Mallard. It

does not mean she would not die; anyway she had her own path "towards-death". Simone de Beauvoir has emphasized that she does not need to justify her existence as a wife and mother and that she can largely leave the responsibility for her fate to the man (Beauvoir, 1961, p. 13). Indeed the moment Mrs. Mallard feels it more important to be an individual than to be a woman (or at least a mother-woman), but she is in deep water. Unassisted, she has to create her own role and status and define her aims; she must fight society's opposition as well as her own feeling of insecurity and guilt, and—more than a man—she suffers and assumes sole responsibility for her life, which then depends on her own efforts; freedom becomes something of a negative condition and she herself is indeed a solitary soul.

Looking into Mrs. Mallard's psychological state, we could find that the emotional change must be described as the development of an increasingly resistant barrier between the real external world and that world which is most authentic in her experience—the inner world of her fantasies. Though in her deep heart there is an ardent longing for freedom and for female self-assertion, and beneath her reserve lies a strain of romanticism and rebelliousness, she has no chance to release from what she evidently felt as repression or frustration, thereby freeing forces that had lain dormant in her. Maybe it is such reasons that cause her heart trouble. Only when she was told the news of her husband's sudden death did she breathe the free and fresh air:

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering. (Chopin, 1894)

Edmund Wilson discerningly points to "The Story of an Hour" as an example of the many unsatisfactory marriages in Kate Chopin's fiction (Seyersted189). Clearly, Mrs. Mallard, like Edna Pontellier in Chopin's *The Awakening*, leads a "dual life—that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions" since her social role conflicts with her true identity (Chopin 1969, p. 18).

During the course of her fancy running riot along those days ahead of her, Mrs. Mallard is gradually standing aloof from the social life and the people around her such as her husband, her sister, and her husband's friend, Richards. Perhaps she can derive some comfort from them, yet it is far from enough. Kate Chopin's view of life is to a large extent independent of such important currents of thought as idealism, socio-economic determinism, and even religion. Her attitude illustrated by Mrs. Mallard comes close to that of existentialism. She seems to say that Mrs. Mallard has a real existence only when she follows her own laws, and through conscious choice, becomes her own creation with an autonomous self. But while such a developmental freedom may strengthen the self, it is accompanied by a growing sense of isolation and aloneness, and even anguish. In this view, the conflict between Mrs. Mallard's life and death becomes so irreconcilable that she finally dies of heart disease when she is told that she will see her husband come back home alive instead of being dead in the railroad disaster.

Here Mrs. Mallard's passing away deconstructs the conflict between her life and death. It's difficult for us to agree with the doctors' view that it is joy that kills her. On the contrary, we are liable to consider that her death is caused by the great shock and anguish when she learns that her husband is still alive.

Edward W. Said in his "Traveling Theories" says:

Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel—from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another. Cultural and intellectual life are usually nourished and often sustained by this circulation of ideas, and whether it takes the form of acknowledged or unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation, the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity (Said, 1984, p. 226).

Thus when we review what Chopin has done in *The Story of an Hour*, we cannot help wondering that there are the others who have the similar ideas to her and what ideas and theories have influenced her. Kate Chopin must be familiar with the transcendentalist precursor Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), who emphasizes the importance of individual freedom and "that Unity" (Emerson, 1990, p. 155). In her The Awakening, she lets the heroine, Edna learn something from Emerson's works:

Then Edna sat in the library after dinner and read Emerson until she grew sleepy. She realized that she had neglected her reading studies, and determined to start anew upon a course of improving studies, now that her time was completely her own to do with as she liked" (Chopin, 1969, p. 96).

In his famous speech, "Liberty or Death" (1775), Patrick Henry (1736-1799) says, "I know not what course others may

take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!" Similarly, Zhuang Zi (B.C369~B.C.286?), an important representative of the Taoist school of thought in Chinese history, is very famous for his thought on freedom. He uses the story form to evoke the reader a philosophical response. Comparisons and parallels of Chopin's ideas on spiritual and physical freedom with Zhuang Zi's philosophy can reveal the universality of ideals of truth and morality encompassed by philosophical thought.

All his life Zhuang Zi lived in straitened circumstances and sometimes had to earn his rice by making straw sandals or even to borrow from others. But he was not at all interested in an official position or offering his service to any ruler. There was a king that went by with the name of Wei Wang in the State of Chu. When he was told that Zhuang Zi was very learned and talented, he sent an emissary to the latter, inviting him to become his prime minister with a huge salary. Zhuang Zi was adamant in declining the offer, and would rather be an orphaned piglet, saying, "I would rather play in a muddy ditch and be happy than be fettered by the state" (Yao-yu, 1991, p. 79). That means he would prefer never to have anything to do with the official world and hope for spiritual contentment only. Thus his spirit is free and he lives in perfect unity with himself and with nature, liberated from all moral, social, or political concerns, all metaphysical uneasiness, all concern for effectiveness, all internal or external conflict, and all wants and desires even though his body leads a dirty and miserable life.

In the same way, at the end of "The Story of an Hour", Mrs. Mallard seems to realize it's impossible for her to keep both her spirit and body free in the traditional society. After the sudden death, Mrs. Mallard gains the eternal spiritual freedom, melting into the universe. To some extent, she is not tragic and has taken fate in her own hands, making the supreme mastery over her destiny. From this point of view, maybe the doctors' diagnosis is right that Mrs. Mallard did die of joy, but the delight is not from the good news that her husband is still alive, but from the death in which she acquires an immortal freedom. All the conventional conflicts are deconstructed, and are not existent for her any longer. In short, the fact that Mrs. Mallard's life suddenly leaves her body is a good illustration of Heideggar's Being-towards-death.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), whom some judge "to be one of the greatest, if not the greatest, twentieth-century philosopher" (Johnson, 2000, p. 1), wants to develop a different way of understanding reality based on the question of being. He attempts to place this understanding of being in the arena of human being or Dasein. Dasein is in all cases you and me, your/my individual being. As Heidegger states Dasein is always already comporting itself towards being as if it knows what being is. Every living being has to be concerned about its being, and being is not a given (only death is). The individual's comportment toward being is very important in continuing being (avoiding death). In examining how we deal with others, Heidegger recognizes an inauthentic mode of being with others in our normal human condition. This is how we usually exist with others when we reflect on how we interact with others. The kind of being we find ourselves living is living the life of someone else, the "they". According to Heidegger, this is an inauthentic life, doing something that is not my own, but somebody else's.

Heidegger acknowledges that the "they" relieves my self of the burden of freedom, of being a self, freedom of choosing a self. For Heidegger, the self is something that must be resolutely chosen by Dasein. The usual state of being for Dasein is the "falling" of Dasein, which is a falling away from authentic being; tranquilized and alienated. In this "falling", Dasein is no longer aware of the need to be a self and is thereby removed or alienated from being a self. In response to this "falling", Dasein often experiences a feeling of anxiety. Anxiety is the mood/mode of attunement in which our inauthentic being is disclosed to us. For Heidegger, anxiety individualizes you. It is the way in which you are not dispersed in the "they".

An essential characteristic of Dasein is being of possibilities. Death is our utmost possibility. It is one of the possibilities of being which only I can be; no one else can do it for me. Death draws me to authenticity, away from "they", forces me to die my own death; and forces me to be authentic. When I am aware of my own death, I am closer to authenticity. Death is the reality, which makes it possible to escape inauthenticity. If I run forward to my own death, it makes me realize how individualized that I am and I am able to regain my own Being. It is easier to live, as everyone else does, less authentic and less anxious. But authentic living towards death is becoming responsible for my own choices.

For as much as this, in "The Story of an Hour", Mrs. Mallard wants to lead an authentic life, doing something that is her own, not somebody else's. She desires to make resolute choices outside the boundaries of the "they", outside of social conditioning and is fully aware of the possibility of what waits for her in the near future. The element of modern existentialism is fused with a Greek tragic sense of the cosmically inevitable as the author, at the very end, gives her heroine a meaning and a dimension which surpass the personal and contemporary boundary.

This is a very interesting and enlightening topic which I will discuss further. Heidegger's views force us into facing our life and death directly: we do not have a position outside of the world from which we can understand the world, "we cannot escape this aspect of our existence. Moreover, we are absorbed in this world" (Johnson 17). In fact, as long as we are alive, we are faced with a variety of possibilities. Even though we are aware that we are mortal, or at least become aware of this the older we become, we continue to think of the future. As Heideggar has pointed out, we are

always ahead of ourselves. He says that in our everyday lives, absorbed as we are in the "they", we flee from death, and we can live our lives with a "freedom towards death" (Johnson, 2000, p. 28).

In literature, there are many protagonists who are granted deaths. Those characters have actualized their idealized images and then die before they are subject to failure and despair. There are many examples such as Flaubert's Emma Bovary (1857), Tolstoy's Anna Karenina (1877), and even Lin Dai-yu in a most famous Chinese writer, Cao Xueqin's *The Story of the Stone* (1763) in Qing Dynasty. Although those authors present their heroines as women struggling toward freedom and self-realization, they usually die in a horrible or agonizing way: Bovary is poisoned by arsenic, Anna is killed by a train, and Dai-yu, maybe we can say, dies of melancholia resulting from the feudal families' and social pressure. All the heroines live far from the nature, and become the victims of society. For example, throughout the novel, Flaubert maintains ironic distance from his protagonist: the reader more often observes than participates in Emma Bovary's awakening. But in "The Story of an Hour", Kate Chopin combines elements from Madame Bovary with a significant shift in focus. The ironic distance of Madame Bovary is replaced by a high degree of narrative sympathy. Written by a woman and focusing strictly upon changes of consciousness in its protagonist, "The Story of an Hour" represents a distilled example of the novel of feminist awakening and self-assertion, and the most essential part is the ending of the novel: Mrs. Mallard seems to die in tragedy, but it can be regarded as a triumph. Chopin grants her a death in which her cravings for freedom are finally fulfilled through her sudden joyful death.

All through her life, Kate Chopin must have been constantly shifting to adjust to the loss of he family members such as her father (in 1855), great-grandmother, brother, grandmother, her husband (in 1883), and her mother, and to her changing place in her personal community. Turning to escapist literature, she tried to forget the world and her grief. In time, she bounced back into life after she gained strength. No wonder, many of her protagonists including Mrs. Mallard seem to be searching for self-understanding in spite of the final death.

In a word, Chopin's philosophical ideas of life and death are clearly reflected in "The Story of Hour", which have transcended the irreconcilable conflict between life and death. They echo the philosophical thought of Zhuangzi, ancient Chinese thinker and Martin Heideggar on them and certainly there is still large space for us to probe. For example, her views also remind us of echofeminism and Chinese Unity of Heaven and Humanity as of ancient times, which I would discuss in another series of papers.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

The Academic English Language Needs of Industrial Design Students in UiTM Kedah, Malaysia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyse the academic English language lacks and needs of Industrial Design students in Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah (UiTM). It highlights the lacks and needs for English for Academic Purposes in helping the students to succeed in the program through the usage of English language. The research tools used were in the form of a questionnaire and interview which later being computed using SPSS into data analysis. Results indicated that the students have problems in acquiring the English language skills. This shows the weaknesses of English Language courses in helping the students to acquire the language skills needed by the faculty. The study concludes that relevant actions should be taken as to ensure the needs of the students are fulfilled and they can perform effectively in the program and future career.

Keywords: Academic English language needs, Needs analysis, Industrial design

1. Introduction

Many institutions of higher learning provide students with ESP, EAP and EOP courses in order to provide them with the exposure to a different kind of English language from the kind they had learned in schools. In UiTM, English language is the medium of instruction. Since English language plays such a vital role, the university thus make English language courses as compulsory subjects to be taken by semester 1 (BEL100), 2 (BEL200), and 3 (BEL250) students and are taught as General English. The analysis of the students' English courses' results of every academic semester indicate a high failure rate that is found to persist, in particular, among the Industrial Design students. This has also contributed to their bad performance in their specialized courses. The English language courses may have not given them what they actually need to ensure their success in the academic context or specialized field. The current English language courses only expose them to the four major skills generally. They face difficulties in coping with these courses as the faculties also require the students to have other relevant skills such as presentation or public speaking skills, report writing or product report skills and other skills that are applicable in their respective programs.

This raises the issue of suitability of the courses as far as the students are concerned since generally there is no specific course that can cater to the demands of a specific program. Therefore it is important to consider the program needs to ensure the students' success in the academic setting. Another issue is whether these courses adequately prepare the students to function according to their specializations.

Khairi Izwan Abdullah et al. (1993) indicate that the progress of ESP courses in institutions of higher learning is due to the fact that it is highly recommended by the universities for the greater specificity that it holds. Seedhouse (1995)

states that needs analysis is rarely carried out in the General English classroom even though it is not possible to specify the needs of General English learners. He further adds that need analysis is very much related to ESP but has been neglected in the General English classroom. This is in line with Hutchinson and Waters as cited in Seedhouse (ibid), who indicate, "what distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need…for the time being, the tradition persists in General English that learners' needs can't be specified and as a result no attempt is usually made to discover learners' true needs". Blue (2006) states that the needs analysis may help us to specify a number of language functions that occur frequently in certain contexts in which art and design students are expected to operate. According to Jordan (1997:23), there are questions that need to be asked when preparing EAP syllabuses. The questions include whose needs are to be analyzed (the students; the sponsor's – institution or country; the specialist department and so on), the specific English requirements that a faculty wants its students to master, the kind of English language skills that are prioritized as more important than others and the qualifications that the English language teachers/lecturers should have.

Therefore, it is pertinent to know the specific English language lacks and needs among the Industrial Design students. This is to make them aware of the required skills to function effectively in their future roles as designers upon graduation. Besides, they also have to function effectively within the program itself since the competition among them is high. Hence, this study attempts to investigate the English language needs of Industrial Design students undertaking the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course in an institution of higher learning, in particular the UiTM Kedah.

The objectives of the study are two-folds which are to identify the academic English language skills that the Industrial Design students lack based on the perceptions of the Industrial Design students, subject-specialists and English language instructors and to identify the academic English language skills needed by the Industrial Design students based on the perceptions of the Industrial Design students, subject-specialists and English language instructors.

2. Method

The design of this study is descriptive non-experimental and it employs the Needs Analysis techniques. Questionnaires were used to run a survey among the Industrial Design students, the Industrial Design instructors, and an interview was conducted to the English language instructors who teach the Industrial Design students. The researchers employed the needs analysis framework by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998:125) because it can be viewed as the most comprehensive needs analysis introduced recently (Figure 1).

2.1 Sampling Design

The sampling of this study consists of 54 respondents: a) 41 Industrial Design students who are in Semesters 4 and 5 and have been exposed to all the three English language courses required by the university. b) 7 Industrial Design instructors (subject-specialists) who teach the upper semester level students and are also academically qualified instructors with more than 10 years of teaching experience. c) 6 Industrial Design English language instructors who teach the Industrial Design students or have had the experience of teaching them and are also academically qualified English language instructors.

2.2 Research Instruments

With the help of subject-specialists, the researchers identified areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills that the students must acquire in order to be competent in their program. The researchers developed two sets of questionnaires adapted and adopted from studies done by Wan Irham Ishak (2002) and Suzana (2005). The two sets are meant for the Industrial Design students (Set A), and the Industrial Design instructors (Set B). Both Set A and Set B are divided into two parts; Part 1 is designed to gain some information about the respondents while Part B is designed to gain information about the four skills (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening) and two language components (Grammar and Vocabulary) which all are later divided based on three criteria which are: i) frequency of specific skills used in the program; ii) ability to perform such skills and iii) the extent to which English courses help them perform the skills effectively. To the English language instructors, the researchers conducted an interview to elicit their perceptions on the students' general language ability and also the suitability of the English language courses offered to the Industrial Design students.

2.3 Research Design

The respondents were asked to rank from 'Not Important' to 'Very Important' for the importance of each general language skill/component, from 'Never' to 'Always' for the frequent use of specific skills, and from 'Not At All' to 'A Lot' for the extent the English courses help to perform the skills. For ease of quantification on these two aspects, the researchers used percentage. The four-point Likert–type scale was used to construct the questionnaires on general language ability and the ability to perform the specific skills (from 'Bad' to 'Very Good'). The high values (3 or 4 on a 1 to 4 Likert scale) can be interpreted as having high performance/ability and low values (1 or 2) as having low performance/ability. To quantify the researchers used the statistical procedure mean in order to get the average score for each specific skill.

2.4 Data Analysis

The responses from the questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12.0. The statistical procedures used were the descriptive statistics – mean and percentage.

3. Results

3.1 The Students' Views on Their Language Lacks and Needs

3.1.1 Students' perceptions on the importance of each general language skill/component and their own general language ability

Majority of the students rated Speaking Skill (75.6%) as the most important skill to be acquired by them, followed by Grammar (53.7%), Vocabulary (48.8%), Listening (43.9%), Writing (39.0%), and Reading (34.1%).

In evaluating their own ability in regards to each skill, the students perceived themselves to be rather good in Reading with the mean score of (M = 3.00), followed by Listening (M = 2.71) which can be considered as above average and the rest of the skills (Speaking (M = 2.49), Writing (M = 2.46), Vocabulary (M = 2.41), Grammar (M = 2.24)) as just average.

3.1.2 Students' perceptions on the frequent use of the specific reading skills required in their program, ability to perform the skills and the extent the English courses help them to perform the skills.

Based on the questionnaire, the students ranked the frequent use of the specific reading skills required in their program as follows (from 'Always' to 'Never'): Posters, Technical Reports, Company Brochures/Pamphlets, Management Reports, Information Booklets, General interest articles, MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), User Manuals, Sales-related materials, Official Notices, Formal Business Emails (34.1%), Business letters, Specialist Articles (Table 1).

By using the descriptive statistic mean, the researchers tabulated the students' perceptions on their ability to perform the specific reading skills. The results reveal that the highest scores are just above average for such skills, Posters M = 2.98, Company Brochures/Pamphlets M = 2.83, Official Notices M = 2.98, Technical Reports M = 2.76, Information Booklets M = 2.71, User Manuals M = 2.71, and General Interest Articles M = 2.68. The lowest ability is in Business Letter (M = 2.39) (Table 1).

As for the extent the English courses help the students to perform the skills, the results is as follows (from 'A Lot' to 'Not At All'): Information Booklets, Posters, Company Brochures/Pamphlets, Specialist Articles, General Interest Articles, User Manuals, MOU, Technical Reports, Business Letters, Official Notices, Management Reports, Sales-Related Materials, and Formal Business Emails (Table 1).

3.1.3 Students' perceptions on the frequent use of specific writing skills required in their program, ability to perform the skills and the extent the English courses help them to perform the skills.

The students' perceptions on the frequent use of the specific writing skills required in their program were ranked as follows (from 'Always' to 'Never'): Posters, Technical Reports, Management Reports, Information Booklets, Company Brochures/Pamphlets, User Manuals, Sales-Related Materials, Official Notices, General Interest Articles, Specialist Articles, Business Letters, and Formal Business Emails. (Table 2).

Regarding the students' perceptions on the ability to perform the skills, the results reveal that there are only three specific skills which recorded to have mean scores above average which are Posters M = 2.78 , Technical Reports M = 2.63, and Information Booklets M = 2.56. The skill with the lowest ability is User Manuals (M = 2.22) (Table 2).

To what extent the English courses help the students to perform the skills, the students ranked the specific skills according to 'A Lot' to 'Not At All': General Interest Articles, Management Reports, Posters, Company Brochures/Pamphlets, Technical Reports, Specialist Articles, Information Booklets, Business Letters, Official Notices, Formal Business Emails, Sales-Related Materials, and User Manuals (Table 2).

3.1.4 Students' perceptions on the frequent use of specific Oral Communication Skills required in their program, ability to perform the skills and the extent the English courses help them to perform the skills.

The findings show that the most frequently used Oral Communication skills are (ranked from 'Always' to 'Never': Presentation And Public Speaking Skill, Attending Job Interview, Responding Appropriately To Questions, Expressing/Discussing Ideas/Information With Clarity And Organization, Explaining Information/Ideas/Opinions, Facilitating Group/Meetings/Discussions, Communicating With The Public Individually, Gathering And Probing For Information, Socializing, Counseling/Guiding/Advising Others On Options/Information/Issues, Communicating With The Public In Groups, Making Official Phone Calls, Using Diplomacy And Politeness, Corresponding With Business Partners, and Negotiating Effectively (Table 3).

The results on the ability to perform the skills reveal that the highest mean score is for Gathering and Probing For

Information with the mean score of $M = 3.07$, and the other four specific skills with the mean scores above average which are Presentation and Public Speaking Skill $M = 2.63$, Communicating With The Public In Groups $M = 2.61$, Socializing $M = 2.59$, Attending Job Interview $M = 2.54$. The skills with the lowest ability are Making Official Phone Calls and Counseling/Guiding/Advising Others On Options/Information/Issues, each with the mean score of $M = 2.20$ (Table 3).

The extent the English courses help the students to perform the skills is ranked as follows (from 'A Lot' to 'Not At All'): Presentation And Public Speaking Skill, Responding Appropriately To Questions, Expressing/Discussing Ideas/Information With Clarity And Organization, Communicating With The Public In Groups, Facilitating Group/Meetings/Discussions, Explaining Information/Ideas/Opinions, Gathering And Probing For Information, Attending Job Interview, Communicating With The Public Individually, Socializing, Counseling/Guiding/Advising Others On Options/Information/Issues, Making Official Phone Calls, Using Diplomacy And Politeness, Negotiating Effectively, and Corresponding With Business Partners (Table 3).

3.2 The Subject-specialists' Views on the Students' Language Lacks and Needs

3.2.1 Subject-specialists' perceptions on their students' general language skills and ability

From the subject-specialists' point of view, it was discovered that the percentage for Reading is 85.7%; Writing 85.7%; Speaking 85.7%; Listening 71.4%; Grammar 42.9%; Vocabulary 71.4%. Hence, the subject-specialists rated Reading, Writing and Speaking Skill as having equal importance and at the top of the list to be acquired by their students, followed by Vocabulary and Listening and the least, Grammar.

The subject-specialists perceived their students as just below average in Reading ($M = 2.43$), Speaking ($M = 2.29$), Listening ($M = 2.14$), and weak in Vocabulary ($M = 2.00$), Grammar ($M = 1.86$) and Writing ($M = 1.57$).

3.2.2 Subject-specialists' perceptions on the frequent use of the specific Reading Skills required in their program and their students' ability to perform the skills.

The subject-specialists rated five specific Reading Skills as the most frequently used (100%) in their program which are General Interest Articles, Posters, Sales-Related Materials, Official Notices, and User Manuals. This is followed by the next frequently used that are Company Brochures/Pamphlets, Technical Reports, and Business Letters, and then followed by Information Booklets, Specialist Articles, and Management Reports. The least used is MOU (Table 1).

On the ability of the students to perform the skills, the results reveal that the mean scores for all the specific reading skills are mostly average. Only one skill rated as above average which is Information Booklets with the mean score of $M = 2.86$. The subject-specialists are of the opinion that their students are weak on skills like Management Reports and Specialist Articles with the mean, $M = 2.00$ each (Table 1).

3.2.3 Subject-specialists' perceptions on the frequent use of the specific Writing Skills required in their program and their students' ability to perform the skills.

From the specific Writing Skills aspect, the subject-specialists rated three areas as the most frequently used (with 100% score) which are General Interest Articles, Technical Reports and Posters. The next frequently used are Business Letters, and Official Notices, followed by Specialist Articles, Company Brochures/Pamphlets, Management Reports, Sales-Related Materials, Information Booklets, and User Manuals. The least used are MOU, and Formal Business Emails (Table 2).

Regarding their students' ability to perform the skills, the subject-specialists perceived their students as performing below average. The highest mean score is just $M = 2.43$ which is for Posters. The students were also rated to perform badly in Management Reports and Formal Business Emails with the mean, $M = 1.86$ each (Table 2).

3.2.4 Subject-specialists' perceptions on the frequent use of the specific Oral Communication Skills required in their program and their students' ability to perform the skills.

The subject-specialists highlighted two specific Oral Communication Skills as the most frequently applied in their program which are Explaining Information/Ideas/Opinions, and Communicating With The Public In Groups (with the score of 100%). This is followed by Presentation And Public Speaking Skill, Facilitating Group/Meetings/Discussions, and Counseling/Guiding/Advising Others On Options/Information/Issues. Next, Using Diplomacy And Politeness, Negotiating Effectively, Responding Appropriately To Questions, Expressing/Discussing Ideas/Information With Clarity And Organization, Gathering And Probing For Information, Attending Job Interview, and Socializing. The least used are Making Official Phone Calls, and Corresponding with Business Partners (Table 3).

When the students' perceptions on the ability to perform the skills were tabulated, the results revealed that the subject-specialists rated their students as performing below average for all the skills. The highest score recorded is only $M = 2.43$ for the skills of Facilitating Groups and/or Meetings/Discussions, Communicating With The Public In Groups, Making Official Phone Calls, Corresponding With Business Partners, Attending Job Interviews and Socializing (Table 3).

3.3 The English Language Instructors' Views on the Students' Language Lacks and Needs

3.3.1 English Language Instructors' perceptions on their students' general Language Skills

The findings reveal that the English Language Instructors' rated Reading (score = 100%) as the most important skill to be acquired by the students. This is followed by Writing 83.4%; Speaking 83.4%; Vocabulary 83.3%; Listening 83.3%; and Grammar 83.3%.

4. Discussion

Comparatively, the subject-specialists, students and English Language Instructors differ in their view on the importance of each general language skill/component. The students viewed speaking (75.6%), grammar (53.7%) and vocabulary (48.8%) skills in that order of importance. Meanwhile, the subject-specialists and English language instructors perceived reading, writing and speaking skills as the most important skills for students. General Language ability of the students is seen mostly as average by both the students and subject-specialists, even though, the students rated themselves as rather good in Reading. Nevertheless, both groups agreed that Grammar is the weakest component.

There seem to be differences in their views on the specific reading skills used in the program. The students stated that the most frequently used are Posters (70.7%) and Technical Reports (68.3%). While the least used specific reading skills are Business Letters (29.2%) and Specialist Articles (24.4%). By contrast, the subject-specialists stated that General Interest Articles, Posters, Sales-Related Materials and Official Notices as among the most frequently deal with in the program. They also viewed that MOU, and Formal Business Emails as the least used.

Most students viewed themselves as being competent in reading Posters (M = 2.78) as opposed to Reading Business Letters (M = 2.39). However, the subject-specialists viewed the students to perform better in Information Booklet (M = 2.86) and the least is in Specialist Articles (M = 2.00).

In the specific Writing Skills, most students viewed their performance in writing Posters (M = 2.78) and Technical Reports (M = 2.63) as above average, while subject-specialists viewed the students' performance in writing those as below average. However, they also stated that the students are better at another specific skill which is Poster (M = 2.43), but that is still below average. The students also viewed themselves as performing the worst in writing Sales-Related Materials (M = 2.20) and User Manuals (M = 1.86). However, the subject-specialists rated Formal Business Emails (M = 2.00) and Management Reports (M = 1.86) as the lowest.

In oral communication, both groups also differ in ranking the most frequently performed tasks in the program. The students claimed that Presentation And Public Speaking Skill as the most frequently performed. From the subject-specialists' point of view, Explaining Information/Ideas/Opinion and Communicating With The Public In Groups are the most frequently used in the program. However, both agree that Corresponding with Business Partners is one of the least used.

The oral communication ability of the students is assessed both by the students and the subject-specialists. From the findings, both have different opinions. The students stated that they have high abilities in Gathering and Probing For information (M = 3.07). However, to the subject-specialists, none of the Oral Communication Skills was rated above average.

From the findings on the extent the English Language courses help the students to perform the skills, it can be concluded that the courses did expose them to the skills. However, those exposures are not enough to develop their competency in the required skills. Most probably they would not be able to function well in their academic studies and career.

Regarding the English Language Instructors' responses based on the interview, all respondents answered 'No' when asked whether current English courses have prepared the students for the Industrial Design program or studies. In fact, they also suggested a new English course that is relevant to the program in which emphasis should be given to help the students to acquire the specific areas of Reading, Writing and Oral Communication Skills. Collaboration between subject-specialists and English language instructors does not exist so far and this can be a problem to determine and share the problems faced by the students.

The students' ability in communicating using the target language is considered poor and their performance in reading, writing, listening and speaking is average. They stressed that it is also important for the students to acquire good English language proficiency in order to do well in their studies. The specific skills of English language that the students use in the program are speaking, writing and reading.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the three groups of respondents collected based on the questionnaires and interview, have revealed that the lacks and needs of the students can be different and considered inaccurate when compared to the

subject-specialists and the English language instructors. Therefore, it is valid and important to get or rely on more than one perception as to ensure the validity of data and findings before making any conclusion and revealing any results.

The subject-specialists for instance, have given some insights regarding the students' needs of academic language skills. They have indirectly given the idea about what is needed by the program from the students in order to perform successfully and most of the students were seen as still weak in most of the important skills. In addition, the students are also found to lack many of the sub-language skills in the three areas of language skills that are very much required by the program, yet the students did not do well such as: Reading – reading of General Interest Materials, and Sales-Related Materials; Writing – writing of General Interest Materials and Technical; Oral communication – skills of Explaining Information/Ideas/Opinions, and Communicating with the public in groups.

The results expose that the students in fact have some difficulties when performing tasks that are related to their program as relevant language skills are needed for that purpose. They might have claimed that they can perform the skills assigned by the instructors. However, their performance has been commented on by the instructors as needing more improvement. They require more exposure to it or more practice.

The English language instructors meanwhile responded that the current English Language courses also have not contributed much towards enhancing the students' language skills. There are still many other components to cover to make them relevant and to fulfill the requirements of the Industrial Design program. The findings of this study have also suggested some sub-skills of the main language skills that need to be introduced in English Language courses specifically for the Industrial Design students.

The researchers believe that this study has revealed such result due to the lack of interactions between the subject-specialists and the English language instructors. Hence, the subject-specialists should work together with the English language instructors in helping the students to understand the technical and language aspects better. They should also understand the Industrial Design students' strengths and weaknesses. The subject-specialists can help the English language instructors to improve the English language skills among the Industrial Design students by providing them with the input of their students' strengths and weaknesses especially on areas or topics that require more language competencies in order to enable them to perform well in their field.

Besides, the subject-specialists can help the Language faculty to devise a new syllabus to meet the requirements of the Industrial Design faculty. Through this, it is hoped that the Language faculty would be able to produce language courses that would cater to the needs of the Industrial Design students. It is also hoped that this collaboration between the two faculties will help the students to perform better and be more competent in their field.

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Table 1. The results on both the students and subject-specialists' perceptions of frequent use of specific reading skills in their program, ability to perform the skills and the extent the English courses help the students to perform the skills

Reading Skills	Students' Perceptions			Subject-specialists'Perceptions	
	Use(%)	Ability(*M*)	Extent(%)	Use(%)	Ability(*M*)
MOU	43.9	2.56	56.1	57.2	2.29
General interest articles	46.3	2.68	63.4	100	2.43
Specialist articles	24.4	2.46	65.8	71.4	2.00
Formal business emails	34.1	2.44	39.1	57.2	2.29
Company brochures/pamphlets	63.4	2.83	65.9	85.7	2.57
Technical reports	68.3	2.76	56.1	85.7	2.14
Management reports	56.1	2.44	51.3	71.5	2.00
Posters	70.7	2.98	73.2	100	2.57
Business letters	29.2	2.39	53.9	85.7	2.14
Sales-related materials	43.7	2.46	48.8	100	2.14
Official notices	42.5	2.80	51.3	100	2.57
Info. booklets	48.8	2.71	75.6	71.5	2.86
User manuals	43.9	2.71	60.9	100	2.43

Table 2. The results on both the students and subject-specialists' perceptions of frequent use of specific writing skills in their program, ability to perform the skills and the extent the English courses help the students to perform the skills

Writing Skills	Students' Perceptions			Subject-specialists'Perceptions	
	Use(%)	Ability(*M*)	Extent(%)	Use(%)	Ability(*M*)
MOU				57.2	2.00
General interest articles	41.5	2.41	68.3	100	2.00
Specialist articles	39.0	2.24	56.1	71.4	2.00
Formal business emails	24.4	2.27	46.4	57.2	1.86
Company brochures/pamphlets	46.3	2.51	56.1	71.4	2.14
Technical reports	68.3	2.63	56.1	100	2.00
Management reports	56.1	2.37	61.0	71.4	1.86
Posters	70.7	2.78	60.9	100	2.43
Business letters	29.2	2.46	51.3	85.7	2.00
Sales-related materials	43.9	2.20	46.3	71.4	2.00
Official notices	41.5	2.27	51.2	85.7	2.14
Info. booklets	48.8	2.56	53.7	71.4	2.29
User manuals	43.9	2.22	46.3	71.4	2.00

Table 3. The results on both the students and subject-specialists' perceptions of frequent use of specific speaking and listening skills in their program, ability to perform the skills and the extent the English courses help the students to perform the skills

Speaking and Listening Skills	Students' Perceptions			Subject-specialists' Perceptions	
	Use(%)	Ability(*M*)	Extent(%)	Use(%)	Ability(M)
Presentation and public speaking skills	78.1	2.63	80.5	85.7	2.29
Facilitating groups and/or meetings/discussions	53.6	2.51	68.3	85.7	2.43
Explaining info., ideas, opinions	58.5	2.51	65.9	100	2.29
Using diplomacy and politeness	41.4	2.22	48.8	71.5	2.14
Negotiating effectively	29.3	2.22	41.5	71.5	2.14
Responding appropriately to questions	68.3	2.41	75.6	71.5	2.29
Communicating with the public in groups (team work)	46.3	2.61	68.3	100	2.43
Communicating with the public individually	51.2	2.51	60.9	57.2	2.29
Expressing/discussing ideas and info. with clarity and organization	58.6	2.46	68.3	71.5	2.14
Counseling/guiding/advising others on options, info., issues	46.4	2.20	56.1	85.7	2.29
Gathering and probing for information	48.8	3.07	63.4	71.5	2.14
Making official phone calls	41.6	2.20	49.2	42.9	2.43
Corresponding with business partners	39.2	2.44	36.6	42.9	2.43
Attending job interviews	70.8	2.54	61.0	71.5	2.43
Socializing	48.8	2.59	58.5	71.5	2.43

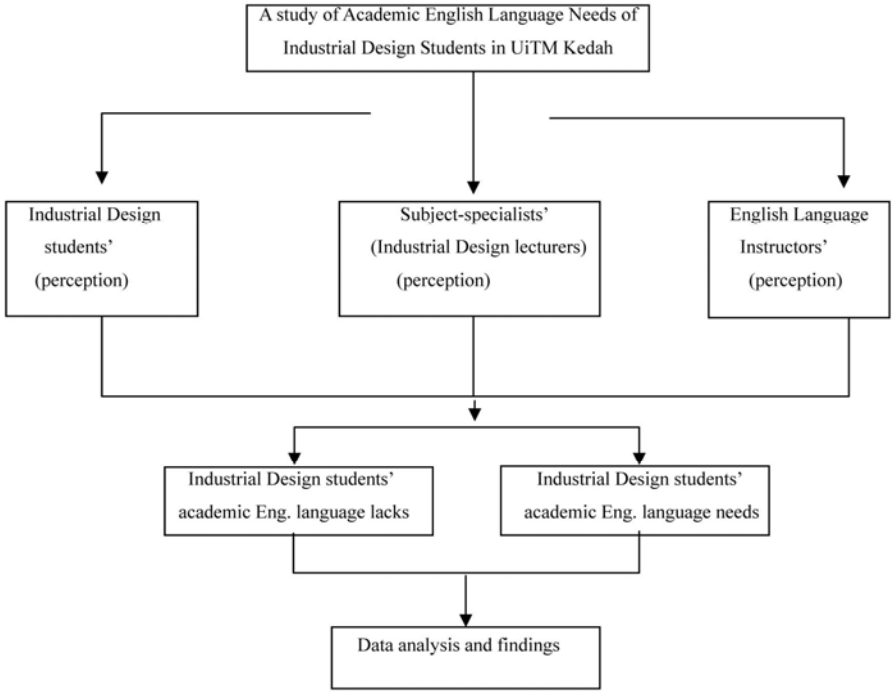

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework - (Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998:125)

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

The Cognitive Nature of Metonymy and Its Implications for English Vocabulary Teaching

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This paper is sponsored by China University of Mining and Technology and the name of the program is "A study of cultivating students' metonymic thinking in EFL teaching".

Abstract

Metonymy is an important means for people to know the world and enrich the language; and it is a way of thinking used widely in people's daily life. This paper illustrates firstly the cognitive nature of metonymy in terms of its definition, classification and contiguity notion. Based on this, the author then studies the meaning extension and lexical conversion of vocabulary from the perspective of metonymy, and concludes that understanding the cognitive nature of metonymy can greatly promote the efficiency of vocabulary teaching and help to expand students' vocabulary amount.

Keywords: Metonymy, Cognitive nature, English vocabulary teaching

1. Introduction

The research of metonymy has a history of more than two thousand years, and its study develops from traditional rhetorical research to modern cognitive research. Rhetoricians and linguists have taken it for granted for a long time that metonymy is a figurative language. It is claimed that metonymy operates on names of things; it involves the substitution of name of one thing for that of another and the two things are somehow associated. The cognitive view of metonymy makes different assumptions from the traditional opinions. Metonymy is believed to be a conceptual phenomenon; it is an important means for people to know the world and enrich the language; and it is a way of thinking used widely in people's daily life. The study of metonymy from the cognitive view is a great help for people to understand the cognitive and conceptual nature of metonymy, and it will shed new light on the English vocabulary teaching.

2. The cognitive nature of metonymy

2.1 The cognitive definition of metonymy

The traditional definitions of metonymy are carried out under the assumption that metonymy is a figurative device to provide some charm and grandeur to the style, and, the researches are all defined to the lexical level yet without treating it as a phenomenon in everyday language and normal modes of thinking. It is believed that most of the basic insights into the tropes of metonymy started from Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, who subsumed metonymy and synecdoche under metaphor (Panther and Radden, 1999, p.1). For him, metonymy is one of the four categories of metaphor (the second category, though he never used the word metonymy explicitly). Since then his study of metonymy has been confined within the study of metaphor for centuries.

The study of metonymy in cognitive linguistics starts with the publication of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's influential book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980, p.37), in which it is claimed that metonymy, like metaphor, is not only a linguistic form but also a powerful cognitive tool for people's conceptualization of the world:" Metonymy allows us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else; metonymic concepts structure not just our language but our thoughts, attitudes, and actions; Metonymic concepts (like THE PART FOR THE WHOLE) are part of the ordinary, everyday way we think and act as well as talk."

Langacker explains metonymy as "a process consists in mentally accessing one conceptual entity via another entity" (1993. p.30). This definition points out the cognitive nature of metonymy.

Blank's definition seems clearer, which considers metonymy as "a linguistic device based on salient conceptual relations within a frame network" (1999, p.174). In this definition, Blank points out that "salient" is an important notion in the view of metonymy.

Later on, Radden and Kovecses define metonymy from a cognitive perspective as: "metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same

idealized cognitive model"(1999, p.21).

All in all, despite the different viewpoints they adopt, most cognitive linguists agree on the fact that, metonymic process consists in mentally accessing one conceptual entity via another entity; metonymy is not merely a figure of speech, but is part of people's everyday way of thinking; and, the function of metonymy is not just to achieve some artistic or aesthetic purpose but rather to better understand concepts. It is an effective cognitive tool for people to conceptualize the world.

2.2 The cognitive classification of metonymy

Classification of metonymy is one of the crucial concerns of research in both traditional rhetoric and cognitive linguistics, as it contributes to understanding the exact nature of metonymy.

Traditional approach to classifying metonymy is to give more or less complex lists of its types, such as PART FOR WHOLE (e.g. Many *hands* make light work.), WHOLE FOR PART (e.g. *Australia* beat *Canada* at cricket.), PLACE FOR INSTITUTION (e.g. The *White House* isn't saying anything.), PRODUCER FOR PRODUCTS (e.g. I like *Shakespeare* most.).

It seems there are no systematic criteria for the classification and it lacks generality, so it is hard for people to understand the real nature of metonymy.

Cognitive linguists take a different view at the classification. One particular appealing proposal is offered by Panther and Thornburg (1999, pp.334-336), who have classified metonymies pragmatically into three groups: referential metonymies, predicational metonymies and illocutionary metonymies (or speech act metonymies).

The first one is the often-heard claim that metonymies are typically used for indirect referring, example like PLACE FOR INSTITUTION helps to identify the intended referent of the organization.

In predicational metonymies, a statement is used to refer to a different statement.

(1) a. She was able to finish her dissertation.

b. She finished her dissertation.

Sentence *a* and *b* are not semantically synonymous, and sometimes it is possible to assert *a* and to deny *b* without contradiction. Yet on many occasions, speakers can use *a* to pragmatically convey the same propositional content as that expressed in *b*. In this sense, the statement *a* can be used to stand for the statement *b*, the only difference being that in the first case the speaker predicts the ability to finish the dissertation of the subject *she*, whereas in the second case the speaker predicts the actuality of finishing it. In pragmatic terms, *b* is a generalized conversational implicature induced by *a*. This predicational metonymy exemplifies the POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY metonymy, which is very common in English language: A potential event (e.g. the ability, possibility, permission, obligation to undertake an action) is metonymically linked to its actual occurrence.

Panther and Thornburg also put forward the concept of illocutionary metonymies wherein one illocutionary act stands for another illocutionary act.

(2) a. I don't know where the bath soap is.

b. Where is the bath soap?

In this case, sentence *a* has the direct illocutionary force of an assertion about what the speaker does not know, but in many contexts it is used with the indirect illocutionary force of a question, that is, *a* may metonymically stand for the question or inquiry *b*.

The significance of Panther and Thornburg's classification lies in the fact that for them metonymy is not restricted to its referring function but is much more pervasive in ordinary language use.

2.3 The contiguity notion of metonymy

The notion of "contiguity" (i.e. nearness or neighborhood) is the key term in the understanding of the definition of metonymy, to which both traditional rhetorician and cognitive linguists agree. However, traditional approaches locate contiguity relationship in the world of reality, whereas cognitive approaches locate them at the conceptual level. Lakoff (1987) accounts for metonymic contiguity within the framework of idealized cognitive models (ICMs); Croft (1993) deals with contiguity relations in terms of encyclopedic knowledge representation within a domain or domain matrix; Blank (1999) and Panther and Thornburg (1999) describe the network of conceptual contiguity by using the notion of frame and scenario respectively.

While all of these are comparable with respect to claiming a cognitive basis, we will adopt Lakoff's (1987) framework of idealized cognitive models (ICMs) as the cognitive mechanism of metonymy as it very well captures the metonymic processes.

The ICMs are the static or dynamic mental representations of typical situations in life and their typical elements. Concepts within ICMs are related by "conceptual contiguity". "An ICM concept is meant to include not only people's encyclopedic knowledge of a particular domain but also the cultural model they are part of" (Radden & Kovecses, 1999, p.20). The content of an ICM depends on people's everyday experience, their world knowledge: beings, things, processes, and actions that generally or ideally occur together are represented in the mind as ICMs. For example, people have *Possession ICM, Production ICM, Control ICM*, etc. ICMs and the network of conceptual relationships give rise to associations, which may be used in metonymic transfer. When a specific ICM is opened or accessed, all concepts that by convention belong to this ICM are simultaneously activated. For example,

(3) A: How did you get to the railway station?

B: I waved down a taxi.

Speaker *B* means to inform listener *A* that " I got to the railway station by hailing a taxi, having it stop and getting into it, and then the driver drove me to the railway station and parked there, then I got out and arrived at the railway station". Obviously, the whole process is so complex that it is hard for the speaker to express it in just a few words. Actually speaker *B* does not provide all these details of the event. It is understandable to say that traveling from one place to another can be regarded as a whole event or more accurately, a *Travel ICM*. This *Travel ICM* contains a series of actions where people find some vehicle to take them to the desired location, get into the vehicle, ride in it to the destination, arrive and get out. And ICM of this series of event includes the following:

Precondition: You have (or have access to) the vehicle.

Embarkation: You get into the vehicle and start it up.

Center: You drive (row, fly, etc.) to your destination.

Finish: You park and get out.

End point: You are at your destination. (Lakoff, 1987, p.78)

In everyday life, it is conventional for people to speak only one part of this ICM, like the Precondition, Embarkation or Center, to evoke the entire series of events that make up the *Travel ICM*. Thus, this metonymic way of thinking and speaking can, to a great extent, quicken the process of pragmatic reasoning in information exchange and therefore promote its efficiency.

From above we can see that ICM serves as a background for understanding of metonymy and, it plays an important role in the human communication with the world.

3. Metonymy and lexical meaning

Metonymy is one of the basic ways of cognition. It is extremely common for people to take one well-understood or easily-perceived aspect of something or some event and use it to stand either for the thing or the event as a whole or for some aspect or part of it. That is, a word referring to one aspect of something may have a relatively extended meaning or may change its lexical class to stand for the whole event, thus metonymy causes meaning extension and lexical conversion.

3.1 Means of meaning extension

Metonymy plays an important role in meaning extension. Take the body parts as the example. Body parts are familiar to people themselves; they are usually used to refer to the actions, functions that are related to the body parts or the whole person. Some references become conventionalized and the body parts change their meaning from bodily organs to the actions or functions. The underlying cognitive principle is CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT. The basic human experience relates to concrete physical objects, which have more salience than abstract object. Body parts make particular concrete objects, and people routinely access various abstract human domains by reference to their body. For example,

(4) Her lovely voice caught my *ear*.

Here, "ear" is metonymically used. The ear is an organ of listening. When we use our ear to listen carefully, we become attentive. In this sentence, ear is very salient and is selected to refer to the abstract function of being attentive.

For more examples,

(5) She is a woman who has a *ready/silver tongue*. (people's way of speaking that charms or persuades people)

(6) There are a lot of *good heads* in the university. (intelligent people)

(7) We need a couple of *strong bodies* for our team. (strong people))

(8) We need some new *blood* in the organization. (people with animating force)

(9) They are taking on new *hands* down at the factory. (people who perform manual labor)

(10) He's got five *mouths* to feed. (people viewed as consumers of food)

(11) He has a good *ear* for music.(people's ability of appreciating music)

In the above examples, different body parts are used to refer to human beings. The speakers tend to guide the hearers to associate one abstract entity with some relevant and concrete characteristics of it. The metonymic linguistic expressions above are not random or arbitrary occurrences, but systematic phenomena. In the case of the metonymy THE PART FOR THE WHOLE, there are many parts that can stand for the whole. Which part the speaker picks out determines which aspect of the whole the speaker is focusing on. The underlying reason why different body parts are picked out is grounded in people's mental and physical experience with the world: different parts function differently.

When the speakers utter the above sentences, they are using *good heads* to stand for "intelligent people", *new hands* for "new labors" and *good ear* for "good hearing" etc. The point is that they are not just using a body part to stand for a whole person, but rather to select a particularly relevant characteristic of the person to stress a specific function, i.e. *the intelligence*, *the laboring ability* and *the hearing ability of a person* respectively.

The above examples account for the reasons and the process for some metonymies involve in meaning extension. As a matter of fact, in our life we have various kinds of metonymy and all of them can lead to semantic shift. Some expressions are so widely used and get conventionalized that people rarely think of their original meanings, or hardly notice their metonymic basis.

3.2 Means of lexical conversion

When metonymy operates at morphological level, it causes lexical conversion. A conversion is a special case of derivational morphology: instead of adding an affix to a stem, the stem takes a zero form, i.e. one that is present, but not perceptible as in a *bank* (noun), which by adding the verb class status to it becomes to *bank*.

In a soccer game, for another example, players handle the ball differently, with foot, head, chest, back and so on. When a player sends the ball into the goal, we can describe the event with any part of the event, for example, the player sees the ball coming, he jumps, he hits the ball with his head, etc. but the exact timing of the ball-to-head contact and the exact force and direction given to the ball by the head are of paramount importance, so the instrument participant "with the head" can stand for the whole event itself, therefore we can describe the event as "The player *headed the ball* into the goal". Here *head* is converted from a noun to a verb to refer to the whole action with the body parts by an INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy.

In light of cognitive linguistic views, one reasonable explanation for why such verbs are readily made and understood is that each conversion process implies a metonymic extension. Thus, in *to bank* the place where the transaction takes place comes to stand for the whole of the transaction. In an example such as to *nail the carpet* the conversion process picks one essential element in the event and names the whole event of fixing the carpet by highlighting the instruments used for it.

More examples,

(12) The librarian *shelved* the books. (put books on the shelves)

(13) The maid *dusted* the table. (remove the dust)

(14) Semis *roared* past me, taking the curves at fifty. (move with a loud sound)

(15) She *grumbled* all the way up the stairs. (complain in a bad-tempered way)

These metonymies are instances of the ACTION ICM. The particular significance of this is that the ACTION ICM and the metonymic relationships occurred in this ICM can account for literally thousands of noun-to-verb conversions. These metonymies apply well beyond noun-to-verb conversions. Because they are deeply entrenched and pervasive, they provide speakers with natural cognitive links that enable them to move from one entity to another, i.e. from the vehicle to the target, unconsciously and without any effort. They are part of the mutual knowledge that speakers share and rely on in creating and understanding this kind of conversion with ease.

4. Implications for English vocabulary learning

The evolution and change of lexical meaning, to a large extent, is considered as the result of exterior factors like historical and social development, however, as for the interior factors, metaphorical and metonymical cognitive models are its basic sources and inner mechanisms.

In terms of meaning extension and lexical conversion, metonymy is of great value to vocabulary teaching. Teachers can illustrate the cognitive nature of metonymy, and guide students to explore the metonymic motivation of a word. This will help students to make clear the internal relationship among different meanings of one word, make reasonable cognitive reasoning, and gradually grasp the language rules. In this way their learning efficiency will be greatly improved and their vocabulary amount will be expanded a lot.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Jane Austen and Imperialism---A Rereading of *Pride and Prejudice*

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to search for the clues related to British domestic exploitation of the peasant labors and overseas colonization of other countries after rereading the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, with an aim to bring out Austen's intimacy with Imperialism. It will offer some insights into a better understanding of provincial world created by Jane Austen.

Keywords: Overseas expansion, Imperialism, Jane Austen

Introduction

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has been long praised as a novel dealing exclusively with love affairs within the provincial world Austen has created. In the past, critics of different schools have studied the novel from various perspectives. Some highly praise the skillful structure of the novel. Some note that the characterization is in the highest degree memorable, while the irony has a radiant shrewdness unmatched elsewhere. There are still some others who write that Austen is a writer with feminist consciousness.

Among different discussions of the novel, few people start their exploration into the novel from Austen's attitudes toward the imperial expansion of her time. Though many scholars have discussed Austen's *Mansfield Park* about her conspiracy with Imperialism, there exists a critical reservation about *Pride and Prejudice* to that effect. In view of the critical inadequacy in the appreciation of *Pride and Prejudice*, this thesis attempts to make a thorough exploration into the imperial concern Austen might have concealed for in the novel.

1. Domestic Exploitation of the Countryside

1.1 The Enclosure Movement

At the beginning of the novel, Mrs. Bennet asks Mr. Bennet to call on their new neighbor —— Mr. Bingley who has bought Netherfield Park and would live there for a long time(Austen, 2003: 1-3). This plot has been for long taken simply as an occasion or a leading cause for the meeting of the four protagonists in the novel.

However, there is another piece of information neglected by past critics either deliberately or unconsciously. The period when Jane Austen had been actively engaged in writing had seen the rapid development of the Industrial Revolution. So far Britain had become the "workshop of the world" and was busily engaged in the colonization of other countries. The Industrial Revolution that had greatly facilitated the development of capitalist economy was initiated and accelerated by the innovation of new machines that in turn had led to mechanization and mass-production. To satisfy the increasing demand of labor force, the rising bourgeoisie class hastened the process of Enclosure Movement and expelled farmers from their farmland. Therefore, the turn of the 18th -19th century had seen the continuity of the Enclosure Movement in which many bourgeoisie representatives went about the countryside doing their business.

1.2 Mr. Darcy and Bingley, Two Bourgeoisie Representatives

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy and Bingley are just two bourgeoisie representatives who have gone to the countryside to make their fortune. At the very beginning of the novel, they are mentioned by Mrs. Long and some other members of the neighborhood as two gentlemen of property. They are said to have bought a house in the Netherfield and are certainly for girls who wanted to find a good husband (Austen, 2003: 1-3). Though their motivations are not clearly expressed in the novel, their buying of the house could be understood as part of the Enclosure Movement to accumulate capitals and recruit labors largely needed in the industrialization in cities. Therefore, the purchase of house constitutes part of the exploitation of the peasant labors from the countryside of Britain in which Imperialism has been widely accepted and promoted.

By deliberately concealing from the reader Darcy's motivation in moving to the countryside, Austen undoubtedly plays a role in advocating Imperialism. She supports the Empire's culture and hates it to be changed by powers outside. Within her characters' conversations, behaviors and thoughts, she always reveals her adoration of the culture, language and tradition of the Empire called "domestic interiors". Then about a decade later, Mary Evans, in her *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel*, argues that "Austen's representation of the domestic includes self-conscious appraisal of

current politics; her domestic interiors are not tranquil enclaves but spaces resonant with political meaning". Austen's description of domesticity demonstrates her discreet usurpation of the early 19th century domestic ideology, which had been called the "wider foreign empire" (Said, 1993: 90). It means that Imperialism has infiltrated into domesticity. Austen's domesticity may blur readers' eyes about the development of female characters, but a careful thinking may reveal the subtle relationship between Austen and Imperialism.

2. Overseas Colonization

2.1 British Overseas Colonization

With the large-scale Enclosure Movement at the end of the 18th century, the old organic rural communities were dissolved and new ones forged under the impulse of industrialization. Meanwhile there occurred a new process of relocating England within a much larger circle of the world map. Living in an era when Britain was busily engaged in its wildest domestic exploitation of the poor and overseas colonization of other countries about the world, Austen is certain to be familiar with the idea of imperial expansion. As is pointed out earlier, she shows in *Pride and Prejudice* a covert interest in domestic exploitation of peasant labors by creating two middle class men who are involved in the Enclosure Movement in the countryside. The same will be true of her interest in overseas expansion carried out by the British Empire. However, past studies about Jane Austen's involvement in Imperialism is confined to her novel *Mansfield Park*, in which Austen has expressed an unmistakable enthusiasm about overseas exploitation and colonization of other countries. For in the novel, Mansfield Park is supported by overseas plantations. To hold and rule Mansfield is to hold and rule an imperial estate.

2.2 The Relationship between Netherfield Park and Imperial Expansion Overseas

Yet much has been reserved about the discussion of Imperialism and colonialism in relation to *Pride and Prejudice*. Such a critical negligence has been deliberately wrought by critics on the pretext that there is no mention of or even reference to the social or historical events related to British territorial expansion in other countries. Instead, *Pride and Prejudice*, just like *Mansfield Park*, is also a novel about how Britain is busily involved in overseas colonization and its impact on domestic life.

If one is familiar with the novel *Mansfield Park*, he will immediately recognize the similarity between Mansfield Park and Netherfield Park while reading the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Apart from offering the four protagonists a place to meet, it also reveals subtly the relationship between the maintenance of the park and the economical profits from overseas colonization and domestic exploitation. It is mentioned in the novel that Mr. Bingley's father became rich through commercial business and has left Bingley an enormous heritage(Austen, 2003: 10). Different from farm business, the commercial business that Bingley's father was engaged in around the turn of the 18th to 19th century would most possibly be business of exploiting the peasant labors moving from countryside to cities or business of preying on the natives in British colonies scattered around the world. Therefore, the money used to support and maintain the park of Netherfield, like that of Mansfield Park, relies on the money gained from domestic exploitation or economic expansion overseas. It is in this sense that the influence of imperial expansion both at home and abroad is at work in *Pride and Prejudice*, though in a masked way.

2.3 Military Involvement in Overseas Expansion

What brings *Pride and Prejudice* closer to the imperial invasion and domination of other countries is its interest explicitly expressed in military troops moving around the country. If one is careful enough, he is sure to notice that Wickham is such a man that his business is intertwined with the Empire's insatiable snatches for treasure overseas.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Wickham is first seen to seduce Darcy's younger sister and try to get more money after he has dissipated his share of money bequeathed to him by Darcy's farther. Then he is seen to deceive Elizabeth that Darcy has been a sly man. Later on, he allures Elizabeth's younger sister to elope with him. Given a second thought, Wickham has been a man whose deeds have much in common with those done by the British Empire to its colonies. For in the colonial period, Britain had been seen to extort treasure from its colonies with the pretension that it was bringing civilization to those colonies.

In fact, Wickham has been an accomplice to the Britain Empire. As is pointed out earlier, Wickham is a military officer in British army moving in and out of the country. Take into consideration the social and historical conditions under which Jane Austen was born and brought up, the reasons for advance or retreat of troops about the country would dawn upon the reader. During Austen's short lifetime, Britain had undergone three wars with America in its protection of its colonies in America. On the other hand, Britain had been in war for 13 years in its competition with French for the domination over the European continent. To support those wars, the military troops had played an indispensable part and Britain had to maintain a considerable amount of soldiers. So the soldiers and officers seen to be moving in and out of the Netherfield Park are those very soldiers engaged in the imperial wars fighting against French and America. For in history there were no other wars being fought during the period when Jane Austen lived. It is in this sense that Mr. Wickham's service is closely linked to the defense of the empire's overseas interests and colonial rivalry with French.

The very account of Mr. Wickham's career seems to reinforce the efforts of imperial dominance whether it is inside or outside the country.

3. Jane Austen's implication of Imperialism

3.1 No Mention of Wars

Professor Butler argues that Austen herself lived in contentious times. Like Wordsworth and Coleridge, she served her literary apprenticeship in the 1790s, the decade of the Terror and the Napoleonic Wars, an era in England of polemic and hysteria. Political partisanship shaped the novel of her youth, in content, form, and style. (Marilyn Butler, 1975)

In *Pride and Prejudice*, there were so many balls and dances that soldiers attended. It seems strange enough there is no explicit mention of adventures or dangers of wars fought overseas with America and French. Usually soldiers are pride of being brave in the battlefields and they would like to tell their experiences whether their stories can be real or just made up. The absence of such kind of experiences shows Austen's complicity with the Empire. She is trying to make her reader to forget the crimes done by the British Empire overseas.

If there are few opportunities to talk about wars and fights at balls, the meeting at Mr. Philip's home shall have encouraged the mention of wars (Austen, 2003: 59). It is a meeting arranged especially for welcoming the soldiers. Unfortunately, officers and others are just playing cards and speak nothing about wars abroad. Though there is a concrete talks depicted between Elizabeth and Mr. Wickham, they just take the weather as their topics and then turned to Mr. Darcy. Usually, we know that when two men meet for the first time, it is inevitable for them to talk about the occupation of each other or incidents and events that have happened both inside and outside the country. But here nothing or even a word related to the wars is mentioned. The deliberate omission of wars or the current events in their daily life offers Jane Austen an opportunity not to criticize the crimes done by the Empire.

Then "the military moved to Brighton" (Austen, 2003: 170) which afterwards is shown to be a coastal city. Since Great Britain is a country of island, the expansion of the Empire needs to take advantage of the sea. It is for sure that the regiment will drive there for a preparation of wars. On the other hand, the youngest of Miss Bennet, as well as other young ladies, feels grievous of the departing soldiers. It is reasonable that they would attribute all the woe-like removing to the wars. However, there is still no word describing wars. Through the association of soldiers with flirtatious young girls, Jane Austen tries to make people forget about bloody scenes to be encountered by the soldiers. On the other hand, Austen seems to suggest that war is like a game between young girls and soldiers. In other words, it is a romantic adventure for soldiers.

3.2 Austen's Complicity with Imperialism

About the provincial life Austen has depicted in *Pride and Prejudice*, Lionel Trilling ever wrote in an essay "Manners, Morals and the Novel" that it is "the buzz of implication" that belongs to each time and each culture, and which is very difficult for those of later times and other cultures to perceive (Trilling, 1987: 22). "The buzz of implication" means the part of a culture made up of half-uttered or unutterable expression of imperial value. They are hinted by small actions, sometimes by the arts of dress or decoration, sometimes by tone, gesture, emphasis or rhythm. Then we find from talks and balls an absence about the wars and other social events. In spite of this silence, Austen could not escape from the accomplice with Imperialism. Besides, in another book discussing the relationship between Imperialism and Western literature, Edward Said also argues that Austen's work is "improbable as art not involved with Empire"(Said, 1993: 55). Although he only selects *Mansfield Park* for such detailed scrutiny, he never acknowledges that *Pride and Prejudice* is immune from the influence of colonial expansion and Imperialism.

Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen tries to cover her interest in the Empire's colonial expansion abroad and the exploitation of workers at home. Such complicity with the Empire is distinctly born out by the silence imposed on people's conversations about current events in their daily life. Skillful Austen may be in concealing her imperial complex, she lets slip anyway a word about the war being fought between Britain and French. In a letter from Elizabeth, Lydia says, "the world is not peace" (Austen, 2003: 287). Lydia writes to Elizabeth mainly because Wickham wants to leave the army and they want Elizabeth and Darcy's help to that effect. Some readers may well believe that Jane Austen is conveying to reader her hatred of war by depicting Wickham's unhappiness in the army. It is nevertheless not the case for in the novel Jane Austen refuses to offer an opportunity for Elizabeth to help Wickham out of the trouble he believes himself to be caught in. What Wickham detest most is his inability to seek further happiness in army where he has to move around the world.

4. Conclusion

Quite contrary to the conventional views that *Pride and Prejudice* only carries a picture of provincial life that Jane Austen knows best, the discussion of domestic exploitation and overseas colonization well shows that *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel about Jane Austen's complicity with the Empire's commitment to imperial expansion. Just like *Mansfield Park*, *Pride and Prejudice* reveals Austen's attitude toward the British Empire, though in a quite different

way. Edward Said believes that the constant reference to the overseas dominions in *Mansfield Park* unfailingly informs the reader of Austen's linkage to the imperial business (Said, 1993). While in *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen strikes for a deliberate aversion of topics about the wars carried out with America and French in competition for colonial dominance, as well as the Enclosure Movement that drove peasants away from their land. It is just such an aversion that reveals how Austen tries to conceal from her reader the crimes done by the British Empire. Therefore, *Pride and Prejudice* becomes a novel that unconsciously delineates Austen's close relationship to the Empire that was still growing.

The discussion of Austen's complicity with the British Empire will offer some insights into a better understanding of the cultural and political phenomena discussed in *Pride and Prejudice*. The movement from cities to the countryside of Mr. Darcy and Bingley is never a coincidence in the construction of the novel. It is just one of the commonest things that Jane Austen has seen in her time. The same is true of the shifting of the military troops about the country. Small may Austen's world seems, inexhaustible implications may be arrived at after a systematical examination about every historical and cultural detail mentioned in the novel. Therefore, much is still needed to be done about the novel if the reader wants to get a better understanding about *Pride and Prejudice*.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Issues in Dynamic Assessment

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Abstract

The focus of the current paper is on dynamic assessment (DA) that has developed as an alternative to static types of assessment, i.e. standardized tests. It is not intended as a replacement of other test types, but as a complement to them. The major concern of the DA approach is that it considers abilities to be "malleable and flexible rather than fixed" (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002, p.1).Lidz (1987) defines dynamic assessment as 'an interaction between an examiner-as-intervener and a learner-as-active participant, which seeks to estimate the degree of modifiability of the learner and the means by which positive changes in cognitive functioning can be induced and maintained. Therefore, the goal of dynamic assessment as a social, interactive, and qualitative enterprise is to measure, intervene, and modify behaviors as well as to document the process of learning. Poehner (2008) argues that DA challenges conventional views on teaching and assessment and states that these should not be considered as separate activities but should instead be fully integrated. This integration occurs when intervention is embedded within the assessment procedure to interpret individuals' abilities and lead them to higher levels of functioning. The unification of assessment and instruction is grounded in Vygotsky's understanding of development and the notion of Zone of Proximal Development. Following Vygotsky's ideas on the use of ZPD in assessment that are based on his conception of ZPD as the place where learning occurs, we call for a change from symptomatic assessment focusing on characteristic behavior of a particular stage in development, a hallmark of psychometric testing, to diagnostic assessment which focuses on understanding and interpreting behaviors through development-referenced dynamic assessment with primary focus on the learners' development .

Keywords: Dynamic assessment (DA), Zone of proximal development (ZPD), Development construct, Interventionist DA, Interactionist DA

1. Introduction

Lantolf and Poehner (2004) refer to DA as a procedure that integrates assessment and instruction into a seamless, unified activity aimed at promoting learner's development through appropriate forms of mediation sensitive to the individual's current abilities. In essence, DA is a procedure for simultaneously assessing and promoting development that takes account of the individual's (or group's) zone of proximal development.(Lantolf and Poehner 2004:50).They argue that in DA important information about a person's abilities can be learned by offering assistance during the assessment itself. In fact, not only can DA provide a different picture of an individual's abilities, it can actually help him or her to develop those abilities by providing finely tuned instruction, or mediation, while engaged in the assessment tasks. DA is based on the theory of development outlined by the famous Russian psychologist, L.S.Vygotsky. While studying the development of children's mental abilities, Vygotsky observed that what a child is able to do independently only represents a partial picture of the child's full ability, because the child often can do more when just a bit of assistance, or mediation, is offered by someone else. According to Vygotsky, what the child is able to do independently represent a view of the child's past development, but what the child is able to achieve with mediation, provides insight into the child's future development. Vygotsky described the difference between what a child can do independently and what the same child can accomplish with mediation, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Interaction in the ZPD, for Vygotsky, was not only a way of predicting a child's future development; it was at the same time a way of promoting that development.

Haywood and Lidz (2007) explain that DA is not a single method of assessment but refers to a wide range of practices that depart from traditional, or non-dynamic, assessments (NDA) by including intervention and learner responsiveness to intervention as essential to understanding learner abilities. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) note that DA interventions may be sandwiched between two NDAs, as in a pre-test – intervention – post-test model, or alternatively

they may co-occur with the administration of the assessment itself, wherein a mediator interacts with the examinee whenever difficulties arise. Lantolf and Poehner (2004) further distinguish between what they term interventionist and interactionist DA, which concerns the quality of mediation offered to learners. In interventionist DA, practitioners devise scripted and standardized sets of prompts, hints, and leading questions, while proponents of interactionist DA advocate an open-ended, dialogic approach to mediation that allows mediators to respond flexibly to learners' changing needs and to pursue unforeseen problems. Outcomes of DA interactions may be reports, profiles, or sets of scores that typically include some or all of the following information: learner independent performance, degree of improvement with mediation, forms of mediation required, responsiveness to mediation, and ability to extend learning to more complex tasks (Poehner 2008). Currently, many approaches to DA are being widely used. They can be distinguished on the basis of the type of mediation made available to learners during the assessment. In some cases, for example, mediation is provided in the form of a series of hints and prompts that have been standardized.

Lantolf & Pohner(2008)highlight the fact that in DA, assessment and instruction are a single activity that seeks to simultaneously diagnose and promote learner's development by offering mediation, a qualitatively different form of support from feedback. Mediation is provided during the assessment procedure and is intended to bring to light the underlying problems and help learners overcome them. Lidz (1991, p. 6.) explains that DA focuses not on what individuals can accomplish on their own but on their "modifiability and on producing suggestions for interventions that appear successful in facilitating improved learner's performance."DA has been criticized on several grounds for not being compatible with the traditional psychometric-based criteria of testing and it is also argued that DA fails to demonstrate, in traditional terms, the reliability, generalizability, and validity of their procedures. As an innovative approach to assessment, interventionists and interactionists need to integrate the traditional testing constructs into their work and outline their own research methods to strike a balance between psychometric-based testing and development-referenced dynamic assessment.

2. Dynamic Assessment and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Lidz and Gindis (2003, p. 100) point out that for Vygotsky, abilities are not innate but are emergent and dynamic. This means that abilities must not be considered stable traits that can be measured; rather, they are the result of an individual's history of social interactions in the world. Through participating in various activities, and through being mediated by those around us, we each come to master our cognitive functions in unique ways.

Following Vygotsky (1998, p. 202), DA seeks to diagnose abilities that are fully matured as well as those that are still in the process of maturing. Vygotsky argued that traditional forms of assessment report on only fully matured functions, the products of development, and consequently reveal little about the process of their formation. Vygotsky defines the ZPD as "*the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers*" (Vygotsky, 1978 p. 86). Vygotsky proposed the use of the ZPD in contrast to symptomatic assessments that describe an individual's abilities but do not explain them. For Vygotsky, psychological assessments usually are merely descriptive; they fail to illuminate developmental processes. However, by making an individual's ZPD the core of the assessment procedure, "we gain the potential for directly studying that which most precisely determines the level of mental maturation that must be completed in the proximal or subsequent period of his age development" (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 165, cited in Minick, 1987, p. 118).

Lantolf and Poehner (2004) describe the perspective of DA by suggesting that dynamic procedures see the future as a bet in favor of everyone. In DA, as called for in Vygotsky's ZPD, assessment and instruction are dialectically integrated as the means to move toward an always emergent (i.e., dynamic) future. Bronnfenbrenner (1977, p. 528) cites an excerpt from a conversation with A. N. Leont'ev, an influential colleague of Vygotsky, in which he noted that "American researchers are constantly seeking to discover how the child came to be what he is; we in the USSR are striving to discover not how the child came to be what he is, but how he can become what he not yet is."

In the context of DA, predictions of future performance are made not on the basis of the individual's current solo performance but on the kinds and amount of mediation required and learners' responsiveness to this mediation. In DA, the examiner–examinee relationship is transformed, with the examiner intervening during the assessment. The "conventional attitude of neutrality" characteristic of NDA "is thus replaced by an atmosphere of teaching and helping" (Sternberg and Grigorenko, 2002, p. 29).

Vygotsky (1998: 201) argued against the general view that independent problem solving was the only valid indication of mental functioning, suggesting instead that this revealed only part of a person's mental ability, his or her actual developmental level. Indeed, "determining the actual level of development not only does not cover the whole picture of development, but very frequently encompasses only an insignificant part of it" (Vygotsky 1998: 200). He insisted that responsiveness to assistance is an indispensable feature for understanding cognitive ability because it provides an insight into the person's future development. That is, what the individual is able to do one day with assistance, s/he is able to do tomorrow alone.

Poehner&Lantolf(2003)state that it is clear from Vygotsky's characterization of the ZPD that to fully assess an individual's development, it is not enough to determine her or his intrapsychological ability, we must also uncover her or his interpsychological capacity. In other words, observing a person's history (i.e., actual level of development) presents only part of the picture; the full picture emerges when we take account of his or her future.Given Vygotsky's appreciation of development in the ZPD, assessment and instruction are inseparable components of the same dialectical activity. As Lantolf and Poehner (2004) put it, assessment and instruction become as tightly conjoined as two sides of the same coin—and there are no one-sided coins.

3. Dynamic Assessment versus Non-Dynamic Assessment (NDA)

Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002, pp. viii–ix) distinguish DA from all other forms of assessment, which, like other DA researchers, they term static assessment. Sternberg and Grigorenko characterize static assessment as follows:The examiner presents items, either one at a time or all at once, and each examinee is asked to respond to these items successively, without feedback or intervention of any kind. At some point in time after the administration of the test is over, each examinee typically receives the only feedback in terms of a report on a score or set of scores. By that time, the examinee is studying for one or more future tests. (p. vii) The authors then describe DA as an approach that takes into account the results of an intervention. In this intervention, the examiner teaches the examinee how to perform better on individual items or on the test as a whole. The final score may be a learning score representing the difference between pretest (before learning) and posttest (after learning) scores, or it may be the score on the posttest considered alone.(ibid.)

NDA conceives of assessment and instruction dualistically and is intended to profile, or even measure, abilities in their current state. DA offers a monistic view of assessment and instruction that focuses on developing abilities through intervention (Lidz, 1991, p. 6). Poehner (2008)states that it should be clear that DA and NDA refer not to assessment instruments but to administration procedures; any assessment can be conducted in a dynamic or non-dynamic fashion. According to Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002: 28–9), DA can be distinguished from NDA in three ways. In terms of assessment goals, NDA focuses on 'products formed as a result of preexisting skills.' At the level of assessment administration, the non-dynamic paradigm does not permit 'feedback from examiner to test-taker regarding quality of performance' during the test procedure. Finally, with regard to the examiner's orientation in NDA, it is important 'to be as neutral and as uninvolved as possible toward the examinee.' Lantolf and Poehner(2004)further elaborate on the differences between DA and NDA stating that in a dynamic approach, the focus is on learners' emergent (i.e., dynamic) abilities. The assessment is inseparable from instruction and the learners are continuously mediated during the procedure because the examiner functions as a mediator who reacts to learner's responsiveness and is more concerned with cognitive transformation than with performance efficiency.

Reuven Feuerstein, a leading DA researcher, charges that testing practitioners are often all too eager to accept learners' present level of functioning as an absolute indicator of their potential future abilities, not taking into account that these abilities can be changed (Feuerstein et al., 1988, p. 83). In line with Vygotsky's perspective of the ZPD, Feuerstein understood the future in a radically different way from how it is seen in NDA. Valsiner (2001) provides a useful means of conceptualizing this difference in his review of three general perspectives on the future that characterize research in developmental psychology. In the first perspective, embraced by proponents of innatist theories of mind, the future is uninteresting because it is assumed that humans are atemporal beings who mature rather than develop. In the second model, which Valsiner calls a past-to-present understanding of the future, researchers acknowledge "The role of the past life history of the organism in leading to its present state of functioning" (p. 86). Development occurs in a lock-step fashion on its way to some fixed end point. According to Valsiner, the future is predicted "post factum – when it already has become present" (Valsiner, 2001, p. 86). The future is assumed to be a smooth continuation or extension of the past, with the learner moving along a given path and not deviating from it. Piaget's theory of cognitive development is an excellent example of this past-to-present model of development.

In the L2 domain, Lantolf and Poehner (2004, p. 52) point out that Krashen's morpheme- order hypothesis also follows past-to-present model of development, with language learners passing through a series of fixed stages en route to a final "mastery" stage. Vygotsky's understanding of the ZPD, however, fits with Valsiner's third conceptualization of the future, a present-to-future model, where development emerges in novel ways that cannot be predicted on the past alone.Given the differences in how NDA and DA construe the future, it seems reasonable to assume that the two approaches would exhibit clear methodological differences in how each concretely implements assessment procedures.

Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) enumerate three important and interrelated methodological differences between NDA and DA. First, NDA focuses on the product of past development while DA foregrounds future development. Put in Vygotsky's terms, NDA taps into already matured abilities but DA promotes functions that are maturing. Another difference between NDA and DA has to do with the relationship between the examiner and the examinee. In NDA examiners are expected to adopt a neutral and disinterested stance as a means of minimizing measurement error (Sternberg & Grigorenko 2002: 29). In DA the examiner-examinee relationship is markedly different in that the

examiner intervenes in the assessment process and the "conventional attitude of neutrality is thus replaced by an atmosphere of teaching and helping" (ibid.). This leads to the final and crucial difference between NDA and DA—the provision of feedback and mediation. In NDA examinees are given sequences of problems to solve or tasks to perform and little or no feedback is provided on the quality of the performance until after the assessment is complete. To do otherwise would introduce a measurement error into the assessment. In DA, a very specific form of feedback is provided—mediated assistance—and this is the crux of the assessment process.

Lantolf and Pohner (2005) contrasted DA and Formative assessment (FA)arguing that DA is not just a special type of FA. It is a pedagogical approach grounded in a specific theory of mind and mental development. FA, on the other hand, is not framed by a developmental theory, but instead is based on teachers' intuitive classroom practice. As such, DA and FA can be differentiated in at least three ways. First, while DA can be carried out formally or informally, it must, by definition, be systematic. It should be remembered that the defining characteristic of DA is the negotiation of mediation aimed at development; in DA, mediation

cannot be offered in a haphazard, hit-or-miss fashion but must be tuned to those abilities that are maturing, and as they mature further as a consequence of mediation, the mediation itself must be continually renegotiated.This is what it means to engage in the activity that is the ZPD.

Leung (2007) highlightes the similarities and differences between DA and assessment for learning (Afl)indicating that in broad educational terms AfL and DA have the following in common:(a) a commitment to improving student learning through assessment activities, (b) use of students' current knowledge and ability as the starting point for assessment, and (c) a belief in teacher intervention through interactive feedback. (Leung.2007,p.267). Poehner and Lantolf (2005) argued that there are two basic irreconcilable differences between AfL and DA. First, DA has a theoretically explicit position on cognitive development that draws on the work of Vygotsky, particularly the concept of ZPD. Much of DA is concerned with working with a person's ZPD to develop his abilities systematically, whereas, it is suggested that AfL does not appear to be grounded in any developmental theory but "instead is based on teachers' intuitive classroom practice" (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005, p. 260).

4. Interactionist and Interventionist DA

Lantolf and Poehner (2004) propose the terms interventionist and interactionist to describe the two general kinds of mediation that DA researchers can make available. Interactionist DA follows Vygotsky's preference for cooperative dialoging. In this approach, assistance emerges from the interaction between the mediator and the learner, and is therefore highly sensitive to the learner's ZPD. Interventionist DA, on the other hand, remains closer to certain forms of static assessment and their concerns over the psychometric properties of their procedures. Interventionist DA uses standardized administration procedures and forms of assistance in order to produce easily quantifiable results that can be used to make comparisons between and within groups, and can be contrasted with other measures and used to make predictions about performance on future tests. Interventionist DA is concerned with quantifying, as an "index of speed of learning" (Brown and Ferrara, 1985, p. 300), the amount of help required for a learner to quickly and efficiently reach a prespecified endpoint.

In contrast, interactionist DA focuses on the development of an individual learner or even a group of learners, regardless of the effort required and without concern for predetermined endpoints.

Interventionist DA procedures can be structured according to what Sternberg and Grigorenko(2002, p. 27) have described as sandwich and cake formats. The sandwich format is much more in line with traditional experimental research designs in which treatment is administered following a pretest (used to establish a baseline measure) and a posttest (used to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment). In this approach to DA, a mediation phase is similarly "sandwiched" between pretest and posttest that are administered in a non-dynamic manner. The performance on the posttest can then be compared to the pretest in order to determine how much improvement an individual made as a result of mediation. Sternberg and Grigorenko also point out that these procedures can be administered in either an individual or group setting, and that in individualized procedures the mediation may also be individualized, while in group procedures the mediation tends to be the same for everyone. The cake format refers to procedures in which mediation is offered during the administration of the assessment, usually whenever problems arise. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002, p. 27) note that the cake format is especially effective in individual administrations where mediators can focus their support on helping learners identify and overcome errors following each assessment task or item. In interventionist approaches to DA, the mediation offered might be in the form of a graded set of standardized hints ranging from implicit to explicit. The mediator then calculates the number and type of hints required by the learner in order to respond appropriately to the particular item. In such a model, variation across learners would necessarily be a function of the number rather than the content of the hints, since these are standardized. In an interactionist approaches to DA, any analysis of variation across learners or for the same learner over time would have to include both the quality and amount of assistance.

Interactionist DA eschews measurement and is interested in qualitative assessment of a person's learning potential. Feuerstein, Rand, and Hoffman (1979) and Feuerstein et al. (1988), for instance, believed that human beings are "open" (i.e., not "fixed") systems and that their abilities can be modified in a variety of ways depending on the instruction and supportive interaction available in the social environment. Reuven Feuerstein , a leading advocate of interactionist DA, argues that traditional conceptualizations of the examiner/examinee roles should be abandoned in favor of a teacher–student relationship in which both are working toward the ultimate success of the student. In this joint enterprise the guidance provided by the teacher cannot be predesigned because it is not possible to know in advance what feedback and support would be required by the student. An interactionist DA approach would first seek to provide the failing individual with the necessary understanding of the problem and the possible ways of solving it. Then, once the individual has developed the ability to solve this task (through mediation work with the teacher), their ability to tackle similar tasks would be assessed. At the heart of Feuerstein's approach is the 'Mediated Learning Experience' (MLE),in which an adult mediator carefully selects, schedules, and repeats as necessary, culturally determined stimuli for presentation to the individual to ensure that "the relations between certain stimuli will be experienced in a certain way" (Feuerstein, Rand, and Rynders, 1988, p. 56.).

Leung (2007)in a remarkable commentary in language assessment quarterly named the two approaches of interventionist and interactionist DA as assessment for teaching and assessment as teaching respectively. He further argues that Interventionist DA tends to involve quantifiable preprogrammed assistance and is oriented toward quantifiable psychometric measurement. In other words, assistance takes the form of standardized interventions that have been devised to measure individuals or groups' capacity to make use of predetermined guidance, feedback, and support with a view to "increasing the predictive validity of the assessment process" (Campione, 1989, p. 158). Interventionist DA can take the sequence of pretest—intervention—posttest. The pre- and posttests can involve the use of "static" instruments such as the Raven Learning Test and conventional IQ tests. The dynamic quality lies in their use in conjunction with intervention.

5. Models of Dynamic Assessment

Interventionist perspectives tend to follow a quantitative approach, and so lend themselves more to a psychometric orientation. Two well known interventionist approaches are Budoff's 'learning potential assessment' and Brown's 'graduated prompt' approach. Using a pretest-intervention-posttest format, Budoff (Budoff 1987, Budoff & Friedman 1964) developed dynamic procedures for administering several widely recognized static tests of mental ability, including the Raven Learning Potential Test, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, and the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale. Budoff argues that so-called general intelligence is trainable because it is influenced by the individual's sociocultural environment.

The research reported by Brown (Brown and Ferrera 1985) extends DA beyond the domain of general intelligence to include specific content areas such as reading and math, arguing for domain-specific ZPDs. Thus, an individual may be able to perform math tasks with very little assistance while at the same time requiring a great deal of help to carry out reading activities. Guthke's Lerntest Approach (Guthke et al., 1986) is noteworthy because it moves DA beyond the realm of intelligence testing, suggesting that individuals do not have a single ZPD for general cognitive development but rather ZPDs specific to various content domains, including language learning.

Minick (1987: 127) points out that for Vygotsky the ZPD is neither a way to assess learning potential (Budoff's interpretation of DA), nor a means of measuring learning efficiency, but "a means of gaining insight into the kinds of psychological processes that the child might be capable of in the next or proximal phase of development and a means of identifying the kinds of instruction, or assistance that will be required if the child is to realize these potentials."

Reuven Feuerstein has produced a robust set of theoretical and empirical studies promoting a qualitative approach to DA that is very much in line with Vygotsky's understanding of the ZPD (Feuerstein, Rand, and Hoffman 1979; Feuerstein, Rand, and Rynders 1988). Feuerstein, Rand and Hoffman (1979) argue that traditional conceptualizations of the examiner/examinee roles should be abandoned in favor of a teacher-student relationship in which both are working toward the ultimate success of the student. They write that "It is through this shift in roles that we find both the examiner and the examinee bowed over the same task, engaged in a common quest for mastery of the material" (p. 102). In this way, they attempt to bring instruction to center stage and to downplay the importance of psychometric measurements.

6. Dynamic Assessment Applications in L2 Context

6.1 Interventionist Approaches to L2 DA

DA has only recently been applied to second language learning situations. Scheneider & Ganschow (1998) relate dynamic assessment to the instruction of students experiencing foreign or second language learning problems. Specifically, they call for teacher/student interaction as a way to teach and assess students' awareness of metalinguistic skills. Guthke and his colleagues conducted a language-based version of the Lerntest. In this procedure items are

presented in a sequence of increasing complexity; learners are provided with immediate implicit or explicit feedback as needed until they are able to respond appropriately to an item (i.e., the cake model), the assumption being that they cannot move to more complex items until they have mastered the principles underlying simpler problems (Guthke 1982: 316).

Kozulin & Garb (2002) report on a small scale study of text comprehension by at-risk EFL adult students in Israel. They assess the students' ability to learn and use reading comprehension strategies (which are the focus of the curriculum) following the test-teach-retest format. Students were given a static test. Then the test was reviewed by teacher and students together focusing on the strategies called forth by each item, process models, and transfer of strategies from one task to the next. A post-test served to assess whether students had benefitted from the mediation. The results indicate that many students scores improved in the post-test, but not all. Kozulin and Garb devised a formula to operationalize student learning potential which differentiates between high and low learning potential students. They note that some students with high and low learning potential obtained the same scores in the pre-test, showing that dynamic assessment adds important information that remains hidden in static testing. It seems then that DA procedures are applicable and effective not only in the assessment of cognitive performance, but in other areas as well, such as the EFL context. The results of the study have a high instructional value in the identification of students in more need of individual instruction and the development of action plans according to individual students' needs.

6.2 Interactionist Approaches to L2 DA

Schneider and Ganschow (2000) speculate on the potential of DA in helping at-risk second and foreign language learners, in particular, those with problems arising from dyslexia. Schneider and Ganschow suggest using DA procedures to help at-risk language learners develop metalinguistic awareness, which they believe will facilitate learning. Antón (2003) reports on the implementation of DA as a placement procedure in a Spanish foreign language program at a North American university. The goal of the assessment was to place students into courses where they would receive instruction more attuned to their ZPD. Students who were able to modify their performance under prompting were considered to be at a more advanced stage of development than students who could not. Therefore, instead of a generic advanced grammar course, students were placed in courses that were more adequately tailored to their needs.

Ableeva (2007) used a dynamic procedure in assessing listening comprehension in university-level L2 learners of French. Through mediation Ableeva was able to uncover the source of comprehension problems that in one case hinged on a single lexical item and in another on cultural knowledge. This revealed that learners' abilities were more developed than one would have surmised from unmediated performance. Erben, Ban, and Summers (2007) report on the consequences of reformulating the ESOL teacher endorsement examination at a large urban university from a traditional to a dynamic version.

7. The Psychometric-based Criticism of DA

DA proponents have often been severely critiqued by those in NDA for failing to demonstrate, in traditional terms, the reliability, generalizability, and validity of their procedures. In contrast, interventionist DA researchers, particularly those working in Guthke's Lerntest approach, have taken the psychometric properties of their procedures more seriously and have begun to integrate traditional testing constructs into their work (e.g., Guthke, 1992).Pohner(2008) argues that DA's incompatibility with more traditional frameworks does not invalidate it as an approach to assessment. Rather, it simply points to the need for DA researchers to outline their own methods. In other words, Vygotsky's (1998) call to understand individuals rather than to measure them requires that new criteria be adopted to report and interpret outcomes and to evaluate the effectiveness of procedures because statistically-derived notions, such as reliability, are not appropriate to the goals of DA. This is because DA privileges development of the individual over the psychometric properties of the test and its administration.

The central role of development in DA is such a departure from NDA that cannot be adequately conveyed by traditional terminology. For example, criterion-referenced assessment describes the success or failure of examinees to meet some predetermined level of knowledge or ability. Norm-referenced assessment, on the other hand, defines an individual's performance in relation to other examinees. In both cases, standardization and lack of interaction are assumed. DA can more appropriately be thought of as development-referenced because its effectiveness depends upon the impact it has on learner's development. Poehner (2008) argues that shifting our understanding of assessment from a criterion-referenced or norm-referenced perspective to a development-referenced perspective prioritize development over psychometric concerns. This is especially true in interactionist DA, where the central concern is how mediation can best be used to help learners at any given moment.

Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002, pp. 30–31) consider DA methodologies as the major obstacle to the flourishing of DA as a dominant paradigm within mainstream research. With some notable exceptions (e.g., Guthke and Beckman, 2000), DA researchers have not made systematic attempts to psychometrically establish the validity and reliability of their

procedures.For interactionist DA researchers, such as Feuerstein, psychometric concerns are not addressed since they eschew standardization in favor of understanding and promoting development of the individual. Interventionist researchers continue to validate their work using traditional methods, although a recurring problem is that existing statistical models, developed for the measurement of fixed traits, are less than adequate for depicting the kinds of dynamic, emergent abilities that are of interest in DA (Embretson and Reise, 2000). An additional, related issue in DA research has to do with replication studies. Again, this criticism is more of a concern for researchers in interventionist DA; proponents of interactionist DA follow a case study approach to research and validate their work on the basis of an accumulation of in-depth studies of individuals or groups of individuals. Those working in interventionist DA, however, follow standardized administration procedures and typically adhere to traditional statistical methods of data analysis and interpretation, and so could certainly carry out replication studies.

7.1 Generalizability

Generalizability concerns the degree to which one can make statements about individuals' performance in non-assessment contexts on the basis of their performance during assessment. Van Lier (2004, p. 5) points out in a critique of traditional experimental research methods, treating context as a set of variables that can simply be added on to the object of study (or removed from it or controlled for in some other way) raises serious questions about what kinds of information count as context, how much it counts, and in what ways. DA, of course, compels us to rethink the relationship between individuals and their environment. In DA, individuals' interactions with others and with cultural artifacts in their environment are understood not as a setting for development to occur but as the source of development. Poehner (2007) states that Feuerstein's model of transcendence is particularly salient in understanding how DA conceptualizes the relationship between performance and context. Every DA sessions are coherent and systematic because they involve mediating learners' development in the ZPD, and continually engaging learners in the ZPD requires change; otherwise, learners would reach a point where they could complete tasks independently and, if not challenged, would cease developing. Transcendence, therefore, emphasizes the need for variable contexts rather than homogeneous ones. Learners are presented with increasingly complex problems, and careful attention is given to their performance, to the mediation they require, and to how they respond to this mediation. The issue is not to generalize to hypothetical contexts but to track learner development from one DA interaction to the next.

Gipps (1994), describing the advantages of classroom-based performance assessments,

has suggested that generalizability is less of a concern in the classroom because assessment is not limited to single occurrences but can involve an accumulation of observations. Poehner (2007), proceeding from a Vygotskian perspective, argues that it is not whether generalizability is relevant to the classroom but rather how this construct is understood. He maintains that generalizing an interpretation of learners' abilities from a single performance makes little sense and that the focus of classroom interactions is connecting each teaching-assessment episode to the next in order to continually work within learners' ZPDs. Within a Vygotskian framework, the classroom enables teachers to simultaneously promote learner development and track their progress over time.

7.2 Reliability

Another criticism of DA concerns test reliability and standardization; presumably, without standardization there can be no reliability (Büchel & Scharnhorst 1993: 103). Traditionally, test reliability derives from a commitment to standardization whereby all sources of potential error should be minimized to ensure that the observed score on a test is as close to the true score as possible. Reliability assumes that what is being measured is more or less stable. Within DA, interventionist researchers, while not viewing traits as stable, have nonetheless attempted to reduce measurement error through reliance on standardized forms of assistance. Interactionist approaches, on the other hand, are more problematic when placed under the psychometrician's lens. As with their interventionist counterparts, interactionist assessors argue that abilities are inherently unstable, but they further argue that to be maximally useful in promoting development, assistance must be tailored to the needs and responsiveness of the individual learners, a requirement which undermines standardization. In Feuerstein's approach, for example,"everything is done in order to undo the predictive value of the initial assessment by modifying functioning through the meditational process" (Feuerstein, Rand, and Rynders 1988: 199). As Lidz (1991: 18) cogently puts it, "the word 'dynamic' implies change and not stability. Items on traditional measures are deliberately selected to maximize stability, not necessarily to provide an accurate reflection of stability or change in the real world."Due to unpredictable and emergent nature of development, the more reliable the procedure, the less effective it is in promoting individual development.

7.3. Validity

The assumption that processes of validating standardized tests can be unproblematically applied to classroom assessments has begun to be questioned on the grounds that traditional testing and classroom assessment these differ in fundamental ways (Moss 2003). The former seeks to isolate abilities, which are conceived as relatively stable, discrete traits that can be sampled and measured. The latter, in contrast, is less interested in observed consistencies in

performance than in helping individuals improve their functioning, and this entails understanding the processes of development.

All assessments, regardless of their purpose, must address the matter of validity as this concerns the appropriateness of decisions based on assessment information. Bachman (2000) has characterized validation as a process of deciding whether what a test measures is really worth counting. Lantolf and Poehner (2007) propose, validating the activity of teaching-assessment requires interpreting its impact on learner development, and just as teaching-assessment in the classroom is ongoing so too must be its validation. Validity, then, can no longer be a concern exclusive to testing specialists but is fundamental to all classroom practitioners. McNamara (2006, pp. 32-33) likens the process of validation in language assessment to a legal proceeding in which an accused individual's guilt or innocence is determined according to the arguments put forth by both the prosecution and defense attorneys, arguments that must take account of all available evidence.Similarly, the function of "empirical validation in language testing is to ensure the defensibility and fairness of interpretations based on test performance…the scrutiny of such procedures will involve both reasoning and examination of the facts" (ibid.). Validation in the psychometric paradigm continues to struggle with whether or not the characterization of individuals' abilities is appropriate while classroom activity is concerned with supporting development. Vygotsky often invoked a medical metaphor relating traditional assessments to a diagnosis that merely restates the problem in scientific language but does not treat the problem (Vygotsky 1998, p. 205).

Validation here is not a matter of argumentation to support generalizations about individuals' underlying abilities because DA is concerned with joint activity intended to move beyond the level of independent performance. The quality of mediator-learner dialoguing is constantly in flux as problems arise and support is negotiated, and so rather than controlling all variables to obtain an accurate measure of where abilities lie at a given point, DA seeks to create conditions for development to take place.Pohner(2008)states that the central argument to establish validity is not whether the assessment produced appropriate measures of the abilities in question but to what degree it supported learner development. Of course, considering 'what worked' is fundamental to classroom practice, but a teaching-assessment dialectic offers the possibility for more focused reflection, in which development remains in the foreground at all times.

In the context of DA, traditional approaches to establishing validity are once again complicated by the assessment's goal of helping learner's to develop, which clearly runs counter to efforts to establish correlations. Lantolf and Poehner (2008) explain that DA practitioners must also address another construct, namely, development. In DA, the future is always emergent and can only be understood in the context of interaction between mediators and learners, whereby collaboration allows one to see where learners might go and how they can be helped along their way. Thus the validity of a DA procedure is best understood as the extent to which it promotes development. This point is in keeping with more recent interpretations of validity, such as Messick's (1988), which emphasizes above all the social consequences of assessment for individuals' lives. Messick compels us to consider the opportunities that are awarded or denied to learners as a result of their assessment performance. In language assessment, researchers have begun to systematically investigate these issues (e.g., Shohamy, 2001). DA represents one response to Messick's concern, as learner development becomes the immediate consequence, and indeed primary goal, of the procedure.

Conclusion

Poehner (2008)argues that dynamic assessment challenges conventional views of assessment and instruction by stating that these should not be dualistically opposed to one another and, further, that they are not even distinct activities. Assessment and instruction can only be complete when they are fully integrated, with mediated interactions simultaneously revealing and promoting learners' abilities. In this way, DA is much more than a methodological innovation. It is a new philosophy of teaching and assessment in which learner development takes center stage. The theoretical motivation behind DA emerges from Vygotsky's theory of the mediated mind. In Vygotskian theory, human mental functioning is always mediated, either externally, as when we interact with others, or internally and our social interactions in the world are the source of our cognitive development. The great power of education, then, is that it presents opportunities to intervene in and guide the development of mental functions by offering learners appropriate forms of mediation .Pohner(2008) proposed that the work of Vygotsky and his colleagues offers a principled approach to integrating teaching and assessment as well as a theoretical framework for reflections on the validity of this activity. Although DA has been severely criticized by traditionalists as failing to address the psychometric concerns, its solid theoretical foundation rooted in Vygotskian perspective in learning and prioritizing the construct of development have made it impervious to traditional challenges. DA researchers and practitioners need to outline their methods by integrating some of psychometric constructs into their framework to make dynamic assessment a tool not just for classifying or categorizing individuals but a pedagogical breakthrough to help individuals move beyond their current capabilities and foster development.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Language Learning Strategies --- The Theoretical Framework and Some Suggestions for Learner Training Practice

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Abstract

Research in the field of second language learning indicates that proper use of language learning strategies leads to the improvement of overall Second Language (L2) or Foreign Language (FL) proficiency as well as specific language skills. This essay firstly attempts to build a theoretical framework of learning strategies theories by clarifying the definitions and categories of learning strategies, discussing the relevant factors influencing strategy choice, while making references to the status quo in China; then it looks at what some learners do that makes them 'good language learners'; finally, some preparatory work is suggested as a start for undertaking learner training in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms.

Keywords: Learning strategy, Strategy choice, Learner training

1. Theoretical framework of learning strategies

1.1 Definitions

In the literature concerning cognitive science in general or language learning in particular, the term 'strategy' has been referred to as a small range of synonyms such as 'technique', 'tactic' and 'skills', by which individual researchers describe their understandings in this particular area in slightly differential ways. Just as Bialystok (1983, cited in Wenden and Rubin 1987:7) states, 'there is little consensus in the literature concerning either the definition or the identification of language learning strategies'. Some more or less overlapping statements are compared as follows.

To begin with, there are some views triggering the discussion about whether language learning strategies are behavioral (observable), mental (unobservable) or both. For example, Oxford (1989，cited in Ellis, 1994: 531) defines the term as 'behaviours or actions', whereas Weinstein and Mayer (1986) argues learning strategies involve both behaviours and thoughts.

Secondly, the disagreement is about the nature of the behaviours, on the presupposition the language learning strategies are behaviours. Stern (1983, cited in Ellis, 1994:531) claims that 'strategy is best reserved for general tendencies or overall characteristics of the approach employed by the language learner, leaving techniques as the term to refer to particular forms of observable learning behavior.' Here Stern describes the nature of strategy as general and overall, while Wenden (1987a: 7) blurs the distinction between these two by referring to 'strategies' as specific actions or techniques, adding that they are not about general approach of learners like reflecting and risk-taking.

The last major dispute deals with learners' awareness of strategy use. Some address this by applying distinct terms, for example, Seliger (1984, cited in Ellis, 1994:531) refers to the abstract cognitive categories of processing information subconsciously or unconsciously as 'strategies', while he defines another term 'tactics' as learners' deliberate respond to the learning circumstances. However, many researchers avoid making clear distinction on the issue of consciousness, and some suggest that learners cope with new information by deploying strategies consciously and these strategies would gradually become subconscious with repeated application and self-adaptation.

Although each of these arguments describes learning strategies from a unique perspective, altogether they may have helped us get a general notion of what are learner strategies:

·Learning strategies are either behavioral thus observable, or mental then not observable.

·Learning strategies could be either general approaches or specific actions or techniques adopted to learn a Target Language (TL).

·Learners are generally aware of what approaches or techniques they have used in language learning, despite some subconscious activities under certain circumstances.

1.2 Typology of learning strategies

According to Rubin (1987: 23), there are three kinds of learner strategies, namely, learning strategies, communication strategies, and social strategies. It is noted that she use 'learner' in the superordinate so as to differ it from the

subordinate. Among the three, the first two are further named as direct strategies, in that they make direct and primary contribution to language learning, by means of obtaining, storing, retrieving and using language, as opposed to the indirect way in which social strategies contribute to language learning. As the first and major category, learning strategies may further break into cognitive and metacognitive strategies. O' Malley (1987) notes that the former normally entail direct manipulation or organization of new information, some typical examples of which are repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note-taking, deducing and inferencing; on the other hand, the latter often include planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning activities. The second category in Rubin's system of typology, communication strategies are often employed when learners participate a conversation, facilitating the on-going of conversation and allowing learners more chances of exposure to L2, such as clarification strategy and avoidance strategy. The last one, social strategies, coappearing with affective strategies in lots of strategy research reports, are applied with a lower frequency in classroom activities, for example, cooperating with peer learners in group work and asking teachers for clarification, due to lack of real life communicative situations and inevitable resort to mother tongue (Carless, 2007).

Although the primary and significant aspects of learner strategies have been covered in Rubin's categorization, some specific strategies owning their importance in L2 learning deserve particular attention. Take mnemonic techniques for instance, they are applied and relied on to some degree in lots of language learning areas. Deployed with other aides in a learning setting, like visual aids and physical responses (Thompson, 1987), memorizing strategies could be particularly effective to some learners. There are other perspectives from which learning strategies are examined, too. Oxford (1990) develops a six-item group of L2 learning behaviors, in which not only affective and social strategy are treated and valued respectively, but cognitive strategy are dealt with in three smaller parts, which are memory-related, general cognitive and compensatory strategy. There is not sufficient evidence to say this way is better than other systematizing approach, or vice versa, but it devotes the insight of seeing learners as persons able of accessing and utilizing comprehensive resources, rather than information processors and at the same time reminds teachers of some potentially enhancable aspects of their learners.

1.3 Factors in strategy choice

Although talking about factors influencing strategy choice may complicate the situation staged by variably defined and systematized learning strategies, it is still necessary to do this, since the learning we are discussing about does not take place in a vacuum or lab, where variables are minimized or in control. Even the strategies employed by classroom learners, whose learning setting does not allow too much operation of social functions and real life situations, are more or less influenced by a range of inner and outer factors.

1.3.1 Learner factors

What learners think about language learning may affect the way they go about doing it. Learners are found by Wenden (1987b, cited in Ellis 1994: 541) to hold at least these two different beliefs about language learning: some believe 'learning' language is very important, as a result, they often resort to cognitive strategies, whereas others regarding 'using' language as significant pay more attention to communicative strategies. In China, an EFL context, where the TL is not 'spoken in the immediate environment' and few chances are available for natural communication (Ringbom, 1980), there are much more learners who take the first attitude towards English learning than those who take the second, which might lead to a tendency in their strategy choice. For example, learners are commonly observed to rely on memorization and rote learning and spend plenty of time doing intensive reading.

Language learning styles, explained as general approaches to language learning, are gaining increasing attention as another essential parameter of L2 strategy choice. Some connection between L2 learning strategies and L2 learners' underlying learning styles are claimed to exist, and these styles may be further associated with certain cultural values. For example, as stated previously, some learners tend to be oriented by visual means and in turn use more listing and grouping strategies, while some prefer learning in an auditory way and are used to listening to tapes and podcasts (Oxford, 2002). On the other hand, research done by Scarcella and Oxford (1992) reveals that learners could overcome their weakness in some learning styles with appropriate strategy training.

Despite some existing contention about the effects of age on the rate, sequence, achievement of L2 learning, it is agreed by many researchers that young children often use simple strategies, while older learners tend to apply more sophisticated strategies (Ellis, 1994:541), which accounts for the fact that adults learn grammar and vocabulary faster and better than children. Nevertheless, this argument does not mean that adult learners do not need strategies in learning grammar and vocabulary at all; on the contrary, adult learners should raise their awareness of using strategies in a more effectively arranged way, which rings the bell to some EFL learners in China, who just blindly invest plenty of time and effort into grammar and vocabulary drills. Although research on aptitude and personality also shed some light on learner strategy choice, more convincing evidence need to be assembled to interpret their links with learning strategy. In addition, as an inevitable factor in language learning, motivation imposes its impact on learner strategies as well, to name just a few, passing exams and living up to parents' expectation. It has been claimed by some researchers that more

motivated learners, no matter in what way, employ learning strategies more frequently than less motivated learners (Oxford 1989).

1.3.2 Situational and social factors

While individual learner differences lead to some variance in strategy use, some situational factors may also be causes. Studies of classroom learners indicate that social strategies are rarely practiced (Chamot et al., 1988), as opposed to cognitive and metacognitive strategies which have been aware of and focused on in the same setting to a larger degree. Besides learning setting, task type is another situational factor to consider. For example, grammar and vocabulary tasks often require the use of self-monitoring, and guessing word meaning needs inductive strategy. It has become increasingly acknowledged that learning strategies are more likely to be improved in appropriate settings and through carefully chosen tasks.

Gender is a factor of social nature. Gu (2002) suggests that female learners generally make better use of most of the learner strategies, particularly those helping enlarging vocabulary size, and present higher overall EFL proficiency than their male counterparts. On the gender issue in language learning, I partially agree with Gu. Recalling my teaching experience, I should say girls in general had done a better job than boys in strategies such as note-taking and advance preparation. However, there are some boys who do show distinguished language ability; moreover, boys as a whole usually demonstrate more flexibility and creativity in language learning. Apparently, more study needs to be done to look into the connection between specific learning strategy and gender (including gender ratio in the classroom, where the behavioral tendency of the overwhelmingly major gender might influence that of the opposite gender), with other parameters like language proficiency and academic subject taken into careful account.

1.3.3 Academic factor

Although not as potent a factor as those described above, academic major might be another source of variety in strategy use for language learning. By means of questionnaires and tests, Gu (2002) finds that arts majors outperform sciences majors in overall proficiency of English, but have a slightly lower level of vocabulary size than the science majors do. Research undertaken by Oxford, Nyiko and Ehrman (1988) indicates that engineering students choose more analytic strategies than humanities students do. Although these results are not sufficient and conclusive to produce any concrete suggestions with for EFL teachers, without further information about other variables in a certain context, it is still reasonable to keep an eye on the potential connections between learner strategies and academic majors or future careers.

1.3.4 Cultural background

Cultural factor is too broad and complex a factor to be dealt with, within which quite a lot of aspects could lead to the variety of strategy use. In my teaching context, it is clearly felt that the strategies deployed by Chinese learners differ considerably from those widely advocated in western EFL literatures. In a classroom setting, for instance, Chinese learners rely more on note-taking strategy and ask teachers more frequently for repetition, paraphrasing, examples and explanation. Also notably, among these learners, introverts resort to taking notes to a larger degree, whereas extroverts are more likely to ask questions. On the contrary, their western peers tend to employ more cooperation strategies, like seeking feedback and pooling resources.

Such tendency of Chinese learners in strategy use is closely related to their cultural identity. In the cultural context of China, diligence in learning has been greatly stressed and highly praised since the emergence of ancient civil examination 'Ke Ju'. In order to obtain a higher mark and step higher on the power ladder, candidates had to learn piles of ancient classics by rote, as a result, many could recite great length of essays, hence the Chinese cheng yu (four-character idiom) 'dao bei ru liu', which literally means that one remembers something so clearly that he can even recite it out in an inverse sequence. Although memorization is not playing an overwhelming part in learning nowadays, mnemonic strategies like note-taking remain one of the most reliable learning techniques in classroom. The other strategy, question for clarification, as Harvey (1985) observes, may be resulted in by the strong emphasis of mistake correction in Chinese academic context.

2. Good language learner

Despite the miscellaneous views about how learning strategies can impact learning outcomes and how they are related to other factors, on evident contrasts between the behaviors of effective learners and those of their less effective counterparts, a list of features shared by 'good language learners' has been widely recognized by L2 researchers and classroom practitioners, as Rubin (1975) suggests, including 'willingly and accurately guess, want to communicate, are uninhibited about mistakes, focus on both structure and meaning, take advantage of all practice opportunities, and monitor their own speech and that of others'.

In the light of Rubin's observation, quite a big number of EFL learners in China are not the so-called 'good language learners', since as Harvey (1985) describes they generally would not like to make inferences about the meaning of words and sentences, pay too little attention to communication skills, feel like to be corrected, and concentrate largely

on grammatical structures. However, millions of EFL learners have learned English in these conventional Chinese ways and a number of them have made outstanding success in English. As regards these contrasts between Eastern and Western behaviours of language learning, probably aware of risking overgeneralization and stereotyping, Harvey (1985) further reviews that Chinese learning methods could not be simply labeled as 'primitive' or 'old-fashioned', and it is ridiculous to assert that these two contrasting ways can not work alongside each other. Therefore, what EFL teaching in China needs are not only western insights but also rational research into classroom learner behaviors and their correlation with other contextual factors so as to inform classroom practice.

Apart from those generally acknowledged attributes of 'good language learner', an argument made by Oxford (2002) about another comparison in strategy use between effective learners and less effective ones reveals the importance of learner training. She states that successful learners are not only aware of what strategies they use, but also skilled at selecting those working together more efficiently and tailoring them to the demands of different language tasks. In contrast, the less effective learners are ill-equipped at employing the strategies in a high-performing manner, although they are reported to be actually not inferior in the awareness of strategy use as well as the number of strategies used. Based on Oxford's findings, it is reasonable to claim that the value of learner training should not stay at the consciousness-raising level.

3. Learner training

Based on the enlightening views displayed above on 'good language learner', the issue of learner training has been foregrounded. As regards this area, quite a number of questions have been asked, hypothesis been tested, results been discussed and implications been drawn by L2 learning researchers and classroom practitioners. In this section, I would just like to give an example of how the novice EFL teacher practitioners like me could set out identifying the strategies used by certain learners and then planning training as to what the learners need.

To begin with, it is necessary to find out about the learners' learning strategies in a particular context. Oxford (2002) lists a group of frequently adopted techniques for eliciting L2 learners' strategies, include classroom observation, formal and informal interviews, learning diaries, open-ended or structured surveys of strategy use frequency, and think-aloud procedures. In fact, it would be more reasonable to combine two or more of them, according to specific objectives, subject features and context factors, as different methods have their respective strengths and weaknesses.

Take my current teaching context for example, the learners are 29 first-year junior college students majoring in mechanics, using textbooks focusing on reading and writing skills. If I would like to check the learners' use of language learning strategies, any one from self-designed think-aloud written report, reading journal, informal interview, classroom observation and survey would be worth trying. To get a general profile of the learners' strategy use frequency as a preliminary step, I can use Chinese translation of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL Version 7.0 for ESL/EFL, Oxford, 1989), a widely employed summative rating scale involving 6 subscales (namely, memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategy) of 50 items on a five-point Likert-scale, the reliability and validity of which have been confirmed by many researchers in cross-cultural contexts. As a supplement to this inventory, a few lines of background information is expected to be supplied by the learners, such as gender, age and the college entrance exam mark (given no other placement test result is available at the moment). Descriptive statistics are then used to analyze the data. As can be seen from the results presented in Table 1, the means for the learners' overall strategy use frequency, regardless of the specific strategy type, are rather similar, that is between 2 and 3, which means less than half of the time, with compensation and metacognitive strategy use happening slightly more frequent than the others.

Insert Table 1 Here

To have a closer look at each high frequency item as well as the low frequency one and analyze the possible causes, the data of each inventory item is also computed and put into Table 2 (see Appendix). Within the scope of the compensation strategies and the metacognitive strategies, the following items have both their mean scores and mode scores above 3 in Table 2: item (24) 'guessing unknown words' meaning', item (29) 'using alternatives to unavailable words', item (32) 'paying attention to people speaking English' and item (33) 'striving to become better English learners'. These findings show that the learners tend to compensate when aware of limited vocabulary, and they are willing and making effort to do better in English learning, which is also embodied in the mode score of item (38) 'reflecting on the progress in learning. Noticeably, they have great interests in speaking English, which makes an interesting contrast to the quite low results of item (35) 'looking for people to talk with in English'. This probably reveals that good oral ability is regarded as important and admiring by the learners, but presumably due to the priority given to reading and writing in classroom, they seldom take the initiatives or seek chances to speak English, which is reflected in item (14). Additionally, some items in other categories are also worth noticing. For instance, using item (39) could mean that affective factor has a significant effect on how they learn; the poor results in item (7) and (43) might be seen as the indicators of the learners' weak awareness of the applying diary and physical acts in English learning.

In spite of these inventory results, further attempts still need to be made to refine or verify them according to specific contexts. For example, O'Malley et al. (1985) carried out classroom observation from the perspectives of source, activity, setting, materials and approach concerning learning strategy, and interviews for both teachers and students to elicit strategies for specific learning tasks, the findings of which informed the training practice and were the basis of refining the training approaches. There are good considerations behind these attempts: firstly, it is now generally recognized that learner strategy use is very unlikely to be discussed thoroughly without taking into consideration the learner differences either individually or in groups (Macaro, 2006) such as age, gender, major and learning experience; Secondly, apart from the variables, the method used in this paper to elicit strategies is not without flaws. The validity of the language learning strategy inventories like SILL has been challenged by some researchers, arguing that the strategies contained may not be simply transferred in different social and cultural environments (LoCastro, 1994), and the means by which the strategies are categorized, however convenient in terms of research and instruction, lacks theoretical support (Skehan, 1991).

On the basis of the inventory results, a list of findings can be summarized as follows:

- The learners use most of the language learning strategies not very frequently or systematically;
- Most of the learners' vocabulary sizes are quite limited and they are more or less aware of this;
- Most of the learners' speaking fluency does not live up to their expectation;
- Most of the learners feel the tension and anxiety during interaction and when making errors.

These findings at least inform the future training practice in three ways: first of all, the learners need to be convinced that to be successful in language learning they need some training sessions of language strategy use; then some combinations of strategies need to be determined for the training with particular emphasis on the strategies used in vocabulary acquisition and listening-speaking tasks; furthermore, adequate chances need to be provided of deploying social/affective strategies. Before strategy training can be conducted, several other issues need to be sorted out, for which different voices are always heard. Regarding the structure of the training content, Ma (2008) makes the point on the basis of his study that metacognitive and affective strategies could be packaged with certain cognitive ones to gain a desirable result due to the facilitative correlation between them, which is certainly one possible sort of training syllabus, which can be customized accordingly. To match with the content, there is usually an organizing style of training to be decided, too. It is recognized by some as a beneficial way to integrate training module into regular class guided with explicit instruction (Oxford, 2002), which received objections by those who are for doing it either separately or implicitly.

Apart from what to deliver in a training session and how to do it, it is necessary for the instructor to think about the means and criteria of assessment before the training. The last note is to get learners psychologically prepared, in other words, to keep them well aware of the strategy training they are undertaking so as to encourage their engagement and active responses (Hedge, 2000: 85). To expand the scope of learner training, Hedge (ibid.) further points out that time outside classroom hours could also be made use of as a continuing phase of classroom training through ICT (Information Communications Technology) in language labs, self-access centres as well as at home.

4. Conclusion

This essay outlines the major aspects of L2 learning strategies, introduces some important insights of L2 learning researchers into surveying, exploring and training L2 learning strategies, and makes association between them in the background of EFL learning and teaching in China. Also a list of suggestions for learner training is made for greenhorns in this field. On the basis of my experience both as a teacher and a learner in investigating and using learning strategies, more research needs to be undertaken to examine the effectiveness of strategy training in a specific area and increase the possibility of EFL learners becoming more responsible for their own learning.

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Table 1. Frequency of language learning strategy use (By category)

Strategy Category	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Memory	29	1.00	3.77	2.2375	.58321
Cognitive	29	1.50	3.28	2.5123	.45299
Compensation	29	1.33	3.83	2.7068	.62306
Metacognitive	29	1.55	4.11	2.7471	.66527
Affective	29	1.33	3.83	2.6149	.62852
Social	29	1.33	3.66	2.4712	.61086

Table 2. Frequency of language learning strategy use (By item)

Strategy Item	N	Min	Max	Mode	Mean	Std. Dev
1.Associating new words to things already learnt	29	1	5	2	2.2413	1.05746
2.Making sentences with new words	29	1	3	2	1.7586	0.57663
3.Memorizing new words as to sounds or images	29	1	5	2	2.2068	1.01345
4.Memorizing new words by visualizing situations	29	1	5	2	2.3103	1.07249
5.Memorizing new words as to rhymes	29	1	4	2	2.3103	1.00368
6.Memorizing new words with flashcards	29	1	5	2	2.5172	1.52645
7.Memorizing new words by doing physical acts	29	1	2	1	1.4827	0.50854
8.Reviewing regularly	29	1	4	3	2.5714	1.03382
9.Memorizing new words as to where they appear	29	1	5	2	2.8275	1.36457
10.Saying or writing new words repeatedly	29	2	5	4	3.7586	0.91242
11.Trying to talk like natives	29	1	4	2	1.8965	0.85960
12.Practicing sounds of English words	29	1	5	2	2.6551	0.97379
13.Using words in varied ways	29	1	4	2	1.9310	0.73615
14.Striking up talks in English	29	1	4	2	1.8620	0.74278
15.Watching English videos	29	1	5	2	2.7241	1.09858
16.Reading English for pleasure	29	1	4	2	2.2068	0.77364
17.Writing letters & reports in English	29	1	4	2	1.7931	0.72601
18.Reading in depth after skimming	29	1	5	2	3.1379	1.27403
19.Looking for similar words in mother tongue	29	1	5	3	2.7241	0.95978
20.Seeking patterns in English	29	1	5	2	2.8275	1.00246
21.Learning words in a morphological way	29	1	5	3	2.7931	1.11417
22.Avoiding word-for- word translation	29	1	5	2	3.0344	1.01709
23.Summarizing the information heard or read	29	1	5	2	1.8275	0.80485
24.Guessing unknown words' meaning	29	1	5	3	3.1379	0.99009
25.Using gestures while conversing	29	1	5	2	2.1379	1.18695
26.Making up new words when needed	29	1	4	3	2.1379	0.99009
27.Looking up each new words met in reading	29	1	5	3	2.8965	1.04692
28.Anticipating during conversation	29	1	4	3	2.3103	0.89056
29.Using alternatives to unavailable words	29	1	5	4	3.6206	1.01467
30.Seeking chances to use English	29	1	5	2	2.4482	1.12078
31.Noticing mistakes so as to improve	29	2	5	2	2.9655	0.90564
32.Paying attention to people speaking English	29	1	5	5	3.8275	1.13606
33.Striving to become better English	29	1	5	3	3.4482	1.32520

learners						
34.Planning to ensure enough time for English	29	1	5	2	2.5517	0.86597
35.Looking for people to talk with in English	29	1	3	1	1.6551	0.66953
36.Reading as much as possible in English	29	1	5	2	2.6551	1.00980
37.Having clear targets for improving English	29	1	4	2	2.2758	0.99629
38.Reflecting on the progress in learning	29	1	5	4	2.8965	1.08050
39.Trying to relax when afraid of using English	29	1	5	4	3.0344	1.23874
40.Trying to speak more though fearing errors	29	1	5	3	2.7586	1.05746
41.Rewarding oneself when doing well	29	1	5	3	2.9655	1.17967
42.Noticing tension in learning or using English	29	1	5	2	2.6896	1.13714
43.Describing feelings about learning in diaries	29	1	4	1	1.7931	1.01345
44.Talking to others about how you feel in learning	29	1	4	2	2.4482	0.98511
45.Asking for slowing down or repetition	29	1	5	4	3.2068	1.08164
46.Asking natives to correct your errors in talking	29	1	4	1	2.5172	1.24271
47.Practicing English with fellow learners	29	1	4	2	2.1379	0.95334
48.Seeking help from natives	29	1	4	2	2.3793	1.04297
49.Asking questions in English	29	1	4	2	2.1379	0.87522
50.Trying to learn about the target cultures	29	1	5	2	2.4482	1.08845

English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

On Translators' Cultrual Frame of Functionist Reference

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Abstract

A deep cognition with translators' cultural frame of functionist reference can help instructors and teachers adjust and extend patterns and schemes of translation and generate the optimal classroom conditions for acquisition of the target language. The author of the paper, in the perspectives of motivational, cognitive and communicative functionist styles, has probed into their respective common patterns that are grounded in the connotation of Chinese culture and examined the implications these three important components have for the would-be translators to work out ways to promote functionist translation.

Keywords: Cultrual frame, Functionist reference, Motivation style, Cognitive style, Communicative style, Translation teaching

Translation, for a long time, has been considered as derivatives, copies, and translators as mechanical devices replacing linguistic codes (equivalents) from one language into another, and the translator's autonomy was always questioned (and is still being questioned) by those who thought of him/her 'as a monkey, with no choice save to make the same grimaces as his master' (Leppihalme, 1997: 19), until recent years when, under the influence of poststructuralism and functionalism, the focus of attention has been shifted to the issue of translator's agency and subjectivity, and the notions of originality and (absolute) equivalence and also author's superiority over translator has been severely questioned. Awareness of complexity of translation process and avoidance of the simplistic view of regarding translation as mere process of transferring words from one text to another will result in realizing the importance of the cultural frame of functionist reference underlying a translation. They argue that behind every one of the translator's selections, as what to add, what to leave out, which words to choose and how to place them, there is a voluntary act that reveals his history and the socio-political milieu that surrounds him; in other words, his own cultural and ideological frame of functionist reference. (Alvarez & Vidal, 1996: 5).

So long, common cultural thinking and behaviour patterns can be identified in China's translation studies, as are evident in students' motivation orientation, cognitive style preference and communication style. To succeed in teaching this particular large group of students specialized in translation, the relevant teachers have to acquire a good understanding of their effect and cognitive domains. Lack of knowledge in this respect tends to bring about disparity in translational expectations, the miscoding between learning syles and instructional styles, and may even cause discomfort, disappointment and fructration both to students and teachers in translation study.

A case in point is functionism, whose advocates claim its theories to be comprehensive and suitable of all types of translation in all situations (Hilliday 1985). On the basis of all transfers among dynamic and functional equivience (Nida 1964), the functionist schematic view is normalized as: Is loyal to his client? Must be visible? Target text oriented, communicative acceptability, psycholinguistic and sociallinguistic and text-linguistic perspectives in one, and building bridge between the intercode and intercultural communication? As we know, translators are those who let their knowledge govern their behaviors. And that knowledge is ideological. It is controled by ideological norms. If you want to become a translator, you must submit to the translator's submissive role, submit to being possessed by what According to Schaffner (1996), 'Functionist approach is a kind of cover term for the research of scholars who argue that the purpose of the TT is the most important criterion in any translation' (p.2). Functionalism is a major shift from 'linguistic equivalence' to 'functional appropriateness'. From the perspective of functionist approaches to translation, translation is viewed as a communicative act. In this view, translation is conceived primarily 'as a process of intercultural communication, whose end product is a text which is capable of functioning appropriately in specific situations and context of use' (Schaffner, 1996: 3).

If we, the teachers of translation studies, can univeil translators' cultural frame of reference embedded in immediate classrooms, it will help translators become more flexible in adjusting and expanding the patterns of functionist transfer and in tailoring our teaching to the needs of the Chinese students. Discontinuities that potentially exist between their cultural absorbed ways of communication and those expected in classroom will be mitigated. Translators' motivation will be enhanced, cognitive competences maximized, and participation in autonomic translation increased.

Nevertheless, the linguistics-oriented approaches to translation studies have failed to address the concept of cultural frame of reference through years of their prevalence, because such approaches are limited to their scientific models for

research and the empirical data they collect, so that 'they remain reluctant to take into account the social values [and ideologies] that enter into translating as well as the study of it' (Venuti, 1998a: 1). The deficiency of old linguistics-based approaches – which 'are mainly descriptive studies focusing on textual forms' (Calzada-Perez, 2003: 8) – in accounting for social values and cultural frame of reference in translation and other aspects of language use resulted in developing a new trend of research called Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) 'whose primary aim is to expose the ideological forces that underlie communicative exchanges [like translating]' (Calzada-Perez, 2003: 2). According to CDA advocates, all language use, including translation, is both cultural and functional, and this means that translation is always a site for cultural encounters. Similarly, Schaffner (2003) claims that all translations are cultural and ideological since 'the choice of a source text and the use to which the subsequent target text is put are determined by the interests, aims, and objectives of social agents' (p. 23), and the very cores of a certain culture and a society.

In Perspective of Motivation Styles

As for the perspective of motivation styles which diversely reveiws on functionist tranfer and equivience, there is a must to center on the two oppositive pairs of frame of reference, ie. The integrative motivation vs. instrumental motivation, intrinsinc motivation vs. extrinsic motivation. The integrative orientation is characterized by the learnor's favorable attitude towards the target language and his/her desire to integrate into the transfer of target language culture, as Hawkes in translating *The Story of The Stone* tended to demosticating on the target culture. The instrumental motivation concerns a more practical value and advantages to be gained through the source language achievement as in the translation of *A Dream of Red Mansions* by Yang Yi-xian and his wife, focused on source language cultural orientation. And the other dimension of motivation discussed in theory and practice of translation is the extent to which translators are intrincally or extrinsically stimulate to succeed in practical translation task. Intrinsic motivation stirs the translators regard translating as a self-rewarding process with endeavours made to build a sense of translating competence and self-determination despite the presence of absence of external rewards with great autonomy. To arouse and sustain the intrinsic interests is the view underlying the notion of intrinsic motivation and to provide opportunities for smoothy and frequent translating practice. While the extrinsic motivation lays greater emphasis on its direct goal for translating behaviours and translating products, such as money, fame, prizes, grades and even positive feedback(Brown 2000). Provision of external incentives may result in a tendency to better performance but a major disadvantage lies in its "addictive nature". Dependence on the extrinsic benefits may increase once tangible stimuli to translate and to make extra efforts, ever to extinguish self-actualization that are offered both in Chinese and Western cultures. The issue of motivation and successful acquisition of a foreign language as English in China is complex. To most Chinese, interwoven with the typical intrinsic drive to take in translation is the culturally acquired extrinsic motivation, which stems from a deep-rooted tradition and sense of family consciousness and family honor. Striving for success to bring credit to the whole family has long been an important belief embedded in Chinese children's minds, an unreserved devotion to the pleasure of their parents in every possible way is central to the family ideal. Through an insight into the existing educatoinal, social, religional, historical and cultural context (inclouding TT, ST, and TR, SR), Chinese translation learners are often found to be extrinsically motivated. So, naturally and accidentally, with limited exposure to the English culture in translating theory and pracitice in and out of class where test-oriented teaching dominates, the goal-directed intrinsic orientation helps more to engage translation learners on learning tasks and maintain that engagement to achieve translating competence for future employment and career as a translator.

In Perspective of Cognitive Styles

Congnitive consideration is another intrinsic factor that equally contributes in a significant way to success in interlinguisic and intercultural translation upon theory and practice. The cognitive domain of translation studies is related to facts, theories, concepts and problem-solving which is a particular way for translators' perference to process information or to approach a translating task and are always specified as following three aspects: major cognitive styles, culturally acquired cognitive styles and general styles preference in the Chinese texts and versions. And focuses on the concrete items of translation, esp. in field independence and field dependence, reflectivity and impulsivity, tolerance and intolerance, visual and auditory, etc. which are implying into the essences of functionist tranfers in English to Chinese or Chinese to English. All the way, cognitive styles are typically studied as the two poles along a continuum; in reality, every translator more likely shows general tendencies towards one style or another. Different styles may be invoked in the same individual translator with the varying source text and target text in learning theory and practice in translation, and become good at handling both ends of a style continuum in special sorts of culture beyond his/her native one. The preconceived notions within translators are culture based and constitute an important predictor of how they would contribute to the dynamics or functional competence of translating(Johnson, 2000).

And there are specific approaches that Chinese translators perceive and process information have been characterized as analytical and transfering mechanism, thinking oriented, authority-oriented and closure-oriented, visual learning(Rao 2001) in translation studies upon foreignization and assimilation. Functionist references is manifested through translators' obsessive concern for precision. They have been taught not to take immediate risk in practical translation

but weigh every consideration before performing the theories and practical strategies in translation. Governed by Confucius' authoritarian principles, the Chinese translators imply high respect for those teaching and passive subordination by those being taught for a long and long time. It is very rare to challenge to both books and teachers with a so-called embodiment of knowledge, wisdom and truth. How to overcome and solve these appears very necessary for the autonomic translators in input and output intercode transfering process. The awareness of the requirements of the functionism certainly expands the possibilities of translation, increases the range of possible translation strategies, and releases the translator from the corset of an enforced – and hence often meaningless – literalness. The translator thus becomes a target-text author freed from the limitations and restrictions imposed by a narrowly defined concept of loyalty to the source text alone.

In Perspective of Communicative Styles

The sociocultural milieu that has an enormous impact on translators' cognitive styles is also held in large measure responsible for the communicative patterns readily observed in China's translators' frame of functionist translating references. Culture, as the contents of a language, exerts an enormous influence on people's perception of the universe, which makes people send and receive messages on different channels and in different networks and conditions people towards on particular mode of communication over another. To know the social and cultural groups from which translators come is a prerequisite for effective instruction in translation study.

Basically, born into the Confucius heritage culture, as the carry-over from Confucianism means that even today China's translators are still conscious of such a "hierarchical role framework" (Li 1999: 5) and the preservation of harmony in most social interaction. Any cultural-specific pattern of a social interaction represent translators the learned ways of communicating within a distinctive culture. In the Chinese source text, the communicative style tends to be moderate, indirect, and context-dependent. Reticence and obedience in the target texts is held in high respect relatively. And in the aspects of functionism, they tend to be less autonomous and more dependent on the authority figures of the circle of China's translation studies and conforming strictedly to rules and criteria of translation.

Concluding Point

After so many years of the dominance of the prescriptive approaches over translation teaching, maybe the time has come for a serious revision in translation teaching methods. Translation teaching should no longer be seen as a set of rules and instructions prescribed by translation teachers to the students as to what strategies will lead to a 'good' or 'correct' translation and what to a 'wrong' and 'incorrect' one. Understanding the importance of decision-making in translation, the translation teachers should try to describe the actual translational decisions made by actual translators under different socio-cultural and functionist frame and settings in real life and real situations of dynamic and functional equivalence, and explain the perlocutionary consequences resulted from adoption of such decisions for the future translators. They should allow the students to select voluntarily between different options they have at hand, reminding them that they will be responsible for the selections they make. It is necessary for translation teachers to make it clear for the students that every translation has its own aim determined by its translator, and that they could freely choose the options that best function their intended goals of translation and fully put it in actual implications of translating theories and pratice.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

Realigning the Focus of Plagiarism Detection using *Plagiarismdetect.com*

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the extent to which plagiarismdetect.com, an internet help/tool to detect plagiarism helps academicians tackle the ever-growing problem of plagiarism. Concerned with term papers, essays and most of the time with full-blown research reports, a tool like plagiarismdetect.com may provide an avenue to ease the burden of detecting plagiarism. As far as plagiarism is concerned, not being computer savvy itself can be a bane when faced with students who appear like wizards in the area of managing information from the internet. Tracking down plagiarists is made easy and free by this site and it may still prove to be the nightmare that is needed to check the unprecedented unethical practices within the academic circle as well as curtail plagiarised work from students. Although some people use other people's material as "seed" for generating ideas and to support their own, the point where material ownership becomes plagiarised material is also another area that a detection tool for plagiarism should be able to handle. Other than this, paraphrasing has always been the solution by lecturers for consistent occurrences of students' plagiarised work. How much of paraphrasing can be considered before it borders on plagiarism? Will plagiarismdetect.com be able to live up to its reputation as a tool to detect and to help students and academicians to turn in original pieces of work?

Keywords: Plagiarism, Cut and paste, Software, Learning tool, Ethics

1. Introduction

The growing interest of institutions in teaching their students academic writing as well as the ability to report findings in an academic manner had inadvertently seen the growth of plagiarism among the writers too. For instance, Chawla (2002) reported that if one copies from one source, it is plagiarism but then if one copies from many sources, it is research. This seems to be the general idea that most people hold when they write an academic paper. However, McKeever (2004) described plagiarism as both a "symptom of declining academic standards" and as providing damning evidence of the "pernicious impact" of internet on society. Reported in negative light as approaching "epidemic" proportions, plagiarism can be considered to be a serious offence and thousands of students are left out in the cold from the paper race annually, being caught using another's material as their own without citing the source. Mounsey (2002:64) points out the institutions of higher learning frown upon plagiarism and students are dealt with mercilessly since the issue reflects the ethics practised at the institution as well.

Although it can be argued that there is little room nowadays for variations in original reporting, the fact remains that students still face the danger of being expelled if caught having similarities in the manner of writing with some other writer they might not even be acquainted with. In line with this thread of argument, it will also be wise to address the fact that with minimum management skills of information from the internet, students using basic "copy and paste" techniques will be able to pull the wool over the supervisor's eyes and pass off at random other peoples' work as their own. The existence of ready-made solutions like "essay-banks" and "paper-mills", further attract and unwittingly make students with money to spend and indulge in plagiarism.

The need to stamp out the problem of plagiarism (Culwin & Lancaster, 2000) is an old idea but turning an early episode of plagiarism into an awareness creating session as well as a learning zone is essential and a novel one. This opportunity to educate students on the dangers of plagiarism slips by as the academician involved looks at hundreds of academic writing by students within one academic study-term. Time constraints and overwhelming workload in the form of checking students' work at draft stage will allow academicians time to only skim through submitted papers. Other than advising students not to be caught plagiarising, their main concern will be on how to improve the draft papers into

worthwhile papers. When the papers, after several revisions, reach the academician for evaluation, it is already at its final submission stage, and at this point, there is no turning back if a case of plagiarism is detected.

As such, it will be beneficial for the students to be aware and be actively involved in detecting plagiarism as they prepare the initial paper, go through a number of drafts and finally submit their papers for evaluation. At this stage, it will be well in keeping with the argument, that it is not enough to alert students and warn them about the consequences against plagiarism. Students need to be made more responsible for what they churn out as their writings. Independence and a pride of achievement should entail a student's final piece of writing. When the supervisor of a student's writing spends too much time pointing out content material that need to be shored-up, it is a wonder as to when time is allotted to check if plagiarism exists in the piece. It will be a sad episode indeed when a student is caught for plagiarism after final submission, when the student could have been alerted as to the existence of "plagiarised" material in the piece of writing.

As much as the internet becomes the source of material available for plagiarism due to its exponential growth, it cannot be considered as a boon to writers of academic writings. The far-reaching worldwide web also expedites the detection of plagiarised material. The benefit of doubt should of course be considered when the question of how "original" is original writing and the source from whence the material comes from. Then another aspect is whether the student has acknowledged at all the source of the material. Then too, to what extent has the material been lifted and used as authentic personally generated material. All these questions become questions to be contended with. To ensure early detection of plagiarism and avoidance of being accused at the last possible moment of having used others' material, an on-going methodology needs to be introduced. This will enable students to check at will, when and wherever they wish, the possibility of plagiarism having occurred without their knowledge (assuming that the leeway for original writing has been breached due to no fault of the student). The detecting system should be available at all time, "free" if possible and most importantly economical, incurring minimal cost or none at all.

2. Issues pertaining to the detection tool

There was, in short, a need for a plagiarism detecting software that will be easily available and accessible. There were a number of reasons why low-level, rather than sophisticated software was needed at this juncture.

The presence of the plagiarism detecting software like *plagiarismdetect.com* should be made available to the students from the very beginning of a writing episode. The lecturers' wish to encourage the students to constantly check on their writings to make sure that they do not even mistakenly infringe into the area of copyrights will be a strong enough reason to introduce this software to the students. This availability of the software will create a separate learning zone, impressing upon the students the importance of ethics in writing.

Making available the software to students also helps the students to help themselves to keep giving drafts that do not contain plagiarised material to the supervisor. The supervisor on the other hand will have the peace of mind that they are not overlooking this aspect (plagiarism) of the students' writings. It would have been taken care of from source, i.e. the students would have taken care of it. The empowerment of students to check on their own work also creates a sense of responsibility and pride over the piece of writing they produce for final assessment.

With supervisors and academicians burdened with workload, the "cleaning out" of plagiarised material by students themselves will lessen their burden, as well as that niggling thought that the writing might contain plagiarised material.

The plagiarism detecting software will be easy to use and be user friendly. The academicians rather than the students will appreciate this aspect as most of them are still being introduced and being awed by what the computer and internet is capable of. The students on the other hand will be more adventurous and will find the software quite comfortable to be used. The 'cut and paste' method which is ever popular among students to produce academic pieces of writing will be put to good use by utilising the programme. They will have to copy sections of their work and by running the programme, will be able to look for matches in the web. The feedback given will ensure that students avoid themselves being caught at the most inopportune moment as having submitted plagiarised work.

The most attractive advantage is that this programme is made available free of charge or at a minimal cost to both the academician and the students. *plagiarismdetect.com* is a free software programme and any payment incurred will only be the payment to have internet access. Unlike some plagiarism detecting software programmes which are available as a money spinning venture, *plagiarismdetect.com* provides self plagiarism detection without any hidden costs. When the same system is used by the evaluator, students too will have confidence that they are on the right track. Some sophisticated plagiarism detecting software programmes have more accessibility to resources other than that found on the internet (Clough, 2003). This of course is a drawback of the recommended site. However, when students are using the same programme as the lecturer, they will rest assured that they are not going to be pinned down for unintentional plagiarism.

The plagiarism detecting programme recommended actually instils in students the importance of the process involved in writing an academic piece of writing. When the software programme is used judiciously, it can encourage self-access

learning by the student and reduce the need for cheating (since they know that the lecturer will catch them eventually and it is not the best option for them). *plagiarismdetect.com* will increase fairness for all students as a more objective and comprehensible manner is used to track students' work, and finally it also works positively for the lecturer as using the programme redirects the burden of proof of plagiarism from the instructor to the software.

Identifying plagiarised work can be time consuming, and a lecturer with a large stack of papers to grade may disqualify a paper as soon as an instance of plagiarism is detected. The software programme approach to detect plagiarism can measure the degree of plagiarism (in percentage), and automatically provide written documentation of the cheating in much less time. When faced with too little time and daunting piles of work to check, the software actually sets the parameter for disqualifying a written piece of work (Niezgoda & Way, 2005). The lecturer in turn can rest assured that a piece of writing has been disqualified through an objective assessment. The nature of the software programme is such that a thorough analysis can also be carried out of the written work, ensuring comprehensive check rather than an assessment that is marred by suspicion as to the originality of the work.

With the noble idea that a student is in an institution to learn, another benefit of a self-check of plagiarism should be borne in mind as a plagiarism detecting tool is introduced to the students. Coming to terms with the fact that plagiarism can never be completely phased out of academic writings submitted by students for assessment, any techniques that can make a potential plagiarist to read, revise, analyze and synthesize written material, is definitely an improvement over the cat and mouse game that can be played out by the lecturer and the student. Rather than the lecturer and student involved in plagiarism detection trying to outwit each other, a plagiarism detecting software programme may well lead to improved learning. In the process of self-check, the student will try to avoid a report that carries a high percentage of matches to other people's work. So, they will endeavour to revise, rephrase, or paraphrase their writings. As a side-effect of trying to overcome the plagiarism detecting software, perhaps the student who is trying to plagiarize may even wind up inadvertently understanding the subject-matter of the paper quite well.

3. Prevention versus detection

While plagiary detection tools like *plagiarismdetect.com* may be one more tool for keeping in check dishonesty, users of the software programme may be missing the larger issue of academic integrity. Gallant and Drinan **(2006**) concluded after surveying academic affairs administrators, that "many more institutions have in place the structural and procedural indicators for the policing and punishing of academic dishonesty than those for the promotion and education of academic integrity" (p. 74). Thus, universities using plagiary detection tools should also consider the help that lecturers may provide to educate students about proper writing and citation skills that will improve overall academic integrity on campus. The importance of machine translation and its part in language teaching has always been highlighted by Somers (2001). Plagiarism detecting tools can be considered as machine translation and by creating awareness as to its use, academic writing becomes a much more ethical endeavour.

The methods of fighting plagiarism may generally be divided into two classes according to Lukashenko et al **(2007),** that is, methods of plagiarism prevention as the first class and methods of plagiarism detection as the second class respectively. If plagiarism is considered by the institution as a social ill, then precautionary and stamping out measures as contemplated in the first class should be adopted. In this manner the fear of being caught will be instilled in students who are submitting their writing pieces for assessment. The knowledge that there is a strong chance of them being caught will overshadow their attempts to plagiarise. Lukashenko et al (2007) believe that this will automatically curtail their attempts to plagiarise. The second class of plagiarism detection however, will encourage a remedial stance; encouraging a cure to the ills of plagiarism. Software tools to detect plagiarism will have a long term effect in creating students who will be careful about infringing areas that may be deemed as plagiary.

A further explanation as to the attributes that determine the application of these two methods by Lukashenko et **al (2007**), makes it clear that load of work in proportion to the intensity of the method's implementation and the duration of the method's efficiency plays an important part as to the class of fighting plagiarism that need to be adopted. The load of work here refers to the amount of resources including time, energy and finance involved to develop and use the method. Plagiarism prevention can be very time consuming, and to bring it to a fruitful stage will require more time compared to detection of plagiarised work. The duration of efficiency, which translates into the positive effect of the method's realization and maintenance, scores less favourably for plagiarism detection compared to preventive measures. Lukashenko et al (2007) further reiterated that students tend to lose sight of the importance of handing in authentic work over time and may resort to plagiarism. Another aspect that needs to be considered is the perception and intimidation that society imposes upon cases of plagiarism. The prevention method seems to be the preferred method by Lukashenko et al (2007) and this according to them relies heavily on the change of attitude against plagiarism adopted by the academic society.

However, there are ways to ensure that students do not lose sight of the importance of plagiarism. One way will be the submission of academic writings accompanied by the report generated by the detection tool. The report does not only carry the percentage of matches found, it also shows the line for line matches with the number of "hits" each line has.

The insistence on submitting academic writings with reports generated by the detection tool will ensure that students do not lose sight of the importance of handing in authentic work, and it will be proof enough to show that the students have made attempts to avoid plagiarism. Their intention to avoid plagiarism by showing proof is in itself half the battle won to instil integrity in writing.

The fight against plagiarism is the common goal, whatever the method implemented and to ensure that the method employed is efficient, a combination of both class actions against plagiarism should be adopted. In other words the detection method is applied at the initial stage to achieve a short term result and preventive measures initiated later on to achieve a long term effect. While detection will minimize the act of plagiarism, preventive measures will put in place a permanent safeguard to stamp out these unethical phenomena. Undoubtedly, prevention methods have made significant progress in actively decreasing incidents of plagiarism, and since it is widespread and viewed as a plaguing problem, judiciously implementing detection methods will be a wiser approach to eradicate plagiarism. In fact, detection methods will in time out-mode the prevention methods if detection is given precedence and some effort is undertaken to ensure that students incorporate plagiarism detection as part of their writing process.

4. The downside to the detection tool

According to **Maurer et. al (2006**), commonly in practice there are different plagiarism methods. Some of them include copy – paste plagiarism (copying word to word textual information), paraphrasing (restating same content in different words), translated plagiarism (content translation and use without reference to original work), artistic plagiarism (presenting same work using different media: text, images etc.), idea plagiarism (using similar ideas which are not common knowledge), code plagiarism (using program codes without permission or reference), no proper use of quotation marks (failing to identify exact parts of borrowed content), and misinformation of references (adding reference to incorrect or non existing source).

Since *plagiarismdetect.com* is a plagiarism detection tool, it is a low level application in all sense. It looks for matches in strings of words and unsophisticated paraphrasing. It immediately traces copy-paste plagiarism without any problems if the source is internet-based. The algorithm also traces poor attempts at paraphrasing. However, if copy/paste is done from sources beyond the internet and corpuses accumulated within the web, then a match will not be traced. As **Grover (2003: 3)** aptly puts it, “a significant but unquantifiable proportion of the web will never find its way into search engines, and frustratingly, it is precisely the 'invisible' web sources, such as password-protected databases of journal articles and essay banks, which are likely to contain the source of plagiarised content”. This puts *plagiarismdetect.com* at a disadvantage. Furthermore, a qualitative piece of academic writing may also pass off as unplagiarised work if the writer had meticulously veiled the material that is not cited with sophisticated paraphrasing.

Another downside to this plagiarism detecting tool is the inability to trace translated pieces of work. So if someone is to get material from another language and translate it into the English Language, that piece of writing, might as well pass off as unplagiarised material. The same issue also arises with artistic plagiarism. Material derived from other forms of media to disseminate information, if not uploaded onto the internet, will not be traced. Ideas that are not common knowledge will not be detected as plagiarised material if they have not been previously found in the internet. Code plagiarism, misinformation about source of material and the extent to which material has been directly quoted by not placing quotation marks will also be a task beyond *plagiarismdetect.com* as a plagiarism detection tool.

In cases of intentional plagiarism, the jurisdiction of the person who is grading the paper is sought. When students intentionally plagiarize, it will be found that even the most sophisticated plagiarism detecting tool is quite worthless. Therefore the plagiarism detection tool recommended here should be considered by the institution and academicians, more as a tool to instil in students that integrity in writing is required of them.

5. Conclusion

So, if *plagiarismdetect.com* is not living up to the expectations of being a comprehensive plagiarism detection tool, what may the purpose be to introduce such a tool? The purpose of students coming to Institutions of Higher Education should not be confused as just a paper chase. It should be dealt with much higher integrity. Educating students will be the prime purpose and to this end, putting them through the “mill” so that they will be ready for a job market should not be uppermost in an educator’s mind. Although reality may suggest otherwise, the noble thought of creating lifelong learners and the ethics involved in the process of learning should be impressed upon the learners.

By introducing *plagiarismdetect.com*, the students are first made aware that plagiarism is an issue to contend with. Next, they are taught that plagiarism is frowned upon and therefore need to be avoided when producing their own pieces of writing. The learning process comes in when they critically censure their own product before submitting it for evaluation. Therefore, even a low-level plagiarism detecting tool provided in the form *plagiarismdetect.com* will empower students to go through the learning process conscientiously.

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English Language Teaching
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 2, No. 4
December 2009

An Overview of English Writing Research in Taiwan

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Abstract

This study systematically investigates the English writing research in Taiwan, over the span of time from 1989 to 2008, a 19-year time period. Data collection consisted of five major sources. Guided by Juzwik et al's (2006) study, the data were analyzed based on the general problems under investigated, the age groups being researched, the methodologies being implemented, and types of research being conducted at different grade levels. Findings revealed that writing instruction, writing and technologies and peer evaluation were the most studied problems in writing research whereas collaborative writing, error analysis, and cultural influences were the least studied problems. The most studied populations were university and senior high school students while the least studied groups were kindergarteners and adults. Most studies were conducted by using qualitative methodology. Writing and technologies was the most studied type of research among elementary school students and university students, whereas writing instruction was frequently studied among senior high school students, graduate students and adult students. The implications and recommendations that emerge out of these results provide possible agendas for writing teachers, researchers and policy makers worldwide.

Keywords: Overview of English writing research, Writing instruction, General problems, Age groups, Methodology

1. Introduction

Among the systematic review of English as the first language (L1) writing research, several studies have been published in the United States. However, systematic review of English as a foreign language (EFL) writing research has seldom become the central focus of literature. The reason could be that the review of EFL writing research would involve many non-English speaking countries around the world; therefore, to systematically and thoroughly examine the abundance of published articles related to EFL writing would be a difficult task. Nevertheless, systematical examination of EFL writing research from an EFL speaking country would help fill the gap in the body of FL writing research. This study systematically analyzes and investigates EFL writing research outside the United States. It focuses on the trends and foci of English writing research in Taiwan over the span of time from 1989 to 2008, a 19-year period. The purpose of this study is threefold. First, it helps to fill the gap in the body of foreign language writing research and helps writing instructors, writing researchers, and curriculum developers worldwide to develop the understanding of English writing research in an EFL learning environment. Second, Chinese writing researchers tend to have partial understanding about the bits and pieces of information concerning English writing research conducted in their country. This paper is intended to assist writing researchers to familiarize themselves with research conducted within nearly two decades in Taiwan. Third, it points out a possible future direction for EFL writing research agendas.

2. Review of literature

Previous research on the overview of English writing in L1 and L2 was conducted by a few scholars in the United States. With regard to the overview of EFL writing research, little information can be acquired in the body of existing literature. It is important to be acquainted with the overview of L1 and L2 writing research because FL writing research has been heavily influenced by L1 and L2 writing research (O'Brien, 2004). Furthermore, English language writing instruction for native speakers has also influenced EFL writing instruction (You, 2006). Accordingly, the writers of L2/EFL are very similar to English native speakers in the respect of learning to write (Williams, 2005).

Among the L1 writing researchers, Hillocks (1984) first conducted a meta-analysis of experimental treatment studies on teaching composition in the United States. The study was an integrative review of experimental studies from 1963 to 1982. In this review, Hillocks investigated experimental studies conducted over this time span by including studies that involved treatments, uses of writing quality scale applied to writing samples, exercises of minimal control for teacher bias, controls for differences among groups of subjects, and insurances on the validity and reliability of the scored compositions. In synthesizing the experimental studies, Hillocks examined the treatments, including four modes of instruction: presentational mode, natural process mode, environmental mode and individualized mode. Hillock's study provides us an insightful view pertaining to what factors of effective writing instruction should be taken into account when teaching writing.

Following Hillocks' studies, Herrington (1989) also published an article entitled *the First Twenty Years of Research in the Teaching of English and the Growth of a Research Community in Composition Studies.* By using *Research in the Teaching of English* as the primary source, her historical reflection focused on four periods, inclusive of the initial years

of each editor. They were from 1967 to 1969, under the editorship of Richard Braddock; from 1973-1975, Alan Purves; from 1977 to 1979, Roy O'Donnell; and finally from 1984 to 1986, Judith Langer and Arthur Applebee. During the first three years, Herrington found the articles were quantitative studies. They focused on investigating writing as texts, describing written texts linguistically or grammatically and evaluating written texts. The next three years was during the "troubled dream" period when researchers were questioning the quantitative research method and called for more qualitative research studies. At the same time, more articles were found to focus on sentence production and measuring writer's development in terms of syntactic complexity. Increased attention was also found on studies about the writing process. The third period of the study found several articles examining "writing as a sentence-generating activity." They included sentence-combining effectiveness, syntactic maturity measurement, and issues relevant to studying syntactic methodology. The authors also questioned "our values as teachers and readers of our students' writing" as well as writing processes. The last period covered in this study demonstrated the findings of using computers to write or to evaluate writing, extending more inquiry in syntactic features and writing quality, and viewing writing from a social perspective approach. Other studies also examined the differences between "basic" and "non-proficient" or "competent" and "proficient" writers.

The next study, conducted by Durst (1990), charted the terrain of writing research by analyzing the empirical studies of composition from 1984 to 1989. Durst analyzed the research on composition by examining what had been learned from the data collected. He specifically emphasized the growth areas issue, less interesting topics, and and topics of more interest. Durst discovered that from a total of 1,577 studies, 969 focused on composition. These studies were categorized into instruction, processes, text analysis, contexts, assessment, status surveys, writing and learning, and rhetoric. Durst further pointed out that almost 90 percent of the research focused on the first five categories. Durst also exclaimed that in his review, he found only about five percent of the research studies centered on minority writers. Additionally, most studies had the tendency of using elementary and college students as their research subjects whereas students from middle and high schools were largely ignored. Furthermore, he pointed out that the number of writing research in contextual studies was relatively small. From his review, Durst informed us of the future direction of research agenda.

Building upon Durst's study, the recent study conducted by Juzwik et al. (2006) took a broader look at the scope of recent research on writing, investigating the studies from 1999 to 2004. In this study, they examined the current trends and foci in writing research in the United States by looking at writing research from three dimensions: problems studied, population age groups studied and methods used. They searched 4,739 articles from ERIC, PsychINFO and Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstract databases but there were only 1,502 relevant articles analyzed. The result showed that, apart from using interpretive methodology in most of the research studies, the most currently studied problems in writing were context and writing practices; multilingualism, bilingualism, and writing; and writing instruction. In contrast, the least researched problems were writing and technologies, writing assessment and evaluation, and relationships among literacy modalities. Findings also indicated that the populated age groups being studied were undergraduate, adult, and postsecondary students, while the least studied age groups were preschool-aged students and middle and high school students. The result of Juzwik et al.'s study provides useful information for contemporary writing researchers and educators.

In L2 and EFL writing research, Silva and Brice (2004) examined published articles regarding research in teaching writing from 2000 to 2004 by including referred journal articles, book chapters, and books. Their study overviewed 1) basic research from composing processes, written texts, and assessment, and 2) applied research from content-based writing instruction, voice and identity, reading and writing, computers and technology, grammar and vocabulary, peer interaction, plagiarism, teacher response, and literature and film. They also discussed general issues and concerns, and pointed out the future direction for researchers.

Liou (2008) had recently presented a paper about EFL writing research in Taiwan, focusing only on three years she surveyed papers published on one local journal and proceedings of three English teaching conferences. Liou discovered that 46.9 % of the studies centered on instruction-oriented research, 32.4% focused on text-oriented research, 18.9% were on writer-oriented research and only 1.8% was on reader-oriented research. Liou's small scale study presented a rough picture of English writing research in Taiwan.

The above writing research in L1 and L2 covered studies on historical review (Hillocks, 1984; Herrington,1989), growth and interested research areas (Drust, 1990), teaching pedagogy (Silva and Brice, 2004), and the examination of current trends and foci (Juzwik et al.; 2006). To date, there is no thorough historical review of English writing research that examines the writing trends and foci in Taiwan. This paper aims to make significant advances in building a more comprehensive awareness in EFL writing research.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

In order to make this task manageable and to present an overview of English writing research from 1989 to 2008 in Taiwan, two research assistants and I set limitation on the number of sources (5 altogether) from which we investigated

the data: (1) *Dissertation Abstracts International*, (2) *Electronic Theses and Dissertations System* in Taiwan, (3) *EBSCO Databases*, (4) *ERIC Databases*, and (5) *Education Full Text*, The primary inclusion of these data sources was that authors usually considered these sources (with the exception of *Dissertation Abstracts international* and *Electronic Theses and Dissertations System* in Taiwan) as the major outlet for publishing their work internationally. In addition, readers would have easier access to these sources from most of the school libraries around the world. Furthermore, the studies discovered from the five data sources in one way or another have contributed an in-depth treatment in the specific area of English writing in Taiwan.

In general, studies which were conducted in Taiwan were included in the data analysis. In addition, both key words: "*writing*" and "*Taiwan*" were used in the databases to make sure the relevant studies were not being overlooked. The data collected from the five major sources sometimes overlapped. Extensive time was spent in order not to include the same theses or articles for data analysis. Table 1 shows the number of articles found from the five major data sources.

(Insert table 1 here)

3.2 Coding

Guided by Juzwik et al's (2006) study, the data were analyzed based on the general problems under investigated, the age groups being researched, the methodologies being implemented, and types of research being conducted at different grade levels. In analyzing the collected data with regard to the problems under investigated, two research assistants (a Ph.D. student from the United States and the other, a Ph.D. candidate from Taiwan) helped worked on and created the categorization. The categories were coded preliminarily based on the title of each article. However, as Durst (1990) has discovered, "Many studies cut across categories; for example, much of the research on writing instruction focuses on the use of writing –process-based pedagogies in teaching composition. A number of writing-instruction studies examine classroom contexts or employ text analysis. In these cases of overlap, studies were categorized based on the dominant focus of the research (p.395)." Thus, in this study, if the title contained peers and computers, the original article would be located and reviewed carefully so as to decide whether it belonged to peer evaluation, or writing and technologies. For example, the study "*Students' use of ideas provided by peers during prewriting discussions conducted on networked computers*" was coded in the category of peer evaluation rather than writing and technologies. It was found from the original study that the major concern of the research was to examine the writing generated from the talk with their peers during computer-mediated prewriting discussions, and the quality of the peers' comments. Another example "*The use of process writing and Internet technology in class: A focus on peer reviews*" was not put in the category of writing process or writing and technologies because peer review was the major focus. The coding description for each researched problem can be found in table 2.

(Insert table 2 here)

Similar to the study conducted by Juzwik et al., the age categories were coded based on the level of schooling. In Juzwik et al.'s study, the age category ranges from prior to school to adults. They were prior to school, elementary school, middle school, high school, undergraduate postsecondary and adults. However, in this study, since the educational system in Taiwan is quite different from that of the United States, we coded 12 age groups from the data. They were kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, vocational high school, junior college, military college, university of science and technology, medical college, regular university (science and technology are not the major focus of the university), graduate school, and adults (non-academic writers).

In terms of methodology being implemented, if the title contained a case study, it would be automatically put in the category of qualitative study. In addition, if the title of the study did not have any methodological phrase, the abstract was examined in detail to detect the use of methodology. Furthermore, if the research methodology or subjects were not clearly stated in the abstract, the original study would be located and examined in detail. Finally, if the study was put in the category of both qualitative and quantitative, it means that somewhere in the study, the author had stated that it was a blended study. If not, each abstract or the study itself would be examined carefully to determine which category it belonged in.

4. Findings

4.1 The general problems investigated

As a result of analyzing the collected data, the data was divided into fourteen categories. They were writing instruction, writing and technologies, peer evaluation, contrastive rhetoric, writing and metacognition, writing processes, e-mail exchanges, responding to student writing, writing assessment, writing anxiety, journal writing, collaborative writing, error analysis, cultural influences, and others.

From the five major sources of data analysis in this review, the most studied problems on writing research in Taiwan tended to focus on writing instruction, writing and technologies, and peer evaluation, whereas the problems least studied

were error analysis and cultural influences. The general problems investigated by this writing research are shown as follows.

(Insert table 3 here)

4.2 The population studied

In Taiwan, university students were found to be the most frequently studied age group in existing English writing research. This age group was dominated as it was examined almost twice as much as the next frequently researched group, the senior high school level. Kindergarteners, military college students, and medical college students were found to be the least studied groups. Other students, such as vocational high school students and non-academic adults seldom became the subjects of writing research studies. The following table summaries the findings of the age groups being studied in Taiwan.

(Insert table 4 here)

4.3 The methodology used

From the data analyzed, with regard to methodology, it was important to note that both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were almost equally adopted by writing researchers in Taiwan. The data indicated that quantitative method was implemented in 40% of the studies while qualitative method was implemented in 42% of the studies. 18% of the studies were found using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

(Insert Table 5 here)

4.4 Types of research conducted at different grade levels

From the five major data sources, there was only one study concerning the use of computer technology at kindergarten level. In terms of elementary schools, writing and technologies was still the major type of research, followed by writing instruction. With regard to junior high school levels, of the nine studies, three were about journal writing with the rest concerning writing instruction. Almost half of the research (20) conducted at senior high school level was still dominated by writing instruction. The rest of the studies consisted of writing and technologies, writing and metacognition, writing process, peer evaluation, teacher feedback, e-mail exchanges and journal writing. At vocational high school levels, writing assessment, error analysis, peer evaluation, writing instruction, and contrastive rhetoric were found from the data analysis. Research from the junior, military, medical college levels, and university of science and technology level showed writing and technologies, writing and metacognition were two major types of research. As for the regular university level, writing and technologies, peer evaluation, and contrastive rhetoric were the most studied types of research. At the adult level, two out of the four studies were writing and instruction, the third was e-mail exchanges and the fourth was collaborative writing. At the graduate level, writing and instruction, writing and technologies, and writing process were the most researched topics. The result of the analysis can be found in Appendix A.

5. Discussion

Focusing on the literature dated from 1989 to 2008, a 19-year time span, this paper examined the trends and foci from the collected data. It investigated the major problems, populations, methodologies and types of research conducted at different age groups in EFL writing research in Taiwan. The findings pointed out several important issues that deserve public attention.

First, in this study, data sources were drawn from *Dissertation Abstracts International*, *Electronic Theses and Dissertations System* in Taiwan, *EBSCO Databases*, *ERIC Clearinghouse*, and *Education Full Text*. The result showed a total of 188 studies, all conducted by Taiwanese researchers, on writing research. Among these 188 studies, only a small amount of research studies were published in the internationally referred journals. The rest were theses, dissertations, and reports. The small number of the English writing research articles indicates that more research in English language writing field is further required. This study advocates the growth of scholarship on EFL writing in Taiwan.

Second, from the findings concerning the problems being investigated in this paper, it has demonstrated that more and more writing instructors have become interested in using computer technology to help students compose in English. Given the rapid change of technology in modern times, computer technology has shortened the distance between countries around the world and it has opened up new and exciting possibilities for instructors to teach EFL writing. In recent years e-mail exchanges, online English learning, Plug-in Learning Object Module, Weblog networks implementation have been the central focus of EFL writing literature. It is expected that research in this field will continue to grow in EFL writing research in Taiwan.

Third, the age group being researched most was at the college level and the subjects being studied were mostly from English majors at colleges. This is partly because writing researchers in Taiwan are university professors and they tend

to use their students as research subjects. It is also partly because writing is a mandatory course for English majors at universities in Taiwan. This study suggests curriculum developers in Taiwan should consider making non-English major college students take English writing as an obligatory course. This study also points out that increased amount of attention should be devoted to other age group of student writers, especially students from kindergarten, junior high school, vocational high schools, military college, medical college. Furthermore, apart from the above-mentioned age groups, master's students, doctoral students, foreign students, aborigines and adults have received scant attention from EFL writing researchers in Taiwan. More research in these fields also needs to be explored.

Fourth, the study revealed that within the past two decades, qualitative research methodology is being more frequently adopted by writing researchers in Taiwan. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were also used at the same time by 18% of the researchers to conduct their research. The increased number of qualitative research studies indicates that qualitative research has become a significant type of methodology in writing research in Taiwan. Researchers were no longer interested in testing hypotheses, instead, they turned to observe the class or participate in class, interview the students, and analyze the documents and materials so that more in-depth insights and contexts could be obtained from the writing class.

Fifth, from the collected data, research on writing anxiety was only found at college level, it is suggested that more research should be conducted by using younger students, including kindergarteners, elementary, and high school students as research subjects. These groups of students would probably have writing anxiety when asked to compose in English. In addition, from the data collected, of the six studies concerning writing assessment, only four portfolio assessment studies were found in one elementary school, one junior high school and two senior high schools. It is suggested that more research should focus on this field because learning to write is a long term process and it takes time and effort to accomplish a good written product. This study raises the issue of writing assessment for FL educators to think over.

Finally, this study has investigated the trends and foci of EFL writing research from five major sources within nearly two decades in Taiwan. While the study has provided important findings, future research should include more sources, including book chapters, books, local journal articles, and local conference papers devoted to adding information and insights to the existing body of EFL writing research currently available regarding Taiwan.

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Table 1. Number of Journals Found from Different Data Sources

Data Sources	**Count**
Dissertation Abstracts International	26
Electronic Theses and Dissertations System	117
EBSCO Databases	6
ERIC Databases	25
Education Full Text	6
Journal of Second Language Writing	3
System	4
total	187

Table 2. Researched Problem Coding and Description

Researched Problem	Coding Description
Writing instruction	effectiveness of teaching strategies
Writing and technologies	effects of computers and word processing on students' writing
Peer evaluation	peer grading, peer editing, or peer commenting
Contrastive rhetoric	rhetorical influences of the L1 on L2
Writing and metacognition	cognitive self-knowledge, what individuals know about their own thinking
Writing processes	writers approaching writing
E-mail exchanges	keypal exchanges
Responding to student writing	teacher feedback
Writing assessment (Portfolio)	assessing writing achievement and proficiency
Writing anxiety	writing apprehension, writer's block
Journal writing	writing journals or writing dialogue journals
Collaborative writing	students compose writing together
Error analysis	error types in English writing
Cultural influences	writing influenced by cultural thinking and background
Others	factors in writing ability, grammar, learner's writing strategy, attitudes

Table 3. Problems Investigated

Problems	Count
Writing instruction	46
Writing and technologies	32
Peer evaluation (peer review, peer response)	22
Contrastive rhetoric	15
Writing and metacognition	14
Writing processes	11
e-mail exchanges	8
Responding to student writing (teacher feedback)	6
Writing assessment (Portfolio)	6
Writing anxiety	5
Journal writing	5
Collaborative writing	5
Error analysis	4
Cultural influences	3
Others (factors in writing ability, grammar, learner's writing strategy, attitudes)	5
total	187

Table 4. Age Groups Studied

Age Groups	Count
(Regular) university	82
Senior high school	44
Graduate school	12
Junior college	9
University of science and technology	9
Elementary school	9
Junior high school	9
Vocational high school	6
Adults (non-academic writers)	4
Military college	1
Medical college	1
Kindergarten	1
Total	187

Table 5. Methodology Used

Methodology	Count
Quantitative study (experimental)	59
Qualitative study	46
Both qualitative & quantitative	34
Case study	23
Questionnaire	8
Action research	7
Quasi-experimental design	7
Interview	2
Survey study	1
total	187

Appendix

Kindergarten Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
Bilingual and bicultural children's emergent writing with computers	thesis	1998

*thesis means thesis found from Dissertation Abstracts International, T thesis means theses from Taiwan

Elementary School (grade school) Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
Interactive Writing via Email	T thesis	2002
Integrating information technology in concept mapping writing instruction	T thesis	2004
Impacts of the Internet task-based activity on the development of students' reading and writing ability	T thesis	2004
Evaluation of the influences of the integration of information technology to English Teaching on 4th graders' writing ability	T thesis	2005
Investigation of the factors related to English writing ability	T thesis	2005
Impact of web-based portfolio assessment on the development of six graders' English writing ability and their English writing attitude	T thesis	2005
Mapping teaching on English story rewriting to sixth-graders	T thesis	2005
Integrated reading-writing instruction through storytime in EFL classes	T thesis	2005
A study on EFL six graders' English composition in an eight-block folio	T thesis	2006

Junior High School Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
Dialogue journal writing as communication	T thesis	1996
Effects of the western children's story portfolio assessment on reading and writing development	T thesis	2003
Picture-elicited narratives for developing students' English writing competence	T thesis	2003
Effects of peer review	T thesis	2004
Application of weekly dialogue journals in classroom	T thesis	2004
Effects of dialogue journal writing on the writing fluency	T thesis	2004
Students' perceptions of writing strategies instruction and their writing performance	T thesis	2004
How students develop L2 literacy through task-based reading-to-writing instruction	T thesis	2005
Teachers' perceptions of writing instruction	T thesis	2005

Senior High School Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
DTP system as applied in teaching high school English writing	T thesis	1991
Learning Strategies and Techniques	T thesis	1992
A cross-cultural validation of the reading hypothesis : The relationship of pleasure reading to writing proficiency and academic achievement among students	thesis	1995
Using writing conference and peer-group review	T thesis	1996
metacognitive process of English writing	T thesis	1997
The effects of goal orientations, metacognition, self-efficacy and effort on writing achievement	thesis	1998
Extending spoken and written English abilities through literature discussion groups	thesis	1999
Effects of gender on Internet-assisted English writing instruction	T thesis	2001
Effects of summary writing with structure guidelines on writing	T thesis	2001
The pedagogical context and the theoretical bases of EFL writing instruction	thesis	2002
Use of feedback: students' preferences and teachers' practices	T thesis	2002
Effects of a portfolio project on English learning	T thesis	2002
Effectiveness of Computer-enhanced Writing	T thesis	2002
On the omission of be in Taiwan learners' English writing	T thesis	2002
Effects of the Process Writing Instruction	T thesis	2003
Bridging the gap between reading and writing in writing instruction	T thesis	2003
Effects of the on-line peer evaluation	T thesis	2003

Effects of teaching organizing strategies in the pre-writing phase on W proficiency	T thesis	2003
Effects of using L1 in L2 writing	T thesis	2003
Effect of E-mail exchanges	T thesis	2003
Use of feedback in composition: Students' preferences and teachers' practices	T thesis	2003
Effects of guided reading and writing directions on students' writing	T thesis	2003
Integrating Reading and Writing in Classroom	T thesis	2003
Teachers' academic preparedness	T thesis	2003
Effects of web-based peer assessment on lowering students' writing apprehension	T thesis	2004
Comparison of peer& teacher evaluation	T thesis	2004
English teachers' practices and beliefs about writing instruction	T thesis	2004
Effects of English summary writing instruction on students' reading and writing abilities	T thesis	2004
Improving coherence in students' compositions through instruction of topical development	T thesis	2004
Effectiveness of metacognitive strategy instruction in English writing	T thesis	2004
Effects of adolescent-literature-letter reading and responding on English learning	T thesis	2004
Integrating reading and writing in a senior high school classroom	T thesis	2004
Effect of multi-draft writing procedure on students' writing quality and their attitudes toward writing and revision	T thesis	2004
A study on implementing writing portfolio in EFL classroom in senior high	T thesis	2004
English narrative writing process of Taiwanese senior high students	T thesis	2004
Effects of cooperative evaluation and group rewards with writing & evaluation – cooperative online learning (WE-COOL) system on students' English writing achievement and attitudes	T thesis	2005
Effects of story mapping on picture writing	T thesis	2005
Effectiveness of writing conferences in improving coherence in students' composition	T thesis	2005
Taiwan's high school English teachers' beliefs and practices in writing instruction	T thesis	2005
E-mail exchange project between non-native speakers of English	T thesis	2006
Effects of error correction on the English writing of senior high school students	T thesis	2006
Model-based writing instruction in senior high school English class	T thesis	2006
A metacognitive strategy training in an English writing program	T thesis	2006
The story behind English writing: Effects of three metacognitive learning strategy training	T thesis	2006
A study of the effects of dialogue journal writing and guided writing on Taiwanese students' writing proficiency and writing apprehension	T thesis	2006

Vocational High School Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
Effectiveness of peer evaluation	T thesis	2002
Error analysis of Chinese-to-English translation of students	T thesis	2003
Task types on EFL writing assessment	T thesis	2004
Translation from L1 into L2 and students L2 writing: coherence as a focus	T thesis	2004
A Comparison of three types of writing assessment	T thesis	2005
Effects of newspaper comics on English reading and writing	T thesis	2006

Junior College Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
Collaborative learning strategies	T thesis	1991
Interlanguage variation of the use of English articles from students" journal writing	T thesis	1997
*Computer generated error feedback and writing process (college of commerce)	TESL-EJ	1997
Business writing behaviors in differing feedback environments	LL	2000
Effects of reasoning skills on writing	T thesis	2002
Application of computer assisted instruction in teaching writing	T thesis	2004
The effect of the WebQuest writing instruction on learners' writing performance, writing apprehension, and perception	thesis	2004
*The role of peer-editing in helping ESL vocational college freshman revise their writing descriptions grammatically	thesis	2006
*Effect of structured Web activities and a Multimedia Sentence Structure Module on single sentence English writing among freshmen international trade majors at a vocation college	thesis	2007

* this vocational college means college of hospitality

Military College Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
An Analysis of Errors in English Compositions	T thesis	1996

University of Science and Technology Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
Enhancing English Communicative and Writing Ability	T thesis	2001
Beginning writers' perception and metacognitive knowledge of English writing	T thesis	2002
Strategy use and regulation in the writing tasks	T thesis	2003
Descriptive study of TVE teachers' and students' perspectives on writing instruction	T thesis	2003
Exploration of self-regulated learning strategies, goal orientation and self-efficacy on writing	T thesis	2004
Exploring EFL writers' self-regulation during composing process	T thesis	2005
Lexical collocations and their impact on the online writing of English majors and non-English majors	Report	2007
Improving a college-level EFL writing class in Taiwan:		

From understanding students' writing anxiety to the implementation of an integrative process-product approach	thesis	2007

Medical College

Types of research	Sources	Year
*Journal-writing in university pleasure-reading activities	Report	2000

*the medical college has changed to a national university in Taiwan, but the subjects were medical college students

University Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
Structures of English and Chinese narratives written by students	thesis	1989
A contrastive analysis of Chinese and English conjunctives	T thesis	1991
Intelligent CALL for EFL writing	T thesis	1991
An automatic text-analysis project for EFL writing revision	System	1992
Can grammatical CALL help EFL writing instruction	CALICO	1992
Responding to student writing	thesis	1993
Learning to critique and revise in a peer response group	thesis	1994
Argumentative essays written by native speakers of Chinese and English: A study in contrastive rhetoric	thesis	1995
Efficacy of using writing groups to help students generate ideas for writing and revise drafts	Report	1995
Students' perceptions of their performance in peer response sessions	Report	1995
A study of verbal interaction in discussion groups in a writing class	Report	1996
L1 or L2 peer response sessions? Differences in verbal interaction between a writing group that communicates in mandarin Chinese and one that uses English	Report	1996
Communicative devices used by EFL students in e-mail writing	Report	1996
A Protocol analysis of the process writing	T thesis	1996
Comparison of the effects between self-revision and peer- revision	T thesis	1996
Applying learning styles research to improve writing processes	Report	1996
Comparison between Chinese EFL students' peer response sessions held on networked computers and those held in a face-to-face setting	Report	1998
When EFL writing students draft oral histories	Report	1998
Action research, learning styles, and EFL/ESL writing	Report	1998
Using electronic mail for English as a FL instruction	System	1998
Effect of error correction on the grammatical structures of students" EFL writing	T thesis	1998
Examination of two anxiety constructs: L2 class anxiety and L2 writing anxiety	thesis	1998
Feedback on student writing: taking the middle path	JSLW	1998
The influence of cultural schemata on writing	thesis	1999
Language anxiety: differentiating writing and speaking components	LL	1999
Writer, the teacher, and the text: Examples from Taiwanese EFL college students	Report	1999
Internet assisting EFL writing learning: From learners' perspective	Report	1999
Students' use of ideas provided by peers during prewriting discussions conducted on networked computers	Report	1999
L1-L2 Transfer of Rhetorical Patterns of Three University Students	T thesis	2000
Quantitative analysis of audiotaped and written feedback produced for students' writing and students' perceptions of the two feedback methods	TJ J	2000
The nature of an EFL teacher's audiotaped and written feedback on student writing	report	2000
Evaluating the impact of collectivism and individualism on argumentative writing by Chinese and north American college students	RTE	2000
Cultural thinking and discourse organizational patterns influencing writing skills in an EFL Learner	BRJ	2001
Interlanguage variation on English past tense marking in students' writing	T thesis	2001
E-mail writing as a cross-cultural learning experience (email writing)	System	2001
Using web articles for students' source-based writing	T thesis	2001
Exploring literary responses in an EFL classroom	FLA	2001
How mind works to revise compositions	Report	2001
A study of English majors' preferences in invention	Report	2001
Investigating the metacognitive awareness and strategies of student writers	Report	2001
EFL teachers' responses to L2 writing	Report	2002
Effect of Rhetorical Analysis via Expository Models (instruction)	T thesis	2002
Motivation and attitude toward integrated instruction through technology	thesis	2002
Peer review	T thesis	2002
Investigation of parts of speech in interlanguage: Subordinators in learners' writing	T thesis	2003
Critical literacy in an EFL context	thesis	2003
Efects of rhetorical specification in writing assignments on EFL writing	thesis	2003
Cohesive conditions to perceptions of writing quality	System	2003
Effects of metacognitive strategy instruction on EFL writing	T thesis	2003
The process of web-based reading and summary writing for EFL college novice writers	T thesis	2003
Effects of reading and summarizing model essays on EFL writing	T thesis	2003
MBTI personality type and the utility of error correction among English majors in Taiwan	Report	2004
Effects of online learning units on synonymous adjectives for EFL college students	T thesis	2004
Interference of L1 on L2 in college students' writing	T thesis	2004

A study on relative clauses	T thesis	2004
A measure of L2 writing anxiety: Scale development and preliminary validation	JSLW	2004
Effects of online peer response on EFL college writing	T thesis	2004
Taiwanese students' perception on peer review activity	T thesis	2004
The use of process writing and Internet technology in class: A focus on peer reviews	thesis	2004
Students' reactions to teacher commentary and the relationship between the reactions and writing proficiency in an EFL setting	thesis	2004
Narrative structure in EFL stories of College English Majors	T thesis	2004
Effects of online conjunction units on EFL college students' writing	T thesis	2004
When students join the debate about the control of writing courses	Report	2004
Freshmen's compare/contrast writing process strategies and genre-specific strategies	T thesis	2005
Integration of culture into a college general English reading and writing class	T thesis	2005
English-major freshmen's narration writing strategies	T thesis	2005
The development and evaluation of a Plug-in Learning Object Module :In the case of a web-based English writing course	T thesis	2005
Effects of automatic essay grading system and bilingual concordancer on Writing	T thesis	2005
A study of collocational error types in ESL/EFL college learner's writing	T thesis	2005
Impact of a Taiwanese/American e-mail exchange project on Taiwanese participants' attitudes, cultural knowledge, and second language writing	thesis	2005
Benefits of cooperative learning in weblog networks	Report	2005
Writing in English: Perspectives of an ethnic Chinese teacher and her students	thesis	2005
Children's literature for reading and writing stories	T thesis	2006
An analysis of intertextuality in disciplinary writing	thesis	2006
Interaction in EFL online classes: How Web-facilitated instruction influences students' reading and learning	thesis	2006
The application of double reinforcement learning strategy to online English writing	T thesis	2006
EFL college students' perceptions on collaborative writing	T thesis	2006
Investigation of the effects of incorporating peer feedback into a focus-on-form EFL Writing Program	T thesis	2006
The effects of trained peer review on EFL students' revision types and writing quality	JSLW	2006
Instruction in conjunction usage and its influence on students' compositions	T thesis	2006
The use of a computer-based writing program: Facilitation or frustration?	Report	2006
Taiwanese students' negotiations with academic writing: playwrights and film directors	JSLW	2008

* means that the study covers students from different subjects at public university, private university and military academy

Adult Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
Effects of model-based instruction on writing	T thesis	1998
Effects of implementing theme cycles	T thesis	2003
An exploratory study of e-mail application on FL writing performance	CALL J	2007
A study of students' construction of science knowledge: talk and writing in a collaborative group	ER	2007

Graduate Student Level

Types of research	Sources	Year
A study of the relationship of ESL students' English language proficiency and writing expertise and its implications to the curriculum of teaching ESL writing	thesis	1992
Using collaborative writing creatively to teach reader-based prose	Report	1995
The connections between L1 and L2 writing performances --From the perspective of writing expertise	Report	1999
Self-reported perspectives regarding academic writing among Taiwanese graduate students specializing in TEFL	TPFLE	2001
Writing from sources: summary and response writing	T thesis	2002
A study of students' attitudes toward and desired system requirements of networked peer assessment system	IJIM	2003
English dictionary use in EFL writing tasks	T thesis	2004
Comparing EFL experienced writers' L1 and L2 writing processes	T thesis	2004
Text analyses and online material development for EAP graduate courses Teaching of abstract writing in the field of applied linguistics discipline	T thesis	2005
Effects of online academic English materials on graduate students' writing: Introductions in research articles of the applied linguistic disciplines	T thesis	2005
Writing for publication: Five novice Taiwanese scholars' composing processes and an analysis of their writings of thesis introductions	T thesis	2005
Learning how to write a good MA thesis literature review: one graduate student	T thesis	2006

A journal archived in Library and Archives Canada
A journal indexed in Canadiana (The National Bibliography)
A journal indexed in AMICUS
A journal included in DOAJ
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