LANGUAGE AWARENESS IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Language awareness in language education

Published and distributed by
Department of Curriculum Studies
The University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road
Hong Kong

ISBN: 962-8109-02-2

International Language in Education Conference is organised by:
Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Hong Kong
The English Centre, University of Hong Kong
The Hong Kong Institute of Education
Hong Kong Association for Applied Linguistics

The conference organisers wish to express their gratitude to the **Language Fund** whose generosity has enabled these selected papers to be published.

Editing and layout: Allen Wan, The English Centre
Cover design: Vincent Lee, Department of Curriculum Studies

To John Harris

Contents

Introduction

The chapters in this volume were selected from a larger collection of papers originally presented at the International Language in Education Conference held at the University of Hong Kong, 14-16 December 1994. A major thematic concern draws these chapters together and helps to define them as a coherent whole. This is the concept of *language awareness*. While language awareness and language use are two perennial themes in language education, both have been reinvigorated by recent theory and research in both first and second language education. The language awareness movement, which has been gathering strength in first language education, has also received a boost in the second language field with the publication of research which explores the relationship between language knowledge, acquisition and use. The research provides more evidence that Krashen may well have been premature in his assertion that there is an unbreachable divide between conscious awareness of language and the deployment of that language in contexts of use.

Although many of the papers are not written specifically within the framework of the language awareness movement, they all demonstrate the importance of the concept. They also show the wide range of educational activities it can be applied to and how it is relevant to different participants in the education process: learners, teachers, trainers, testers and so on. Major themes include:

- teachers' awareness of various aspects of language that will help them to understand their
- learners difficulties
- learners' awareness of the interrelation between the forms of a language and the functions
- teachers' awareness of learners' awareness
- teacher trainers' awareness of their trainees' proficiency
- awareness of coherence for testers
- learners' awareness of aspects of their own proficiency
- awareness of crosslinguistic features for students of translation

In most of the papers there is an emphasis on language education in the East Asian region. The importance of the chapters in this collection, however, is not merely that they replicate, in an Asian setting, research carried out elsewhere, but that they take the research and development agenda forward. They do this by showing that language awareness and communicative use, far from being in opposition, are complimentary and mutually reinforcing processes. In fact, these studies demonstrate that the challenge for the future will be to develop an

integrative model in which the relative contributions of language awareness and language use are made explicit.

The Editors
Hong Kong, October 1995

1 HOW AWARE SHOULD LANGUAGE AWARE TEACHERS AND LEARNERS BE?

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1. Introduction

The topic of language awareness is particularly relevant at present. There is much discussion of language awareness in relation to language development and of the study and analysis of language by language learners, in contexts of teaching English as a mother-tongue as well as teaching English as a second or foreign language (Donmall, 1985; Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 1987; Hawkins, 1987; Sinclair 1985; James and Garrett (eds), 1991; Fairclough (ed), 1992; Van Lier, 1995). The issues force us to consider how we describe English as a language, the relationships between language study and language teaching, how different language and 'Englishes' can be compared and contrasted and how language intersects with culture and ideology.[1]

M.A.K. Halliday at an ILE Conference in Hong Kong in 1987 (Halliday, 1987) has suggested that a three-part structure is needed for discussions of language learning:

learning language
learning through language
learning about language

This paper will concentrate on the third part. Students' learning about language has declined in recent years. It will be argued that there should be exploration of the pedagogic possibilities of learning about language for the following main reasons. It is valuable in its own right and has an 'educative' potential in the broadest sense of the word. It can enhance learning 'through the language' about the cultures and ideologies which inform the target language and its uses. Finally, it can assist processes of learning a language in so far as knowing about a language is part of knowing a language. This last reason is, however, more controversial, particularly in the era of communicative language teaching.

1.This is an expanded and re-worked version of a paper entitled 'Language Awareness and Language Learning' in Hoey, M. (ed) *Data, Description, Discourse* (Collins, London, 1994. Parts of the paper also owe much to Chapter 4 of McCarthy, M. and Carter, R. (1994)

Discussions of language awareness within the second language acquisition literature focus mainly on grammar. Grammar is likewise prominent in debates within mother-tongue English teaching concerning the place of 'knowledge about language' in the National Curriculum in England and Wales (see Carter, 1990). It is important, however, that discussion also extends to other levels and areas of language. Examples will be drawn here from the domains of vocabulary and idiomaticity, literary language and the interfaces between language and culture and language and ideology. These areas are chosen deliberately because they are normally associated with more advanced stages of language learning and usually appear, if they appear at all, at the end of a language course. If the relationship between language awareness and language learning is to be explored, such presuppositions need to be challenged. Without drawing undue analogies between processes of first and second language acquisition, we should note that literary uses of language (verbal play with rhymes, puns, nonsense words, jokes, for example) are encountered by young children from the earliest stages. Similarly, idioms, metaphors and cultural embeddings in language are not exceptional but are a natural and pervasive feature of all languages.

2. Language Awareness in Action

2.1 Language, literature and a small 'l'.

A useful starting point is with the kinds of 'transparent' language with which we are surrounded daily but which we normally take for granted and do not normally interrogate. Take, for example, the phrase:

Life in the fast lane

and ask yourself in what contexts of use we should expect to encounter such language and what kinds of associations are suggested by it. The phrase is the 'headline' to an advertisement for mens' toiletries (for TURBO After-shave, in fact). Knowing the meaning of these words involves knowing their associations with fast cars, high living and dangerous pursuits as well as with men who are in the fast lane - not only literally in the motorway fast lane but, metaphorically, men whose careers are accelerating due to high levels of performance. Interrogating the phrase further reveals its gender-specificness. It is hard to imagine a perfume called Turbo and, correspondingly, difficult to associate what is fast, powerful and dangerous with women. The gender-directedness of many advertisements can be a key topic in language awareness, for language choice is crucial in the mediation of such messages. Advertising language is also a rich source for exploring creative play with words and the social and ideological worlds such play invokes (see, in particular, Cook, 1992).

Jokes are also inherently creative in the patterns and associations generated by language; they are also significant cultural products as they reveal much of the societies and cultures which shape them and their functions. Jokes are generically diverse and range from straightforward verbal punning, for example:

Q. What is black and white and red all over?
A. A newspaper.

to jokes which allude to or reproduce specific sets of socio-cultural assumptions. For example,

British Rail announces: Coffee up 20p a slice

Here the comic equation of coffee (a liquid) with the word slice (normally applied to pieces of bread or to cake) together with the sizeable cost of the increase combine to reveal much in public attitudes to British Rail; for example, that British Rail is believed to provide a poor but expensive service; that food and beverages served on British Rail are expensive and of poor quality; that the coffee, in particular, is barely drinkable and is more like bread or cake in its consistency.

The examples here illustrate a basis for awareness of literary and cultural uses of language. In using terms such as 'literary' and 'cultural' these are used with a small 'l' and a small 'c' (see McRae, 1991). In other words, creativity and cultural embedding are not the exclusive preserve of canonical texts but are pervasive throughout the most everyday uses of language (see also C. & M. Alptekin, 1990; Prodromou, 1990). One classroom-based exercise would be to ask students to discover the place of origin (names of businesses) for the following names:

Highlights
Headlines
Way Ahead
A Cut Above
Shampers
Making Waves

Working out answers to such questions (common names of hairdressing salons in Britain) involves learners in working through and understanding creative processes in the formation of the names; in particular, they will come to see how one aspect of the double meanings created suggests that the salon will, in one way or another, make the customer feel special, the centre of attention and, possibly, socially superior as well. Prodromou (1990) offers further examples and discussion.

2.2 Idioms, Key Words and Cultures

Language awareness can focus both on the patternings of phrases and on individual words. Colours are key words in all languages and, when investigated, often reveal interesting collocational and other patterns. The word 'green' in English, for example, refers to a particular point on the colour spectrum but also contracts partnerships of a cultural and idiomatic nature. Thus green is equated with positive actions ('green for go/give somebody the green light'); with youth and inexperience('green'/'greenhorn'); with feelings of jealousy ('green with envy'); with the environment ('green' issues/'the green party'/the 'greens') and with horticultural growth ('greens'/'green fingers'/'greenhouse'). Some of these combinations are transparent and easy to understand; others are more arbitrary; others are culturally significant. There are several ways in which more conscious awareness of such patterns might be stimulated but much can be learned 'about' the word by analysing how such patterns involving green (and indeed other colours) are translated into other languages (see McCarthy, 1990, 1991 for further related activities).

2.3 Language and Ideology

The relationship between language and ideology can also be productive for generating an important dimension to language awareness. Grammar can play a significant part in such a relationship. Take, for example, the following sentences which are headlines from daily newspapers - each representing a slightly different point of view on events the previous day in the township of Soweto in Southern Africa

A. Police shoot rioting blacks
B. Rioting blacks shot by police
C. Rioting blacks shot.

In sentence A the police is the clear subject of the sentence and rioting blacks the clear object of the sentence. The verb 'shoot' also clearly links the subject and the object. It is in the active voice and it is a transitive verb. Such specialist terms as 'voice' and 'transitivity' are economic and precise ways of referring to this important verb but much more significant is the function of the verb 'shoot': it clearly makes the police responsible for the shooting; agency is unambiguously assigned to them.

In sentence B the police are still the main agents in the sentence, that is, they are still responsible for the shooting; but the positioning of the noun 'the police' is different from sentence A. Here it is relegated to the end of the sentence. Correspondingly, 'rioting blacks' is fronted and as a result gets emphasised: items

placed at the front of clauses in English receive emphasis. One effect of these choices of grammatical structure is to make it seem as if the rioting blacks are primarily responsible for their own shooting.

In sentence C the agent is deleted entirely. Like sentence B it is in the passive voice. The passive voice allows writers a choice; either the agent can be left in (as with 'by police' in sentence B), or it can, as here, be deleted entirely. In the process, of course, sentence C presents an interpretation of events in which the police are not involved in the action at all.

The activity should help to reinforce the point that it is important not simply to look through language to the content of the message but rather to see through language to the ways in which messages are mediated or shaped, very often in the interests of preserving or of reinforcing ideologies. Grammar plays its part in such mediation, though it is vital that such a focus on grammar is not on the forms for their own sake but on the functions they encode.

Sentence A is taken from The Morning Star; sentence B is taken from The Guardian; and sentence C is taken from The Daily Telegraph.

A general language awareness involves at least:

a) awareness of some of the properties of language; creativity and playfulness; its double meanings.

b) awareness of the embedding of language within culture. Learning to read the language is learning about the cultural properties of the language. Idioms and metaphors, in particular, reveal a lot about the culture.

c) a greater self-consciousness about the forms of the language we use. We need to recognise that the relations between the forms and meanings of a language are sometimes arbitrary (witness the above example of green) but that language is a system and that it is for the most part very systematically patterned.

d) awareness of the close relationship between language and ideology. It involves 'seeing through language', in other words (see Carter and Nash, 1990; Fairclough (ed), 1992).

3. Language Awareness and Teaching Languages

What are the theoretical implications of this kind of analysis? What is its relevance to language teaching? The first observation is that native speakers of a language and advanced learners of a second or foreign language react to such bits of language mainly unconsciously and unreflectingly. In normal circumstances of communication - where there is successful uptake - most language users do not analyse language in this way. There is no need to. Indeed, some would argue that, for example, analyzing jokes can kill them, can destroy their effectiveness. By analogy, therefore, many language teachers would argue that we should not be encouraging our learners to analyse the target language. It is often said that too much self-consciousness can restrict opportunities for language acquisition and inhibit the learner. They point to the prevalence of communicative language teaching practices which are designed not to help learners to analyse the language but to experience it in use. Communicative methods do not, indeed should not, cultivate reflectiveness on language.

Opponents of language awareness also argue that, in order to analyse language, a considerable range of metalanguage is needed - that is, you need language to talk about language. (Notice in this connection the terms employed so far such as active, passive, agent-deletion, opaque/transparent idioms etc.) It is said very forcefully that language learners have a long journey to take. We should not make it more difficult for them by giving them extra luggage to carry. If language awareness is extra luggage, then learning a metalanguage is definitely excess baggage. Of course, the rejection of analysis by communicative language teaching theorists is part of a reaction against structural methods in language teaching. For example, grammar translation methods involved a lot of conscious metalingual naming of grammatical parts. There was no corresponding attention to helping learners use the language fluently in authentic contexts. Audio-lingual methods did not draw attention to language structure as explicitly as grammar translation methods. But audio-lingual methods are based on an isolation of language structure - a declarative knowledge which teachers seek to convert into procedural knowledge by pattern practice and the use of drills.

Communicative language teaching, influenced by theories such as those of Stephen Krashen, states that languages are acquired rather than learned. Indeed, language learning and language acquisition can be seen to be opposed. Language learning is largely a form-focussed activity. It focuses on the structures of the language in an explicit way. It focuses on accuracy. Language is taught as if it were a product, a static, machine-like entity. Such learning results in learners knowing that rather than knowing how - knowing that, for example, certain rules obtain in particular uses of language. Knowing that is conscious knowledge. It is

language awareness. Such knowledge may act as a monitor or editor of language use but is not and cannot be equivalent to language use.

For Krashen and for others greater emphasis should be placed on classroom language activity which is meaning-focussed and with a focus on fluency. Meaning-focussed activity exposes learners to and immerses them in language. It helps generate implicit knowledge of the language. Language is taught as if it were a process, an organic, dynamic entity. Such processes of learning are, it is said, much more likely to result in knowing **how** rather than knowing **that** - that is, knowing how to use language fluently, unselfconsciously and without inhibition. It is an intuitive implicit knowledge of the language, not an explicit knowledge about language.

It can be seen, therefore, that language awareness is resisted from a number of theoretical and practical viewpoints. Indeed, familiar contrasts and dualisms impregnate our discourse:

implicit	v.	explicit
meaning-focussed	v.	form-focussed
declarative	v.	procedural
conscious	v.	unconscious
knowing how	v.	knowing that
product	v.	process
language as static	v.	language as dynamic
knowledge of	v.	knowledge about
accuracy	v.	fluency
language learning	v.	language acquisition

Such familiar dualisms in discussions of language lead to what has been termed the pendulum theory of language teaching. Once a pendulum has swung then it should swing at least as far the other way. In this respect communicative methodology is at one end of the swing of the pendulum; structural grammar translation and audiolingual methods are at the other end of the swing of the pendulum - a swing which, in fact, takes us in a completely opposite direction. Until recently and during the 70s and 80s the pendulum has swung firmly away from and against language awareness.

Instead of adopting a dualist perspective, I would like to explore the possibilities of integration of these seemingly opposed theories of language learning. I believe that the development of a form of language awareness can serve such integration. Such integration can bring together conscious and unconscious approaches to L2 language development. This perspective is endorsed by Henry Widdowson in a chapter in his recent book 'Aspects of Language Teaching':

> ...it seems on the face of it to be likely that with some learners a conscious awareness of how language works and the subjection of their experience to analysis would suit their cognitive style, increase motivation by giving added point to their activities, and so enhance learning. It would enable them to make comparisons between the language they are learning and their own language, and engage in the kind of rational enquiry which is encouraged in other subjects on the curriculum.
> Widdowson (1990);

and by Ellen Bialystok in a paper published in 1982:

> In unanalysed representations of language, only the meanings are coded; in analysed representations, both the meanings and the relationships between the forms and those meanings are coded. Such analysed representations permit the learner to manipulate those form-meaning relationships to create particular structured uses of language. While conversations may proceed perfectly well from unanalysed representations.... other uses of a language involved in reading, writing, lecturing and explaining depend on greater analysis in linguistic structure.
> Bialystok (1982)

The quotations illustrate that explicit and implicit knowledge need not be in opposition and that under certain conditions explicit knowledge can facilitate acquisition. An important contribution to this debate is William Rutherford's book 'Second Language Grammar'. Rutherford makes a key point when he writes:

> whatever it is that is raised to consciousness is not to be looked upon as an artifact or object of study to be committed to memory by the learner.... what is raised to consciousness is not the grammatical product but aspects of the grammatical process.... C-R (consciousness raising) activity must strive for consistency with this principle.
> Rutherford (1987)

4. Integrating Language Awareness: The Contrastive Principle

If we accept that consciousness-raising or language awareness can be more extensively introduced into the language classroom, then how is this best achieved? If we accept that it is likely to be more successful if it is not seen as a

separate classroom activity (a 20 minute slot on language awareness on Thursday at 2.30) but rather integrated into the ongoing process of language learning, then how is this best achieved? If we accept that learning about language can inform not just language learning but learning in the broadest sense of the word, then how is this best achieved?

This brings us now to the second main question posed at the beginning of Section 3. What is the relevance of language awareness to language teaching and what does this mean in the context of the language classroom?

Explorations in this area in both mother-tongue and foreign language teaching underline the value of adopting a contrastive principle. A contrastive principle states that we are more likely to see things perceptively, creatively and with understanding if things are viewed not in isolation but set alongside each other, compared and contrasted. There are innumerable opportunities within the system of a language for contrasts to be generated. (See also Harris, 1994; McCarthy and Carter, 1994)

To activate this principle three broad parameters of language awareness can be posited:

a parameter of form
a parameter of function
a parameter of socio-cultural meaning

4.1 Form

Activities within the form parameter involve a systematic focus on more formalistic aspects of language. Examples might include strategies which draw attention to the -ed ending in seventy per cent of English past tense verbs; the frequency of plural in s; the phenomenon of the (ð and θ) in English phonology; the contrast between count and non-count nouns in English (see Ellis, 1989). Control of such forms is important for accurate use of the language. Such parameters of form can be usefully foregrounded by comparisons between the target language and the learner's language and/or interlanguage. Numerous activities exist or could be developed which might foster enhanced awareness of such formal properties of language.

There is always a certain arbitrariness both to forms of language and in the relations between form and meaning. Lexical collocations are a good example of this.

Thus, you can have:

a strong argument

a powerful argument

and

strong tea

but not

powerful tea

You can have

dry ground

wet ground

and

dry bread or toast

but not

wet bread or toast

These kinds of lexical gaps can be best exploited within activities which both highlight the contrasts and gaps internal to the target language and which bring into conscious awareness one or more of the related or contrasting patterns within the learner's language. An important component of the contrastive principle is the need to draw attention both to what is there and what is not there in and across languages. We should also note research which underlines the importance of learning words within contrastive patterns and sets. Such processes facilitate the kind of cognitive depth which is central to memorization of words.

4.2 Function

Activities within the parameter of function are designed to raise awareness of what language does, particularly in communicative contexts. Such awareness involves looking at the relationship between language and contexts of use. There are several classroom possibilities here:

i) comparisons between spoken and written texts (especially spoken and written versions of the same content or theme) (See, Harris, 1994)

ii) comparisons, preferably in relation to a common content, between different stages in the history of English or between different international Englishes (See Wilkinson, 1995)

iii) comparisons between different translations of the same stretch of language (see Duff, 1990)

iv) comparisons between contrasting styles designed for different purposes or functions (e.g. real language v. textbook language; scripted v. unscripted talk; real and made-up examples in dictionaries. COBUILD data is especially valuable here.) (See also Willis, 1990)

More specifically, it can be productive to generate awareness of the functions of words and phrases in texts, especially conversations. Studying the ways words are used to close down conversations can set up perceptions of how words can have different meanings and functions in different contexts (often underlining in the process the arbitrariness of the form/meaning relationship). It can also be fun to work out how words like **right, OK then, good** or phrases like **I'll let you be going then** or **This call must be costing you a lot of money** can be used to signal a desire to finish a telephone call. Activities of this kind illustrate the importance of understanding how closely language function and situation are intertwined (see recent articles by Bardovi-Harlig et al, 1991 and Holborrow, 1991).

4.3 Socio-Cultural Meaning

Awareness within the parameter of socio-cultural meaning is also best achieved by invoking the contrastive principle. Examples here might include activities which generate awareness of language cross-culturally. As we have seen, differences in newspaper headlines are an obvious starting point but within different newspapers and magazines the language of horoscopes, agony aunt letters or wanted columns involves different cultural and social assumptions. Indeed the absence of such items within a particular English language newspaper in different parts of the world or within the newspapers of the learners' culture as a whole could raise numerous points for contrastive, cultural literary and ideological analysis. (See also, Carter and Long, 1991).

5. The Reflective Language Learner: How Much Language Awareness?

One argument not so far mentioned is the case for an increased learner autonomy which goes with increased language awareness. Consciousness-raising in the area of language form and structure is closely connected with the movement in recent years to give to learners greater control over their own learning. One particular domain here is learner training, the notion of learning to learn English promoted, very successfully in my view, in the work of Gail Ellis and Barbara Sinclair. The aim of the teaching materials developed by Ellis and Sinclair (1989) is to promote greater awareness on the part of learners of the learning strategies which they use. Such greater consciousness will, it is argued, help make such learners more reflective, flexible and adaptable. A more reflective language learner is a more effective language learner.

This kind of awareness is best promoted by a view of language as **discourse**. What I have tried to illustrate is that teachers and learners should go beyond an attention to linguistic form towards a conscious understanding of the role of language in real texts, spoken and written, and of how those texts operate in contexts.

Much depends, therefore, on the nature of the language awareness and how much there should be. It depends of course on whether the awareness of language is

incidental
planned or
integrated

and that in turn depends on the purpose of a course, the goals and objectives set for the learner or set by learners for themselves.

Incidental language awareness occurs when teachers take an opportunity as it arises to generate learners' attention to language. Single words, idioms, metaphors or one line texts are introduced without any particular pre-planning.

Planned language awareness would involve particular programmes of learner training; planned courses in language awareness; a regular focus on language embedded in courses on grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing development and so on.

Integrated language awareness takes language awareness as a core component in language courses, providing systematic opportunities for reflection on language as a standard and pervasive part of all language learning.

6. Conclusion

I have argued in this paper for the following:

1. Learning a language involves understanding something of that language. It is unlikely that such understanding can be developed by naturalistic exposure. It has to be quite explicitly taught.

2. Teaching can and should build on existing competences. For example, all learners have an inbuilt literary competence. But it has to be developed.

3. Learning about a language also involves understanding something of the culture within which the language is embedded. This involves aesthetic understanding, appreciating the creative play and invention of language use. Knowing a language involves appreciating how and why its rules can be broken or creatively manipulated. It involves appreciating jokes and ironies, responding to puns, and seeing through language to the points of view and ideologies which it can reveal as well as conceal (see also Candlin, 1989).

4. Such language awareness assists in the development of interpretative and inferential skills. Indeed it has to. It is impossible to teach in detail about the literature, the culture or ideologies of the societies which use the target language. There is neither time nor curricular space to allow this. What can be taught is the procedural ability, the ability to learn how to learn such things, the capacity for interpretation and inference in and through language.

5. In this way, language learning and teaching become indistinguishable from language education in the broadest sense of the word. Learners are better learners if they are able to analyse what they are doing and why they are doing it. Language teaching has for too long been seen as training in the instrumental functions and purposes of the language and for too long there has been a strong anti-intellectualism associated with communicative language teaching. A learner, educated in the use of the language, is aware of the language as a cultural artefact. She/he is a student/analyst of the language as well as a user. Such awareness can be stimulated at all stages in the language development process and courses should make greater provision for developing such awareness from the earliest stages to the most advanced levels.

Teachers have responded to this work with great enthusiasm. They are particularly interested in the relationship between knowing about language and using the language effectively, and interesting evidence concerning this relationship (which would need to form the subject of a separate paper) is being gathered. Many teachers do, however, point out that greater language awareness confers greater power on pupils. The ability to analyse language should not be the exclusive preserve of the teacher. It is important that teachers share that power with learners.

Work on language awareness in English as a mother-tongue is commensurate with current developments in EEL/ESL in learner autonomy, task-based learning, student-centred language development, the relationship between teaching the language and teaching the culture and with the pedagogic implications of the shifting roles of teachers and learners in the classroom.

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2 USING THEMATIC ORGANISATION FOR EVALUATING SCHOOL CHILDREN'S WRITTEN NARRATIVES

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1. Introduction

In recent years, within the tradition of Systemic Functional Grammar, there have been several attempts by applied linguists to discover the linguistic and discoursal features of school children's writings (Halliday, 1985a; Hasan, 1984; Halliday and Hasan, 1985; Martin, 1984, 1986; Martin and Painter, 1986; Christie, 1985, 1986; Foley, 1990; Ghadessy, 1990). A number of these studies have analysed children's written narratives by using the pioneering work of Labov and Valetsky, 1967 and Labov, 1972. However, the analysis of children's writings in terms of **thematic organisation** or the **method of development** has been much less in evidence.

The method of development consciously or sub-consciously influences our judgements about how good or bad a text is. As teachers we react differently to children's writings and, if required to evaluate them, we give higher or lower grades. But what are the bases for our evaluation? In many cases the important factors are the vocabulary, the grammar, the content, and to some extent, the organisation. For many teachers the last factor is the most difficult to define. In the majority of cases, good organisation means that the writing has a beginning, a middle and an end.

On the other hand, it can be claimed that organisation is a part of something higher that all coherent texts must possesss, i.e. a kind of 'unity'. Any text has some kind of unity on the surface and another kind of unity underneath; we may call the first the 'unity of texture' and the second the 'unity of structure' after Hasan (Halliday and Hasan, 1985). What the teachers consider as organisation seems to relate to the second unity.

It is the purpose of this paper to show that the teachers are also influenced sub-consciously by the first kind of unity which is partially manifested by the thematic organisation of the texts under consideration. The paper will deal with a discussion of thematic organisation as an option in the Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday:1985b) first before analysing some texts written by four primary school children in Singapore. The ultimate purpose of the article is to

show that we can make our subjective impressions of a text more objective by looking at **one** system of selection and its implementation by all language users. The discussion of several other systems given by the Systemic Functional Grammar is beyond the scope of this paper.

The Systemic Functional Grammar of Michael Halliday has provided us with some powerful tools that can be used in the analysis of all types of discourse. Thematic organisation is one of the systems in the textual metafunction of the language and it can be used to determine the method of development in children's writings. Halliday (1985b:62) proposes that,

> The choice of clause Themes plays a fundamental part in the way discourse is organised; it is this in fact, which constitutes what is often known as the 'method of development' of the text.

Fries (1983:119) also attempts to study several aspects of Theme development by putting forth a number of arguments. One that is of interest to us here is that,

> Thematic content correlates with the method of development of a text and the nature of a text (this deals with lexico-semantic content of Themes).

2. Data Collection

In this paper we intend to examine the method of development of four narrative texts that were created by some school children in Singapore. The texts were selected from a much larger sample elicited by Jaya Laxmi for her Academic Exercise at the National University of Singapore in 1985. The writers were 6th grade students from several Primary Schools in Singapore.

The subjects were given a set of four pictures (Hill, 1960) numbered 1-4 and asked to write a story based on them. The tests were administered to the students in their own classes. They were told to write, in the space provided, as they would for any of their classroom composition writing, the only difference being that their answers would not be graded. Miss Laxmi explains below how the task was carried out.

> The students were requested to work on their own. I only helped them when they raised their hands to ask questions for clarification. These were mainly to do with spelling or naming of the objects. I went to the students individually and

answered them so as not to distract the other students or influence their choice of words. (p.12)

Although students were given about 45 minutes for the assignment, most finished in about 30 minutes. They were asked to proof-read their texts before submitting them and also keep within the limits provided. Only a few exceeded this limit.

The actual analysis and discussion of the results are presented in sections 6 and 7. In the following sections we deal with some background information that is necessary for readers who are not familiar with Halliday's thematic analysis. (Please see Appendix I for the text of the passages used in this study.)

3. Thematic Organisation

As the maximal grammatical unit in the analysis of language a sentence or clause[1] has a structure that consists of a noun phrase and a verb phrase. In English we usually start with the noun phrase followed by the verb phrase. Analysing English functionally, we can say that a sentence or a clause has two parts. That which comes first for various reasons and that which comes last. We attach some significance to first position, i.e. it is our point of departure of the message; we usually put known information in this position; or we wish to draw the reader/hearer's attention to some part of the message we are conveying. These possibilities are shown in the following examples[2].

1. My sister, cusin and I	didn't go to school...
Theme	Rheme
Subject	Predicate

2. After some time	she felt so worried that...
Theme	Rheme

3. But	**unfortunately**	**while they were...**	the tennis ball...
textual	interpersonal	ideational	
Theme			Rheme

In the first example, the point of departure is *My sister, cousin and I* which is new information as this is the first clause of the text.. The second example starts with *After some time,* a prepositional phrase that the writer wishes to give

prominance to. Here there is another choice, i.e. putting the phrase at the end of the clause. In the third example there are three elements of structure that come initially. Each has a function which will be discussed below. Again we should note that both *unfortunately* and *while they were ...* could be shifted to other positions in the same clause.

It is beyond the scope of the present paper to discuss in detail all the implications of the above choices. It should, however, be emphasised that the picture as to the selection of language for first position in the clause is much more complicated than the simple description above. The stand taken here is that there is a significance attached to the first position and if we look at all the choices made for this place, then a pattern may emerge. This pattern has been called the 'method of development' of a text. In the following sections, we discuss the linguistic tools and methodology (Halliday, 1985b) for establishing this development.

4. Definition of Theme

According to Fries (1983:117), there are two approaches to the definition of Theme, i.e. the 'combining' and the 'separating'. In the combing approach the concepts of Theme/Rheme and Given/New are merged whereas in the separating approach the two sets of concepts are analysed as belonging to two different systems in the information structure of a clause. The present analysis deals with Theme/Rheme as a separate system from that of Given/New.

Halliday (1985b:39) distinguishes between Theme/Rheme and Topic/Comment by saying that 'the label "Topic" usually refers to only one particular kind of Theme ... and it tends to be used as a cover term for two concepts that are functionally distinct, one being that of Theme and the other being that of Given'. Halliday's definition for Theme (p38) is as follows :

> The Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned.

Clauses in spoken as well as written discourse have a structure appropriate for the presentation of information. Every clause plays a significant role in the creation of cohesive chains (Hasan:1985) which ultimately contribute to the coherence of the text. Any part of the clause can relate to something that has already been mentioned in the previous text, given information, or to something that is not mentioned before, new information. In English we usually start a clause with given information and end it with new infromation.

Thus the Theme is oriented towards the speaker/writer,i.e. this is how I want to start my message; and the Rheme oriented towards the listener/reader, i.e. this is what I want you to pay attention to (Halliday :1985b:316). But the Theme also has two other functions that are equally important. One is that in many cases it overtly connects the present clause with the clause/clauses that have gone before, this is the textual function of the Theme; the other is that there may be some kind of evaluation of the content of the message by the speaker/writer. This constitues the interpersonal function in the Theme.

5. Theme Types

It frequently happens that the Theme in a clause coincides with the subject, as in example 1 above. If this happens, we have an 'Unmarked Theme'. But it is also possible to have another constituent placed initially in a clause. If this is the case, we have a 'Marked Theme' as in example 2 above. In this example, the point of departure of the message is *After some time.* Of course the Theme here is not the grammatical subject.

Themes can also be classified according to their internal structure. All the Themes in the above examples are 'simple' but we can also have 'multiple' Theme structures. A simple Theme always has an ideational element in it, i.e. *My sister, cousin and I* or *After some time.* A multiple Theme, on the other hand, has more than one element as in example 3 above.

As indicated in example 3, there is an order for multiple Themes, i.e. textual^interpersonal ^ideational (^ means followed by). Other combinations such as textual^ideational or interpersonal^ideational or the ideational on its own are also possible. A Theme must always have an ideational element in it (obligatory); it may or may not have the other elements (optional). Examples 4 and 5 show these possibilities, i.e. the textual^ideational and the interpersonal^-ideational.

4. Then	**we**	tried to get the ball down...
textual	ideational	
Theme		Rheme

5. Unfortunately	**the shuttlecock**	was too high up the tree
interpersonal	ideational	
Theme		Rheme

Another type is when a clause is used as the Theme of another clause. If this happens, we have an ideational Theme of the type 'clause as Theme', i.e.

6. As he was climbing higher and higher,	we	were very worried about his safety
	Theme	Rheme
Theme		Rheme

And finally Themes can be ellipted as in the second clause of example 7.

7. Unfortunately	**he**	got the ball
interpersonal	ideational	
Theme		Rheme
and	-	came down safely
textual	ideational	
Theme		Rheme

One other Theme type, i.e. 'predicated Theme' was not found in the four narratives analysed.

6. Clause Types

The present analysis follows the procedure provided for thematic development by Halliday (1985b:Chapter3).Thus only the Themes of main clauses, i.e. declarative, interrogative and imperative are analysed. Halliday states that 'the main contribution comes from the thematic structure of independent clauses' (1985b:62). In some other analyses, only the declarative clauses are analysed (Berry, forthcoming). However, due to the nature of the written materials here, it was felt that the inclusion of interrogative and imperative clauses is also necessary. The texts under discussion include dialogues between the characters in the stories and clauses of the above type are frequently used. (See the Appendix 1 for thematic organisation and actual texts used in the analysis.)

In independent declarative clauses the Theme includes everything right up to the finite verb; the Theme in interrogative clauses includes the *WH*-word for clauses starting with *who, what, where,* etc. and the Aux+Subject for *yes/no* questions. For imperatives, the verb at the beginning of the clause will

constitute the Theme. All conjunctive adjuncts are included in the textual part of the Theme and modal adjuncts in the interpersonal part. The grammatical category of the Theme in the declarative clauses includes nominal groups, adverbial groups, and prepositional phrases. (See Halliday 1985 for the full list of all the above categories.)

7. Results

The following tables provide the grammatical and lexico-semantic properties of the Themes in the four passages analysed. We have followed the procedure given by Fries (1992a) and Ghadessy (1993) for summarising the findings with some modification. A discussion section follows each table.

Table 1: General characteristics of the four texts

Texts	A	B	C	D
Length (words)	142	114	113	101
No of clauses	21	15	18	14
Lexical density	6.67	7.60	6.27	7.21

Discussion : Evaluation of children's narratives cannot be based on either the number of words or the number of clauses used. However, what is called lexical density (LD) can be used to show the relationship between the words and clauses in the text. Halliday defines LD as 'the number of lexical items per clause' (1985b:67). In our case here we have decided to change this to the number of words per clause as the distinction between lexical items (content words) and non-lexical items (function words) is not that easy to make . Many words fall between the two and are on the boundary. The texts then can be ordered as C, A, D, B, based on lowest LD to highest LD. According to Wallace and Danielwicz (1987:10) clauses or 'idea units' in spoken langauge have about 6 words whereas the average for written language is 9 words per clause.

Table 2: Grammatical properties of Themes				
Texts	A	B	C	D
Marked Idea Theme	14.3	20	27.8	21.5
Unmar Idea Theme	85.7	80	72.2	78.6
Simple Theme	61.9	53.3	50	64.3
Multiple Theme	38.1	46.7	50	35.7
Textual Theme	38.1	33.3	38.9	35.7
Interpersonal Theme	0	13.3	11.1	0
Clause as Theme	4.8	13.3	11.1	14.3
Pronouns as Theme	42.8	53.3	27.8	57.1
Ellipted Theme	4.8	6.7	0	7.1

Discussion : The unmarked form of the clause Theme in Systemic Grammar is the default option. Any deviation from this will add a meaning dimension to the clause. In terms of the complexity of the structure, we can safely say that the marked forms are more advanced and hence more complex than the unmarked ones. The marked Themes can consist of adverbials or main clauses moved away from their default positions and placed in a thematic position. Thus we can see that student C uses more marked Themes than student A. The picture is actually more complicated than this as we will discuss the lexico-semantic options in the Themes of the four passages below. The picture is almost reversed if we look at the use of unmarked Themes. Student A uses a lot more of these than student C.

We also notice a major diffrence between the use of simple Themes between students B and C on the one hand and Students A and D on the other. The reverse is true with regards to the use of multiple Themes. Also there is a difference between students B and C on the one hand and students A and D on the other in relation to the use of interpersonal Themes. A and D have not used any of these options.

All students have used clauses as Themes. The difference here could be related to the lexico-semantic properties of the clauses used. Student C's contribution stands out in the sense that his clauses are projections, i.e. speech and thought presentation which involve more complicated grammatical processes than the use of a manner or time adverbial clause placed initially. Student C also uses fewer pronouns due to the variety of Themes selected.

(The information in Table 2 is reproduced below in Figure 1.)

Figure 1 : Thematic Organisation : Grammatical Properties
Abbreviations are : LD (lexical density), MIT (marked ideational Theme), UIT (unmarked ideational Theme), ST (simple Theme), MT (multiple Theme), TT (textual Theme), IT (interpersonal Theme), CT (clause as Theme), PT (pronouns as Theme), ET (ellipted Theme)

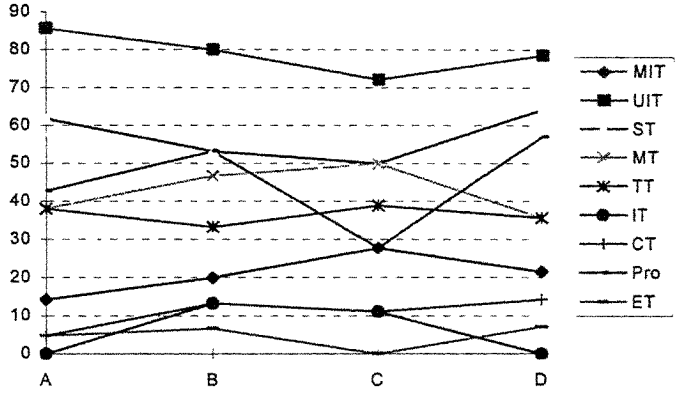


Table 3: Lexico-semantic properties of Themes

Texts	A	B	C	D
Major text participants	71.5	66.7	38.9	57.1
Object/portion of scene	9.5	13.4	27.8	14.3
Time	14.3	6.7	0	21.5
Location	0	0	5.5	0
Manner	4.8	13.4	5.5	0
Process	0	0	5.5	7.1
Projection	0	0	11.1	0
Abstract concept	0	0	5.5	0

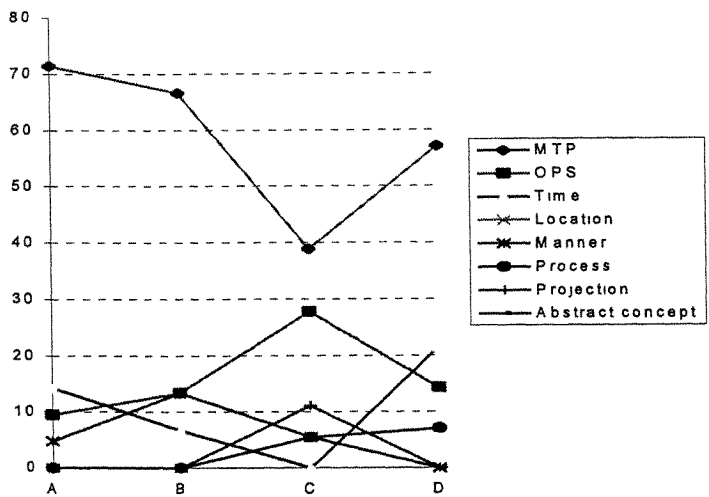
Discussion : Stories are about people, places, objects, actions, times, etc. Any of these semantic categories can start a clause and thus be included in the Theme. On the other hand using only one category to start every clause with is unusual. Thus the Themes can indicate the method of development by orienting the reader towards one, two, or more of the above categories.

The method of development can be seen by considering the frequency of the options related to the lexico-semantic features of the Themes. Of the four

students C has a more 'balanced' use of these features than the other students. The method of development of student A especially is by starting 71.5% of his/her clauses by an animate participant. The point of departure or the orientation is towards people in the story. Only a few, 9.5%, are used as object/portion of scene. Students A, B, and D have used time adverbials. Student C's use of location, process, projection, and abstract concept is noteworthy.

(The information in Table 3 is reproduced in Figure 2 below.)

Figure 2 : Thematic Organisation : Lexico-semantic Properties
Abbreviations are : MTP (major text participants), OPS (object or portion of scene), Time, PRO (process), LOC (locative), PROJ (projection), MAN (manner), Abstract Concept (ABST)



Conclusions

The building blocks of all meaningful texts are clauses which contain the messages that the writer or the speaker wishes to convey. We have shown in this article that there is a system for the construction of each clause and the chaining of them together. The concept of Theme as defined by the Systemic Functional Grammar of Michael Halliday has been used to determine the options in the system for the beginning or point of depature of each clause. It has been argued that, based on the organisation of Themes, different

developmental patterns can be established and that teachers can make a more objective way of evaluating texts by looking at these patterns.

What has been suggested above can be applied to any text that may be used for different educational purposes. The analysis should be seen in the larger context of establishing what has been called the registers of written /spoken English. It is assumed that each register has associated with it special grammatical and lexico-sematic features. The above analysis is one way of establishing some of these properties. An analysis of the other options in the Mood and the Transitivity systems would provide additional features for each register under investigation.

Finally any text produced by children has value in the society despite the attraction of some recent researchers to 'more valued' texts such as some genres in the fields of business and industry. Narratives, written or spoken, have been with us for a very long time and will be with us for still a longer time if humanity is not destroyed completely by some unforseen catastrophe. We hope that the analyses and discussions here can make a very small contribution to our understanding of how written narrative texts by chilren are constructed and that the findings can help language instructors to better evaluate such texts when confronted with them.

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[1] A sentence may consist of one or more than one clause. Only main clauses have been analysed thematically.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, all the examples are from the analysed texts.

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Appendix : Passages Used in this Study

The text of the narratives used for analysis.

Spelling errors are not corrected and clause boundaries are marked by /. Clause Themes are in **bold** and marked ideational Themes undelined. The following procedure, based on Halliday (1985b) has been used for identifying Themes. The Theme is marked if it is not the subject of the clause. In declarative clauses, the Theme constitutes everything right up to the first finite verb, e.g. ***Last week*** *was a public holiday.* Almost all interrogative clauses are projections and function as marked ideational Themes because they are removed from their default position and put in thematic position. They have not been reanalysed thematically, e.g. ***'What am I going to do?'*** ***She*** *thought.* Theme otherwise constitutes the WH-word. In imperative clauses, the Theme constitutes the finite verb. If the whole clause is a projection and placed initially then all of it is the Theme, e.g. ***'Come on, Hit harder!'*** ***Said*** *Jill.* Dependent relative clauses have not been analysed.

A

/Last week was a public holiday./**My sister, cousin and I** didn't go to scool/ **so we** stayed at home to play badminton. **/Because I didn't know how to play badminton**, **I** sat aside to watch them play. **/They** played for a very long time. **/Then my sister** suddenly hit the ball very high. **/The ball** stucked on the tree **/and** couldn't get down. **/My sister** shooked the tree to get the ball down./**But she** failed./**After some time** , she felt so worried **/that she** started to cry. **/I** felt sad too/**when I** saw my sister cried, **/so I** decided toclimb up the tree to get the ball./**My sister** agreed/ **so I** climbed up the tree to get the ball./**After some time** , I took the ball down./**My sister** was very happy/**and she** started playing again./

B

/Last week, my neighbour, Mary and I and my brother went to the playground near our flat to play badminton./ **As we were playing happily**, **Mary** hit the shuttlecock too high **/and it** flew up the tree./ **Then we** tried to get the ball down by shaking the tree. **/Unfortunately, the shuttlecock** was too high up the tree. **/We** were very sad./ **My brother Jeffrey** saw/ **that we** were unhappy,/ **he** decided to climb up the tree to get the shuttle cock for us./ **As he was climbing higher and higher, we** were very worried about his safety./ **Fortunately, he** got the ball/ **and** came down safely./ **Then we** continued to play the game./

C

/'Come on, Hit harder!',/ said Jill./ **Jill and his sister, Jane** were playing a game of badminton./ Sitting beside was his brother, Smith./ **Suddenly, Jane** hit the shuttlecourt with all her might/ **and it** fell onto a tree./ ' What am I going to do?',/ **she** thought. /**Then , an idea** came to her./ **She** swayed the tree by herself/ **but it** was under her ability. /**She** called Smith and Jill to assist her but in vain./ **Then, Smith** climbed up a tree./ As a result he fell from the tree/ **and his body** ached./ **Luckily, a gust** of wind blew/ **and the shuttlecourt** fell from the tree./ **After that, they** continued with their game./

D

/One fine day , three people were playing badminton in a park./ **It** was fɹn!/ **They** enjoyed playing the game./ When a girl hitted the ball very hard, **the ball** went up very high /**and** rested on one of the tall tree./ **A girl** tried to climb the tree/ **but then she** do not know how to climb tree/ **so he** asked a boy to climb the tree./ **He** couldn't get up the upper branch of the tree/ **so he** asked a girl to lend a hand./ When he got up the tree, **he** took the ball/ **and** climb down the tree.

3 WHY 'OFTEN' ISN'T 'ALWAYS'

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Introduction

The focus of this paper is sufficiently restricted to deserve an early justification. Its concern is to explore and explain an apparent tendency among Chinese learners of English at quite advanced levels (first year undergraduate students for whom English is a second language) to use the lexical item "always" in ways that will strike many experienced users of English in academic contexts as erroneous or misconceived. Since, at worst, preoccupations of this sort can be summarily dismissed as both prescriptivist and myopic, the following discussion is not without risks, especially if undertaken in the name of language awareness. It is nonetheless my belief that the judgements made by experienced users of English about students' writing are not adequately explicable as arbitrary exercises of power and whim, but that they quite often reflect values and priorities that it can be helpful for students to understand. To this end, it is worth moving beyond generalities (e.g. that students are sometimes adjudged to adopt an overly dogmatic tone and make unwarranted claims in their academic writing) in order to ask how readers' judgements could be influenced by specific linguistic choices. Rather than merely contrasting microlinguistic and macrolinguistic concerns, I shall attempt to show how local choices sometimes contribute towards the overall coherence, or lack of coherence, that academic readers find in students' writing.

Research into ESL writing has done much to characterise ways in which ESL students' writing often - though not always - lacks coherence in the eyes of academic staff. Some of the subject teachers interviewed in universities have commented freely on the "irrelevance" and "illogicality" that they find in ESL students' assignments (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991, p.20) or consider much ESL students' writing to be deficient in background knowledge, awareness of text macrostructures, planning, "conceptual imagination", vocabulary and objectivity regarding value systems (Johns, 1991, p.168). Johns herself observes of ESL writing in an adjunct class that "students tended to be general, to make knowledge claims that were inaccurate, unsupported, and therefore lacking in coherence for the target audience" (Johns, 1990, p.221). In a number of comparative studies of L1 and L2 writing, claims made by L2 writers are said to have been typically less fully supported and developed, less effectively linked and less adapted to a target readership than in otherwise comparable argumentative text structures produced by L1 writers (Silva, 1993, pp.664-665,

reviewing the literature). Bruce and Lewkowicz (1991) point to a lack of initial direction, of clear transitions across levels of generality, and of a final synthesis, and to the common inclusion of unselective and uncritical listings of what other writers "said" 1, as characteristic shortcomings in samples of academic writing by students at the University of Hong Kong, as these were perceived and evaluated by language teachers and other disciplinary specialists in their comparative study.

The prevalence of such reactions to ESL students' writing quite properly motivates a great deal of critical discussion and investigation within applied linguistics. As several of the above sources point out, the expectations of academic staff are themselves not always (or perhaps even normally) clear, consistent and uniform. ESL student writers face considerable difficulties, and often show remarkable abilities, in reconciling their own comments, views and values with the obscure demands of teacher-readers that form an important part of the context for their writing. For my immediate purposes in this paper, I shall assume the context of an ESL writing class in which the teacher seeks to work with learners to explore and understand some of the demands of "academic writing" in English. I take the view that a critical exploration will avoid either imposing or opposing conformity to academic readers' expectations, but will seek to increase an appreciation of some of the textual origins and intellectual reasons that are likely to underlie these readers' reactions to students' writing.

Students' writing may be found to lack coherence for many reasons. Among these, we should not overlook the effects on readers of specific linguistic choices in the textual development of a writer's argument and standpoint. Semantic values and pragmatic implications of ostensibly familiar words and phrases are liable to be diversely and sometimes imperfectly understood. These differences can form a locus of misunderstandings or disagreements between reader and writer that may have profound effects on, for example, a reader's judgements of a writer's viewpoint, or competence, or commitment. When viewed in this light, explorations of microlinguistic choices with ESL learners2 can help teachers to actualise, in practical and accessible ways, some of the far-reaching concerns over relevance, consistency and warrant in argumentative discourse that arise in academic and professional deliberations over the development of advanced writing abilities. (Allison, in press, develops and illustrates this claim more fully.) Attention to specific choices can also take

1 Pickard (1994) has investigated the reporting verb SAY in students' and others' academic writing

2 Comparable issues will doubtless arise in other languages and will not be confined to second-language learners, as academic writing is first approached.

account of the expectations of teachers and learners who want to continu overtly to address matters of grammar and vocabulary in language classes.

The focus of this paper is on just one such linguistic choice, involving th word "always" and alternatives such as "often" that might have been chosen i its place. The paper takes an example of student essay writing (also presente and briefly discussed in Allison, in press) to suggest how problematic uses c *always* appear likely to reflect adversely on the student writer's perceive competence in undertaking an academic discussion. The status of this kind c problem as a "common error" is raised to find out whether any useful diagnose and possible treatments are suggested in pedagogic grammars that are availabl to students in the teaching situation. The apparent persistence of such usag among Hong Kong undergraduate students is then related to choices availabl in Cantonese, and to linguistic analyses of the descriptive facts an communicative options in English. A small sample of concordanced data finally examined to suggest how far the practice of ESL student writers at th University of Hong Kong may compare with the usage of other writers i locally published academic writing. The point of working with such data is nc to establish authoritative truths, but to suggest how alternativ lexicogrammatical possibilities and their implications can be investigated wit benefit by students during group and class activities.

Illustrating A Problem

As a working assumption, I shall take the following example as an instance c fairly widespread usage among first-year undergraduate writers in Hong Kon and not a personal idiosyncracy on the part of the student writer. I base thi assumption on my unquantified impressions of usage and comments by othe students I teach, corroborative feedback from a number of colleagues in m teaching situation, and evidence below that *always* has been identified as source of "common errors" among Hong Kong learners of English. Th example in question has already served the pedagogic purpose of generatin student discussion about linguistic choices and their effects on the claims writer is making. Actual frequency of usage could also be explored by student through work on linguistic corpuses.

The introductory paragraph below is taken from an essay submitted by a first year student in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Hong Kong who wa following an English enhancement course and whose general English standar and results were somewhat above average. (Members of the class gav permission for extracts from their essays to be cited on the understanding tha anonymity would be preserved.) The title of the essay was "The approache techniques and effectiveness of behavior therapy in helping a patient qui

smoking". The topic and background source materials were chosen by the student and were said to be of interest: while such comments from student to teacher remain open to diverse interpretations, the thorough treatment of the topic in the essay tended to bear out this reported judgement. The source materials were mainly American in origin (and have influenced spelling choices). The opening paragraph was as follows:

> *Cigarette smoking is a very common habit in Hong Kong. Data from researches have well supported that cigarette smoking has a high correlation with lung cancer. And lung cancer is a great disease killer in Hong Kong. In view of this hazardous result of smoking, many smokers had tried to quit smoking. However, since smoking is a very addictive behavior, people who try to quit smoking always result in failure. There are actually many ways derived from studies in Psychology that can help people quit smoking. And these ways are always carried out in behavior therapy.*

The two uses of *always* in this short extract are, of course, not the only potential causes for concern about the writing as an introduction to an academic treatment of the topic. Among the intellectual errors that might be attributed to the student on the basis of this opening paragraph are the mistaken assumption that a high correlation is proof of cause and effect, since there is a leap from "high correlation" to "hazardous result" in the argument. There are also various syntactic infelicities (e.g. the collocation "people... result in failure": compare "people... meet with failure" or "people's attempts... result in failure"). Discussions of the extract in class might, therefore, elicit a number of different points of interest on different occasions.

That said, it is worth pointing out the contribution made by the two uses of *always* to the text and to impressions to which it could give rise. The first instance is factually at variance with common knowledge, with the source texts used and with the essay itself. Even though failure is frequent, people's unaided attempts to give up smoking do sometimes succeed, hence do *not* "always result in failure". The rate of success in a population can even afford a benchmark against which the rate of success for particular forms of behaviour therapy are compared. (This point was discussed in a source cited and used by the student writer.) The second sense is hard to interpret meaningfully. Does the use of *always* imply, for example, that every patient invariably follows the complete set of ways to help people quit smoking? In both cases, replacement of always by a term denoting what is frequent, or typical, such as *often* or *commonly*, would eliminate any contradiction or implausibility in what the student writer is asserting.

Searching For Explanations

The complexity of the linguistic choices we make, and the limited access that we have to our own mental processes, conspire to render explanations a hazardous and speculative affair. The following discussion will seek to throw light on what is possible, but cannot hope to demonstrate what selection or combination of these possibilities underlay the choices made by one student writer on one occasion. Even the student's own comments (which in this case are reconstituted from the teacher's notes and recollections) cannot transcend these epistemological difficulties. They are, nonetheless, of special relevance as a source of insight.

Comments by students

Essentially, and summarised in the teacher's metalanguage, the student writer's own position was that these uses of *always* were intended to denote very high frequency, stronger than *often* or comparable terms, but not strictly to effect a universal claim. An account in terms of the L1 was also proposed, as the student claimed that Cantonese uses one and the same expression where English would use either *often* or *always* depending on emphasis and context. Other students questioned this judgement and pointed to a comparable distinction between two expressions in Cantonese. Students acknowledged this area of usage as sometimes problematic in English. For immediate purposes in class, matters were taken no further: the student writer had indicated agreement after small-group discussion that *often* would serve better to convey the intended meaning in the context. Whether such a change involves learning or token acquiescence is, of course, impossible to determine other than impressionistically. My judgement as teacher was that the student accepted the revision as an improvement but did not see the change as important; I felt that further discussion would have been a case of overkill.

The commentaries that follow arise from my own efforts to account for an apparent lack of awareness, on the part of a learner who appeared to be interested in English, of what is potentially an important linguistic difference in terms of whether claims being made in the course of an academic essay will appear defensible or not. This issue of sensitivity to a distinction needs to be distinguished from a question of interest, with which it is sometimes confused in shop talk among teachers. One can, after all, quickly recognise many distinctions without having any great interest in them. More to the point, a student can fail to see why a distinction would matter despite manifesting a genuine desire to improve his or her writing.

In what follows, we consider the status of *always* as a source of "common errors" among ESL users, look briefly at comparable expressions in Cantonese, and go on to examine linguistic arguments that challenge a categorical interpretation of *always* as strictly invariable in English. Having established the underlying complexity of the choices at issue and the largely inevitable limitations of pedagogic reference material, the paper calls for classroom exploration of appropriately chosen samples of usage.

Always a problem?

In order to move beyond personal impressions derived from one classroom context, I decided to see how *always* was treated in three pedagogic grammars to which my students were already encouraged to refer on a self-access basis.

Bunton (1989) identifies overuse and misuse of *always* as a common error in English usage among Hong Kong learners (Bunton, 1989, p.5). Bunton's first example of an error is *I always listen to the radio*, which he contrasts with acceptable forms *I often listen to the radio, I listen to the radio every day* and *I always listen to the radio in the evenings*. Bunton observes: "*Always* means 'at all times', so *often* or *frequently* may be more accurate unless the situation is more clearly defined, e.g. *He always sits at the front of the class / She always goes to the cinema on Sundays*". In these examples, a situation has been defined by means of adverbial phrases of time (*on Sundays; in the evenings*) or place (*at the front of the class*), taken in conjunction with world knowledge (e.g. that *class* indicates an institutionalised event as well as a location). Though concise exposition is always a problem, it is perhaps a pity that Bunton does not go on to consider the potential acceptability of *I always listen to the radio* in more extended discourse contexts where a situation has been adequately defined in or can be understood from neighbouring utterances. (In the same way, I hope that my own generalisation, *concise exposition is always a problem,* is acceptably specified in the previous sentence by its context of occurrence in an academic discussion.) Bunton's exposition may serve to capture default expectations of fluent English users who play by the rules constraining short pedagogical grammars, but does not in this instance appear to do full justice to the contextual complexities that determine what can meaningfully be said.

Whereas Bunton (1989) notes that one of the relevant problems in usage is an issue of what *always* means, Willis (1991, unit 34, pp. 68-69) simply lists *always* and *often* among twelve "adverbs of frequency" and then discusses placement of such adverbs in relation to BE, other main verbs, auxiliaries and modals. The subsequent exercises appear to assume that meanings are known and not at issue. Although he treats adverbs of frequency together with adverbs of probability in the same unit, Willis does not discuss the semantic relationship

between these two forms of modification, with the result that the similarities in their syntactic placement might be inferred as the sole reason for the joint treatment.

In a more sophisticated exposition, Leech and Svartvik (1975) display some of the correspondences between several areas of meaning relating to positions "on a scale of amount" (section 68, p. 52). Their treatment of *always* distinguishes between duration, with *always* and *for ever* both meaning 'for all time', and frequency, for which *always* serves to express the upper limit 'on every occasion' (sections 156 and 157, p.81). *Always* and *never* are presented as the upper and lower limits on a scale of indefinite frequency, which in "a rough indication" includes *often* and *frequently* at the level of 'on many occasions' (section 157, p. 81). Where frequency is concerned, this exposition therefore assigns *always* and *often* to different, non-overlapping parts of a scale. This appears to capture default expectations over usage, while the admission that the account gives a "rough indication" implicitly makes room for contextually determined variations in interpretation of specific instances. Figure 1 is extracted and slightly adapted from one column in the table presented by Leech and Svartvik (1975, p.52); it shows how such information might appear for frequency terms.

FIGURE 1. Six 'frequency' terms presented as discrete categories.

always
often
sometimes
occasionally
rarely
never

(Adapted from part of a table in Leech and Svartvik, 1975, p.52)

A comparison with Cantonese

Consultation with a native speaker of Cantonese and applied linguist (K.S.Ip) immediately elicited familiarity with the problem of overuse of *always* by Cantonese users. The expression '常常' (seung seung) and the variant form '時常' (si seung) were cited as synonymous forms that were likely to be translatable either into *always* or *often* in English, depending on context, with uses of *always* corresponding to common uses in informal spoken English (e.g. *She's always putting him down!*). Another expression, '永遠' (wing yuen), corresponds to a stricter English interpretation of *always* ('for ever, opposite of never'). As other consultations with students and colleagues also made clear, accounts of what is possible and acceptable in Cantonese can vary considerably among authorities; my expert informant has nonetheless made it clear that a strict notion of "invariably and without exception" can be encoded in one lexeme in Cantonese. Indeed, any lack of correspondence between the semantic ranges of the Cantonese and English terms in this area appears to be that Cantones '永遠' (wing yuen) has a narrower range of meaning (permanency and invariability) than English *always*. Further consideration of the lexeme *always* may therefore prove instructive.

Semantic and pragmatic considerations: Does a word always mean what it says?

Our exposition so far has broadly assumed with Bunton (1989) that *always* means 'at all times', or on all occasions, and our comments on academic writing have implied that this meaning itself holds good at all times in academic writing. Yet such an account offers at best a convenient oversimplification. For one thing, we know from less formal contexts that *always* can indeed be used, in conjunction with a continuous tense, to mean much the same as *typically* or *very often* (*She's always putting him down!*). Such use is also possible in conjunction with a simple tense (*You always say that!*). Although their occurrence in an academic context or genre might be marked as unusual, it seems unlikely that academic writing should prove wholly impermeable to such possibilities in English. Students could in fact be encouraged to look out for such instances in the writing they encounter.

A more radical difficulty for our account arises from no less a source than Halliday (1985), who argues that expressions such as *always* and *certainly* are not in fact wholly determinate in meaning. This begins to suggest that a rigorous linguistic treatment of the expressions we are studying will prove more challenging and elusive than has appeared up to now. How far difficulties in describing and explaining linguistic choices can usefully be captured rather than avoided in pedagogic accounts may then vary according to the aims and target

audiences for those accounts, but it seems important that teachers at least should be aware of them. Halliday's position is stated as follows:

> In a proposition, the meaning of the positive and negative poles is asserting and denying: positive 'it is so', negative 'it isn't so'. There are two kinds of intermediate possibilities: (i) degrees of probability: 'possibly / probably / certainly'; (ii) degrees of usuality: 'sometimes / usually / always'... (Degrees of usuality) are equivalent to 'both yes and no', i.e. sometimes yes, sometimes no, with different degrees of oftenness attached. It is these scales of probability and usuality to which the term 'modality' strictly belongs.... Note also that even a high value modal ('certainly', 'always') is less determinate than a polar form: ... *it always rains in summer* is less invariable than *it rains in summer*. (Halliday, 1985, p.86)

Halliday's account rejects a distinction in kind between *always* and *often* and presents both as conveying (different) "degrees of oftenness" on an intermediate scale of usuality.3 As Halliday notes, the use of any such marker of modality in a declarative statement is an expression of speaker opinion. His argument is that expressions of speaker opinion - even claiming certainty or invariability - render the speaker's (or writer's) claims less determinate than when they are asserted without modification. Lyons (1977, p.809) also claims that "there is no epistemically stronger statement than a categorical assertion". This is not quite the same position as Halliday's, as it allows logically for the possibility of markers of speaker opinion that would neither strengthen nor weaken a claim. Lyons goes on, however, to point out that introducing markers of modal meaning into an utterance "has the effect of making our commitment to the factuality of the proposition explicitly dependent upon our, perhaps, limited knowledge" (p.809): this could imply that claims are weakened.

Responding to the above statements by Lyons (1977), Palmer (1986) argues that it is easy to imagine contexts where markers of speaker commitment:

> ".. strengthen the commitment rather than weaken it after a declarative statement, as in the following conversation:
> John is at home
> I don't think so
> Oh yes he certainly is/He must be."
> (Palmer, 1986, p.87).

3 Halliday has also spoken in lectures about possible slippage of terms along such scales over time, e.g. *surely* conveys less confidence than *certainly*. (Surely you would agree?)

Palmer thus takes the opposite view to Lyons (and Halliday). Palmer's examples, however, are a little cryptic and they remain open to different interpretations. As I would read them, imagining the conversational context and tones of voice, "Oh yes he certainly is" makes an emphatic reaffirmation of the earlier statement "John is at home", effectively strengthening the commitment as Palmer maintains, and thus demonstrating his general argument. On the other hand, despite Palmer's claim, I find that "He must be" actually introduces doubt: compare "He's gone out? I don't believe it!", meaning "I am astonished (but in fact do believe it)". I therefore agree with Palmer's general claim that "Expressions of the speaker's commitment do not necessarily weaken it" (loc. cit.); yet one of Palmer's own examples serves to remind us how easily such expressions can introduce doubt. We shall need to be open to the possibility that use of *always*, and of other terms at the limits of a scale, may render an utterance less determinate than an unqualified assertion, but we need not follow Halliday in assuming that this will necessarily be so.

Another perspective on the issue of speaker opinion and its effects on epistemic status of assertions would acknowledge that the marking of speaker or writer commitment to a claim will carry pragmatic as well as semantic implications. The meaning of expressions such as *always* or *often* will then appear particularly sensitive to the contextual constraints that realise, neutralise or suspend the meaning potential of lexical items as part of the language system. Levinson (1983, pp.37-38) has developed an interesting line of reasoning in relation to the words *some* and *all*: rather than seeing these expressions as mutually exclusive, Levinson argues that the semantics of *some* include in its scope the meaning *all* (some, and perhaps all...), but that pragmatic constraints sometimes add further constraints on interpretation (some, but not all). Comparably to Levinson, we can argue that the semantics of *sometimes*, *often* and *always* relate to the varying degrees to which frequency is specified, but do not map onto discrete parts of a frequency scale. Thus, in its meaning potential, *sometimes* is simply indefinite as to the frequency with which something happens, except for the crucial point that *never* is excluded. A default pragmatic reading of *sometimes* is then that it denotes only moderate frequency, in contrast with more marked expressions such as *rarely*, *often* and *always*, but this default expectation is easily cancelled without semantic contradiction (invented examples):

(1) Sometimes, though I have to say rarely, we manage to agree.
(2) Sometimes, in fact very often, we differ.
(3) Sometimes, and perhaps always, invented examples simplify the problem.

Unlike *sometimes*, the word *often* already denotes relatively high frequency on a scale. For this reason, example (4) is semantically anomalous and not just pragmatically unusual.

(4) * Often, though rarely, he gets to work on time.

The notion of "relatively high frequency" remains quite broad. In particular, it does not exclude the upper bound of the frequency scale: that is to say, it includes *always* within its scope. However, there will sometimes be a pragmatic tendency to restrict interpretation of *often* to mean "but not always":

(5) Linguists often go into too much detail.

A speaker or writer may specify such a restriction, rather than leaving it only to inference:

(6) Linguists often, though not always, go into too much detail.

Alternatively, any pragmatic restriction on the meaning potential of *often* can be blocked without leading to the kind of anomaly seen in (4) above:

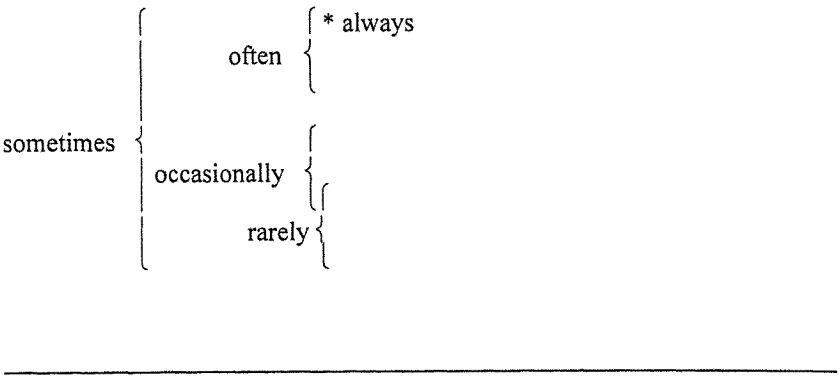
(7) Linguists often, and perhaps always, go into too much detail.

There appear to be good reasons to doubt the descriptive adequacy of pedagogic accounts of *often* and *always* that assign these expressions to different non-overlapping parts of a scale of frequency (or "usuality" if we follow Halliday, 1985). Instead, we can posit a semantic relation of inclusion (*often* includes *always*) that is asymmetrical (*always* does not include *often*). Similar arguments will apply to other terms on a scale of frequency and to terms on a scale of probability. Some terms cover larger semantic areas; this semantic coverage will sometimes be restricted pragmatically in contexts of use. For pedagogic purposes among others, a writer or speaker's choices can be related to notions of being sufficiently informative and not overly restrictive in selecting and contextualising expressions from a relevant scale, rather than to partitioning the scale into mutually exclusive segments.

Looking for Applications

The account we have just given will probably not translate very easily into teaching tips. It could, however, inform the presentation of information and examples in pedagogic grammars, by not restricting the meaning potential of such terms as *sometimes* or *often* more narrowly than is actually warranted. To this end, a presentation as in Figure 2 that shows relations of inclusion would be more informative than that seen in Figure 1.

FIGURE 2. Six 'frequency' items shown in a relational diagram



Pedagogic material focussing systematically on this area of language might also introduce examples in which *always* and *often* occur together (*often, and perhaps always, often, though not always; always, or at least very often*), rather than focussing solely on paradigmatic choices in which one term is substituted for the other.

Even if a particular use of *always* is taken to acknowledge some degree of doubt about the self-evident truth of a claim, to which the speaker or writer reacts by adding emphasis to the assertion, this is not to say that *always* means much the same thing as *usually* or *often*. Unless *always* is actually negated (*not always*) or hedged (*almost always*) by a speaker or writer, use of the term remains incompatible with quantified exceptions to a claim that something is always the case. The use of *often* does not mean that there can be no exceptions, even though a purely semantic account does not exclude the upper bound of the frequency scale from its range.

Why authentic examples are often best

Invented examples can sometimes serve purposes of linguistic exposition. The preceding discussion has (certainly) shown that linguists (always?) differ in their preferred accounts of the meanings and implications of apparently familiar lexical items like *certainly* and *always*. Such discussions, though, easily become arid, not least in the judgements of students and teachers who are not oriented towards linguistics. From an ESL teacher's perspective, more may be gained by looking with students at how the lexical item *always* and related lexemes are used in different corpuses of spoken or written English. Authentic data from

larger corpuses can also extend and improve linguistic analysis (Sinclair, 1991), but such research falls beyond our limited scope in this paper.

Corpus-based investigations can serve several teaching and learning purposes. For example, a teacher might need to be convinced that it was worth spending time on a given lexical item, and might study a corpus of student writing to see how widespread or rare were the uses and possible misuses of that item. Assuming that the data warrant further interest, the teacher might then want to compare contexts of occurrence (e.g. associated tense choices) across different corpuses (e.g. student writers and "expert" writers). Such comparisons might also be undertaken by students, either as a class activity or as out-of-class work by interested individuals. (For fuller discussion, references and illustration of corpus-based work, see Benson et al, 1993.) We should bear in mind that "findings" from such studies will only be suggestive when small corpuses are used. As students in many disciplines will be well aware of sampling problems, and used to the idea of small pilot studies, involving them in small-scale linguistic enquiries ought to be possible without misrepresenting the research process.

Even if a classroom enquiry around concordanced outputs from small corpuses has originated in a teacher's concerns that certain lexical items appear to be misused or overused by student writers, the outcomes of such work are not determined by the teacher. The linguistic judgements of students and teacher alike can then take account of what is seen in the course of a corpus-based study. Even a small corpus can offer some points of reference with which to compare one's own impressions or linguistic preferences. In this way, judgements and descriptions can be mutually informing.

Pickard (1994) has defended the practice of comparing a small corpus of student writing (essays by first-year social science undergraduates) with a small corpus of papers in linguistics and language teaching mainly written by English language teachers at the same university. Even though the topic areas are distinct (with some overlap), the comparison permits students and teachers to compare teachers' fairly general advice on aspects of academic writing with their own or their colleagues' practice in academic writing. Such work moves beyond teacher pronouncements to collaborative explorations of academic writing practices. In the teaching situation I outlined above, following Pickard, I provided my students with concordanced printouts for three lexical items or

phrases: "always", "to...extent" and "society" from these two corpuses.4 Below, I reproduce the "key word in context" information for *always*. For ease of reference and reprographics, I have numbered the examples and reduced the context to seven words on each side of the italicised keyword. For class use, original printouts were used to emphasise how the data were obtained.

Examples (student writing)

S1 ...as the climate of Hong Kong was *always* hot and humid during the years, and...
S2 ...repeat and faithful consumers. Their customers are *always* our target customers. So it is efficient...
S3 ...time to time so that it can *always* be fully and aptly utilized. For those...
S4 ...so as to be as useful as *always*. Language, too, needs 'revision' every now and...
S5 ...which language is unavoidably engaged. It is *always* a mystery to me how people manage...
S6 ...knowledge of the language one learns are *always* one's assets which can be used everywhere...
S7 ...and type of concert, we are still *always* so close to the foreign, especially western...
S8 ...to the society policy. Human beings are *always* living in society. We should not isolate...
S9 ...unpredictable and even impossible turns. People have *always* been intrigued by dreams, seeking to find...

Examples (academic papers)

A1 ...2, but that the converse does not *always* hold among the "poor" scripts. What seems...
A2 ...nouns. For example, numerals (more than one) *always* precede plural nouns, whereas some other modifiers...
A3 ...and (15) illustrate two forms that are *always* plural (in the sense that they are...
A4 ...plural non-head nouns, and nouns which are *always* marked for plural but which some HKE...

4 Both corpuses can be analysed (within working memory limitations) by students and teachers using the Longman Mini-Concordancer in a self-access facility at the University of Hong Kong The student essays came from coursework. The academic papers came from *Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching*.

A5 ...a mass noun, one of the *(sic)* is *always* followed by a plural noun. However, the...

A6 ...on an individual basis, & not necessarily *always* from the classroom teacher. Eventually, one would...

A7 ...a left-dislocated topic in English is nearly *always* used to refer to something known to...

A8 ...that this type of topicalisation in TL *always* involves the precise placement of a comma...

A9 ...puzzling, since often, but by no means *always*, the TL used is ordered in a syntactically...

A10 ...found in Chinese, if transferred to English, *always* have the potential to suddenly introduce a...

A11 ...competence. (As a rule, Native Speaker Cantonese *always* say 'yes' to negative questions in Cantonese)....

A12 ...'mistake') of a particular problem is not *always* clear, and that in any case students...

A13 ...moderation since some of the items can *always* be eliminated if they do not work...

Such data could lend themselves to investigation and discussion along many parameters. It should be emphasised again that the samples are far too small and restricted to be taken as representing "student writing" and "academic writing" (even if we are prepared to assume that such broad categories are meaningful). All that is suggested is that the samples offer an opportunity to raise questions and to begin to look at instances of usage. At this stage of our discussion, only one or two such questions can be very briefly considered, to echo some earlier themes.

Our original concern was with student uses of *always* that appeared to make unmodified claims that readers might reasonably regard as excessive. One area of interest is therefore to see how often *always* is either negated or otherwise departed from in the two concordances. There are no such cases among the 9 student examples. There are 4 cases of negation among the academic paper examples: "not always" (A1, A12); "not necessarily always" (A6); "often, but by no means always" (A9). Example A9 is an authentic instance of explicit reduction of the meaning potential of *often*, in which the upper bound of the frequency scale is excluded from the possible range of interpretation. Other instances in which *always* has been adverbially modified are A7 "nearly always" and (arguably) A11 "As a rule, ...always". Extended discussion of examples in class would not normally be needed: just identifying some of the possibilities in action can encourage students to reflect on their own writing as it takes shape. (How far it actually does so in a particular class setting could be the focus for an action research study.)

Some of the students who looked at the concordanced material were interested in the tense options that writers used. We may note here that the data included only one instance of a continuous tense, in example S8, and that this tense choice appears to sit oddly with the kind of generalisation that the writer seeks to advance. There are two instances of occurrence with a modal ("can always be"): S3 and A13. While not particularly striking, this last example indicates that similarities as well as differences can be found when comparisons are made.

Conclusion

One aim of this paper has been to show that a very narrow focus, on a lexical choice between two items, already creates a need for several explanatory perspectives if even preliminary justice is to be done to the complexities that underlie such choices. The perspectives taken here have included cross-language comparison, commentary on pedagogic guidance available in grammars, study and criticism of more sophisticated accounts in English linguistics, and a preliminary look at how concordanced data might encourage attention to specific language points without basing attention to lexis and grammar on prescriptive input from teachers. Many other perspectives have been ignored in the paper (specifics of the writing tasks, for example), as its main focus was on how certain highly specific linguistic choices may be influenced and how they may then contribute to reader perceptions of writer competence and stance. To ignore other perspectives for one's own purposes in one discussion is not, it needs to be said, to suggest that these other perspectives are less important or less relevant to academic writing taken as a whole. I do, however, want to question any belief that specific attention to linguistic features in texts is in conflict with general concern for the academic situation, the development and the integrity of student writers. It is through linguistic choices that writers position themselves and are positioned by their readers. Attention to the likely effects of such choices in students' writing is a small but focussed contribution to their academic education.

ESL teachers will obviously approach such implications of linguistic choices in many different ways. It is unlikely that detailed linguistic accounts will engage the minds of ESL learners (although students of English language may have greater tolerance and interest than others). I have suggested that one useful way of looking at linguistic choices is for students to discuss selected features from short extracts from their peers' writing, as illustrated for the use of *always* in the extract chosen for illustration. Another complementary possibility is to work with concordanced data, from small corpuses, that can rapidly be

examined with the help of starter questions to give focus to the comparisons that students make and to any lessons they may draw from this. These suggestions are methodological commonplaces and have not been developed in any detail. The main focus of the discussion has been on the actual linguistic point at issue. This has proved complex, perhaps sufficiently so to make it unremarkable that ESL students among others do not always tune into the semantic values and pragmatic implications of common lexical items in English (or of grammatical expressions), and that "common errors" often persist in advanced writing.

Prescriptivism remains a danger in working in these areas, and not only because of entrenched attitudes on the part of teachers. Students may also try to do what they think the teacher wants without understanding or caring why the teacher wants this. Exploring alternative choices that are made, and suggesting reasons for and effects of some of these choices, does not eliminate this danger. Such activities should, however, increase the likelihood that students will come to make their own judgements about the effectiveness of linguistic choices by writers, and about why readers might react to some of these choices in ways that the writer would not have hoped or intended.

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4 GRAMMATICAL TERMINOLOGY: IS THERE A STUDENT/ TEACHER GAP?

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Introduction

My interest in metalinguistic terminology started when I was teaching a course in English grammar to first year undergraduates. It seemed to me to be essential to find out how much grammatical terminology the students were familiar with, in order not to waste time teaching items that they already knew, or not to confuse them by assuming they knew words which in fact they did not. So I designed and administered a questionnaire, the forerunner of those to be discussed here; it produced some interesting results, which proved very useful in my lectures. From there my interest progressed to the role of metalinguistic terminology in language teaching in general, and as I investigated it became apparent that very little research had been done into this phenomenon. What little there is usually is subsumed under the more general heading of language awareness/ knowledge about language and approaches the topic from different viewpoints. Thus Bloor (1986) studied the knowledge of two groups of British undergraduates, which he termed 'linguists' and 'non-linguists', prior to starting their university studies. Andrews (1994), using some of Bloor's questionnaire, looked at grammatical terminology in the context of teacher education in Hong Kong, with the aim of investigating teachers' metalinguistic awareness and how this related to their linguistic background and their classroom performance.

It seemed to me therefore that there was a need, firstly, to study metalinguistic terminology in its own right, and secondly, to put the focus principally on learners in an EFL/ESL setting, such as Hong Kong. So I initiated a 'Metalinguistic Terminology Survey' (MTS), the first results of which are presented below.

The role of metalinguistic terminology in language teaching

The first question that needs to be asked is: can a case be made for the use of metalinguistic terminology in the classroom? Or should it be regarded as 'excess baggage' in language learning, as Carter (1995, this volume), playing devil's advocate, calls it. Very little has been written specifically on the subject, but if we view it as part of what Ellis (1985) has called 'formal instruction', then by implication we would have to recognise that many of the language teaching

methods that have been prevalent this century would regard it at best as excess baggage and have no place for it. The so-called 'naturalistic' methods - the Natural Approach, Communicative Language Teaching, the Direct Method (see, for example, Richards and Rodgers 1986) are directly opposed to the inclusion of any technique which relies on a view of language as code. The Audiolingual approach would similarly proscribe any overt reference to the forms of language, even though, covertly, it based its syllabus on them. Only the largely discredited Grammar-Translation Method would associate itself with metalinguistic terminology; this perhaps explains why it may be considered a taboo subject.

Research into the role of formal instruction in second language settings has, after a long, and somewhat polemic debate, come to a stalemate, and attention has been focussing on other avenues of investigation. One, under the heading of the Language Awareness movement (see, for example, James and Garrett 1991), has looked at the role of metalinguistic knowledge in general, particularly in mother-tongue settings. One general insight emerges clearly, namely, how pervasive metalinguistic knowledge is and how it cannot be considered to be a marginal language activity. Indeed, Carter (1995, this volume) points out how **natural** language awareness is, for example in the area of verbal play. One may therefore perhaps be allowed to question the appropriacy of the term 'naturalistic' to describe methods and approaches to language teaching which, while comparing themselves to first language learning, actually proscribe an important part of that process.

There is another dimension in which a case can be made for the use of metalinguistic terminology in language teaching. This is where the language itself has been chosen as the content of learning. Talking about language can be a valid activity, given the right students; in fact, one can argue that language is more relevant as a topic than many others, since it is always of concern to learners. In this sense, teaching metalinguistic terminology is the same as teaching any vocabulary items which are necessary to understand a text or take part in discussion. Here the debate about the relevance of formal instruction does not penetrate, and even the most fervent supporter of the Communicative Approach would not be able to reject the use of metalinguistic terminology on ideological grounds.

However, to some extent the research and methodological issues raised above are academic, since it is apparent from the survey that teachers to a large extent continue to use metalinguistic terminology in the classroom and that learners continue to be familiar with it. Practical methodology books make little mention of it but this comment by Woods (1994:89) is probably typical of the more pragmatic advice offered to teachers:

> "A question that often arises when we are talking about grammar is how much terminology should be learned. While it will not be necessary for learners either of L1 or L2 to know and understand advanced linguistic terminology, it is probably helpful if they understand the kind of terminology that will be found in the contents page of a learner's grammar or EFL course book. Then there is the question of how detailed explanations should be. Very often a limited knowledge of linguistic terminology can make explanations easier."

Metalinguistic terminology therefore would appear to have survived not only at the tertiary level in Hong Kong, where a stronger case can be made for it on the grounds of the more intellectual/ academic focus (in particular the emphasis on written skills), but also at the secondary level; here, despite a syllabus which favours communication over code, it is clear that teachers in general still place a great deal of reliance on it. Thus it may be equally relevant to ask **why** teachers use it, as well as **whether** they should. For this and other reasons the research net needs to be cast rather wide.

The Metalinguistic Terminology Survey

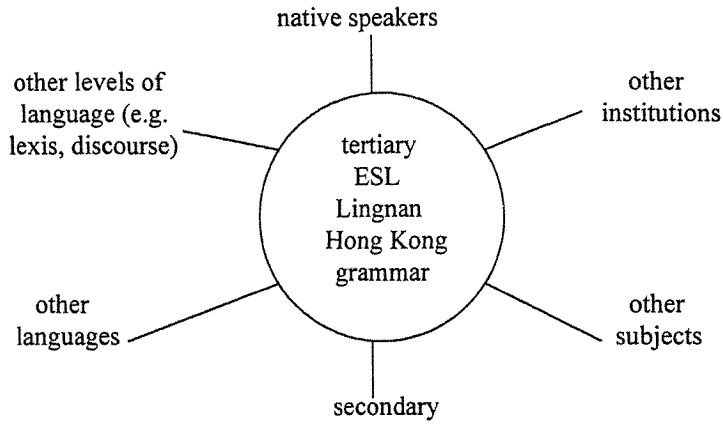
Below is a list of the survey's major aims. Those that have been highlighted indicate the focuses of this article.

1) **to find out how much MT learners know (and in which areas)**
2) **to find out how much MT teachers think learners know (<u>not</u> how much teachers know)**
3) **to find out how much MT teachers want to use**
4) to compare learner MT knowledge in different situations, at different proficiency levels, etc.
5) to follow MT development in individual learners
6) to examine actual MT usage in e.g. writing centre discussions, trainee teacher log-books
7) to find out which MT is easier to learn/more suitable for learners
8) to relate MT to other aspects of metalinguistic knowledge
9) **to review the role of MT in various methods/approaches**
10) to investigate the pedagogic function of MT
11) to provide teachers with information on their students' MT knowledge
12) to suggest whether and how much use of MT is advisable according to context
13) to check usage of MT in teaching materials
14) to investigate the linguistics of MT

15) to compare various ways of accessing learner MT knowledge
16) to establish the nature and extent of MT
17) **to correlate knowledge of MT with factors such as proficiency, medium of instruction**

The survey will initially focus on the author's own teaching situation, that is the teaching of English to students on four degree programmes (Business, Social Science, Translation and Chinese) at Lingnan College, specifically concentrating on grammatical terminology. Later it is planned to move on to other teaching situations, which in addition to providing data in their own right will also allow comparisons to be made. Diagram 1 shows the possibilities.

Diagram 1. Possible comparisons



Methodology

Two questionnaires were devised, one for students and one for teachers. These questionnaires both contained a set of 50 items of grammatical terminology. The major aim was to find out if the grammatical terms used by the teacher corresponded to those understood by the learners.

Two sets of responses were sought from teachers for each item: firstly, whether they thought their learners would know these terms, and secondly, whether they would want to use them in class. Clearly, these two responses might be different; teachers might think learners are familiar with a term but not wish to use it, or they might find an unknown term useful and teach it to learners. Teachers were asked to differentiate their responses according to the different degree programmes the students were on (out of four: Business, Social

Sciences, Chinese and Translation); what would be thought appropriate for one set of students might not be for another. It was made clear that this was intended to be neither a test of their own metalinguistic knowledge nor of their general professional competence.

The students were asked to respond 'yes' or 'no' to whether they knew each item; in the case of 'yes', they were asked to exemplify the item using a word, or sentence with the relevant part(s) underlined. This was done in order to ensure the reliability of the answers; if a positive response was contradicted by the example, it was counted as a 'no'. Although this was a lengthy process, the need for it was borne out later on in the analysis. It should be stressed that what was being checked was not the students ability to use the forms correctly, only their understanding of the reference of the term.

Other formats could, of course, have been used to check knowledge of terminology. Andrews (1994) used two: identifying a given term in a text and naming an underlined form. It was felt that these two, while being appropriate to check teachers' ability, did not correspond to the way students are confronted with grammatical terms. They are more likely to hear or see them and be required to bring to mind the relevant form.

The questionnaires were administered in October 1994, at the start of the academic year, to 600 first-year students and their 14 teachers. In the analysis contained herein, only the 149 students from the Social Sciences programme and their 7 English teachers are included; the course in question is in English for Academic Purposes, concentrating on reading and writing. It must be admitted from the outset that the small size of the teacher sample is a serious drawback for generalizability; in another sense, though, it is unavoidable if the research is to be relevant to the particular community of teachers and students. However, future research will need to be built on a wider basis.

The items chosen can be seen in Appendix 1. At 50, the total was intentionally extensive in order to establish the bounds of learners' knowledge and teachers' use. Included were items that were thought to be familiar to most if not all, learners, and others that would probably be unknown. Some of the items were taken from Bloor's and Andrew's questionnaires; others were included in order to compare the popularity of synonymous terms, for example 'present continuous' versus 'present progressive'. A number of categories were established within this selection, namely major word classes (parts of speech), refined word classes, verb forms, verb tenses, grammatical functions, structural units. Their relative popularity is discussed below.

Results and discussion: student questionnaires

Student scores

Table 1 shows the overall picture in terms of the distribution of scores for the student questionnaires.

Table 1. Distribution of student accuracy scores.

Value	Frequency	Percentage
11	1	0.7
12	1	0.7
13	0	0.0
14	1	0.7
15	6	4.0
16	6	4.0
17	8	5.4
18	4	2.7
19	10	6.7
20	17	11.4
21	14	9.4
22	20	13.4
23	14	9.4
24	13	8.7
25	7	4.7
26	4	2.7
27	3	2.0
28	4	2.7
29	2	1.3
30	4	2.7
31	4	2.7
32	1	0.7
33	4	2.7
34-38	0	0.0
39	1	0.7
Total	149	100
Mean	22.2	
SD	4.6	

It can be seen that there is a wide range in students' knowledge of metalinguistic terminology, from as low as 11 out of 50 all the way up to an admittedly exceptional case with 39. This in itself should caution against regarding any group of students as homogeneous in terms of knowledge of metalinguistic terminology. The differences can probably be accounted for, in part at least, by

the different teaching styles and approaches that they have been exposed in their English classes at secondary school. The bell-shaped nature of the curve (were it to be represented graphically) would tend to suggest a fairly typical population.

Item scores

Appendix 2 shows the full results rank-ordered according to their popularity with students. It can be seen that all students were familiar with one item ('verb') and other items were very close to the 100% figure ('past tense', 'sentence', 'noun').[1] At the other end, two items were completely unknown ('predicate' and 'concord'). It can be seen that most items clustered towards the top or the bottom of the scale. Fifteen fell into the top 20% and twenty into the bottom 20%; only fifteen items fell into the middle 60%. This suggests that, as a group, the students usually either know an item or they do not; this observation must be tempered, however, with the individual differences noted above. The middle items will be very useful in future questionnaires where discrimination is desired.

There were some perhaps surprising results. Thus, 'countable noun' and 'uncountable noun' (at 93.3% and 84.6% respectively) were both higher than might have been expected; this may be because learners were able to guess their meaning. It would be fruitful, at some time, to look into the comparative transparency or opaqueness of labels and see if this is related to learners' ability to understand them. Some items that were lower than might have been expected were 'pronoun' (63.8%), 'indefinite article' (12.8%), 'modal verb' (2.0%) and 'determiner' (1.3%).[2]

Synonymous terms

Three pairs of synonymous terms were included in the questionnaire. These were, with figures in brackets:

present continuous tense (96%): present progressive tense (10.1%)
agreement (16.1%): concord (0.0%)
reported speech (59.7%): indirect speech (45.0%)

Thus, it can be seen that 'present continuous' is greatly preferred by learners, despite the current popularity of 'present progressive' with pedagogic grammarians; out of 'agreement' and 'concord' the former is the only one that has even a small currency among learners; and 'reported speech' is slightly preferred to 'indirect speech'.

Categories of items

When the items were classified according to a number of categories, a significant pattern emerged. Table 2 below shows the categories and the percentage of correct responses. It was evident that students were happier with certain types of terminology than with others. Thus, major word classes (noun, verb, adverb, pronoun, preposition, adjective, conjunction) achieved an average percentage of 85%. (This figure would have been lower if determiner and article had been included.) Almost as popular were verb tenses at 76%, and this category included 'present progressive', which as was pointed out above, loses out by far to 'present continuous'. It is interesting to note that 'future tense' is still immensely popular with learners, even though scientific grammars and even pedagogic grammars are reluctant to recommend its use. Of the other categories only grammatical functions stood out; 'subject' and 'object' were both popular whereas, not unexpectedly, direct object and indirect object were not.

Table 2. Analysis of student responses by categories.

	no. of items	percentage
A. major word classes (items 1,2,6,10,14,26,46)	7	85.04
B. structural units (items 3,18,21,25,31,44)	6	25.38
C. grammatical functions (items 5,15,30,41)	4	46.98
D. verb tenses (items 4,17,20,28,40)	5	75.98
E. verb forms (items 12,24,38,45)	4	32.05
F. refined word classes (items 8,11,13,19,22,23,34,35,36,37,39,42,50)	13	29.22

Relation to medium of instruction and proficiency

The questionnaires also carried questions about the students' grade at Use of English and the medium of instruction (determined on the basis of whether they studied all or most of their level subjects in English or Chinese). This enabled comparisons to be made to see whether there was any connection between these two factors and the extent of their MT knowledge. Table 3 shows this.

Table 3. Comparison of student totals with medium of instruction and Use of English grade.

Medium of instruction (n = 125)

	n	mean	
Chinese	23	21.61	
English	102	22.49	p=0.39

Use of English Grade (n = 142, minus 5 C-grades = 137)

	n	mean	
Grade D	46	22.96	
Grade E	91	22.04	p=0.24

As can be seen, although in both cases there was a tendency, in neither case was it significant. Thus, for medium of instruction, there was a slightly higher mean (of metalinguistic terms known) for students who had studied in the medium of English, which would perhaps be expected from the more extensive use of English in the classroom. However, the number of those who had studied in Chinese was substantially smaller, and any difference could be easily attributable to the generally expected difference in proficiency between the two groups of students.[3]

As regards Use of English result, there was again a higher mean for those students with a Grade D compared to those with a Grade E, as would be expected, but it was not significant. (The small number of Grade C students was discounted.) In any case, the long time interval between the exam and the administering of the questionnaire (six months) could be said to lessen the validity of the comparison.

These two results should not be taken as evidence that there is no correlation between knowledge of metalinguistic terminology and language proficiency or medium of instruction. A more carefully controlled experiment would be needed to answer, in particular, the question of whether students' proficiency in English is influenced by their MT knowledge or vice versa.

Results and discussion: comparison of teacher and student questionnaires

Teachers' estimation of learners' knowledge

Appendix 2 shows the items from the student questionnaire rank-ordered according to popularity alongside the results from the teacher questionnaire. Bearing in mind the limitation mentioned above, namely the fact that only 7 teachers were involved, a general comparison of the two suggests that the teachers' estimation of whether their students know the items generally corresponds to the students actual knowledge. With over half the items (27), the teachers' prediction was within 10% of the student's figure; of the remainder, more predictions were below (13) than above (10). Table 4 below shows items where the teachers substantially (by more than 20%) **underestimated** the students' knowledge.

Table 4. Items underestimated substantially by teachers.

	student score	teacher estimate
present continuous tense	96.0	57.1
countable noun	93.3	71.4
adverb	83.9	57.1
present perfect tense	77.9	57.1
conjunction	69.1	28.6
comparative adjective	49.7	14.3
auxiliary verb	29.5	0.0
transitive verb	24.2	0.0

This suggests that there are few items where the teachers might not be exploiting a term that students know. Indeed, only four out of these eight have student scores above 80%, putting them in what might be termed the safe zone.

In other words, the teachers in the survey in general appear to be good predictors of the learners' metalinguistic knowledge. This is not to say that some teachers do not over- or underestimate it, however. Table 5 below shows the ten items where the teachers **overestimated** the students knowledge by more than 10%.

Table 5. Items overestimated by teachers.

	student score	teacher estimate
plural	84.6	100.0
pronoun	63.8	85.7
definite article	27.5	57.1
agreement	16.1	57.1
indefinite article	12.8	71.4
present progressive tense	10.1	42.9
possessive pronoun	8.7	42.9
possessive adjective	4.0	14.3
modal verb	2.0	14.3
indirect object	2.0	14.3

In the last three cases the overestimation was caused by one teacher alone.

Problematic cases

This overestimation does not necessarily become a problem, of course. It only does so when teachers also want to use the terms. The third column in Appendix 2 shows only those figures where the teachers' desire to use the item also exceeds the students' knowledge. These items were: adjective, pronoun,

clause, definite article, agreement, indefinite article, present progressive tense and possessive pronoun. The fourth column suggests which of these might be problematic. Two items have been eliminated at this stage as the teacher's desire to use them was very close to the actual student score: adjective and present progressive tense. For example, although three teachers thought that students were likely to know the term 'present progressive tense', only one wanted to use it (presumably because 'present continuous tense' was preferred; four selected it).

This left six items which were clearly problematic. They are shown below in Table 6.

Table 6. Problematic items.

	student score	teacher estimate	teacher use
pronoun	63.8	85.7	100.0
clause	32.9	42.9	85.7
definite article	27.5	57.1	85.7
agreement	16.1	57.1	85.7
indefinite article	12.8	71.4	85.7
possessive pronoun	8.7	42.9	85.7

As can be seen, in one case all seven teachers wanted to use the term and in the others six, even though this substantially exceeded the students' collective knowledge of the item. Of course, the fact that in each of these cases the teachers' use score was higher than their estimate of student knowledge suggests that some at least would take care when using such terms in the classroom and would introduce them before using them. Nevertheless, it would appear that there is considerable potential for misunderstanding.

Individual teacher scores

The analysis above has treated the students as a group and isolated items that will be problematic on a course-wide basis. Of course, this is not to say that there will not be problems on a class or individual basis, where one teacher uses a term which is unknown to one or more of the students. Indeed, when the scores for teachers are looked at individually, a wide variation becomes apparent. As Table 7 shows, predictions of student knowledge ranged from 12 to 31, with a mean of 21.71; for desire to use, the variation was even greater, from 17 to 45 (mean 30.86).

Table 7. Analysis of individual teacher scores (out of 50).

Teacher	Students are likely to know	I would want to use
B	17	17
C	12	22
D	26	45
H	27	28
I	31	27
L	21	36
M	18	41
Mean	21.71	30.86
SD	6.63	10.19

Teacher B had no difference between the terms he/she thought students would know and those he/she wanted to use, whereas Teacher M's figure increased from 18 to 41; presumably, those with large increases will take appropriate measures when introducing new terms. Further investigation including a larger sample would be needed to determine whether this variation is related to any aspects of the teachers' backgrounds. Nevertheless, it is evident that some teachers need to take more care than others with grammatical terminology.

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

While this research is still at an early stage, the following tentative conclusions may perhaps be drawn. There is no claim for generalizability beyond the group in question; and the limitation of the size of the teacher's group should also be repeated here.

- there was a wide range in students' knowledge of English grammatical terminology
- most terminology was either known or not known by the vast majority of students; very few items were 'in transition' between the two extremes
- teachers were generally in tune with their students' level of grammatical terminology
- with a few individual items, teachers were ahead of their students in general
- some students would probably be far behind their teacher's use of grammatical terminology

- there was a wide variation among the individual teachers in their prediction of student knowledge and in their desire to use grammatical terms
- no significant relationship could be observed between students' knowledge of grammatical terminology and their level of English or medium-of-instruction background
- in many cases students thought they know a term when they didn't
- students were happiest with certain terms and certain categories of terms, e.g. parts of speech and verb tenses

The pedagogical implications to be drawn from this study do not involve any exceptional insights. It goes without saying that teachers need to be aware of which terminology their learners are familiar with and which they can use reliably in the classroom (this of course is valid for any subject). The same is true of any vocabulary in language learning, yet of course metalanguage is more important because it underlies the teaching of vocabulary and other aspects of language. In other words, teachers need to be aware about their learners' awareness. The present study has shown that gaps do exist, even if on a limited scale. Teachers need to take action to deal with the situation and not make any unjustified assumptions. Ways of checking on learners' knowledge perhaps need to be applied, and strategies for teaching unknown items should be devised.

This study has had two distinct aims: one, of a specific/practical nature, designed to give teachers in a particular situation some definite advice, and the other of a general/theoretical nature, designed to start the research ball rolling into this interesting area. The former can have an immediate pay-off; as to the latter, only time will tell.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Mr Anthony Ng, of the Office of Research and Staff Development. Lingnan College, for his help with analysis and statistics.

Footnotes

1. For these items one can surmise that the shortfall was causes by slips in answering by students, rather than lack of knowledge.

2. The low figure for 'pronoun' can be explained by the fact that a number of the examples actually contained possessive adjectives ('my', 'your', etc.), which

were counted as incorrect. It has been suggested that some learners are taught these as part of a pronominal paradigm.

3. Only 125 students answered the question about medium of instruction background, and 142 about Use of English grade.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Full results for Yr 1 Social Science Students

		STUDENTS			TEACHERS			
					students are likely to know		I would want to use	
		n	%	rank	n	%	n	%
1	noun	146	98.0	3-4	7	100.0	7	100.0
2	verb	149	100.0	1	7	100 0	7	100.0
3	sentence	146	98.0	3-4	7	100.0	7	100.0
4	past tense	148	99.3	2	7	100.0	7	100.0
5	subject	140	94.0	7	6	85.7	7	100.0
6	pronoun	95	63.8	20	6	85.7	7	100 0
7	singular	130	87.2	12	6	85.7	7	100.0
8	definite article	41	27.5	27	4	57.1	5	71.4
9	passive verb	134	89.9	10	6	85.7	7	100.0
10	adverb	125	83.9	15	4	57.1	6	85.7
11	countable noun	139	93.3	8	5	71.4	6	85.7
12	past participle	55	36.9	24	2	28.6	5	71.4
13	modal verb	3	2.0	45-46	1	14.3	4	57.1
14	preposition	131	87.9	11	6	85.7	7	100.0
15	object	113	75.8	17	4	57.1	5	71.4
16	reported speech	89	59.7	21	4	57.1	6	85.7
17	future tense	144	96.6	5	6	85.7	5	71.4
18	noun phrase	25	16.8	31	1	14.3	3	42.9
19	transitive verb	36	24.2	28	0	0.0	2	28.6
20	present continuous tense	143	96.0	6	4	57.1	4	57.1
21	clause	49	32.9	25	3	42.9	6	85.7
22	auxiliary verb	44	29.5	26	0	0.0	1	14.3
23	possessive pronoun	13	8.7	38	3	42.9	5	71.4
24	infinitive	98	65.8	19	4	57.1	6	85.7
25	predicate	0	0.0	49-50	0	0.0	2	28.6
26	adjective	138	92.6	9	7	100.0	7	100.0
27	agreement	24	16.1	32-33	4	57.1	6	85.7
28	present perfect tense	116	77.9	16	4	57.1	5	71.4
29	plural	126	84.6	13-14	7	100.0	7	100.0
30	direct object	24	16.1	32-33	1	14.3	3	42.9
31	verb phrase	6	4.0	41-42	0	0.0	3	42.9
32	determiner	2	1.3	47	0	0.0	0	0.0
33	imperative	5	3.4	43	0	0.0	3	42.9
34	relative pronoun	16	10.7	36	1	14.3	4	57.1
35	comparative adjective	74	49.7	22	1	14.3	3	42.9

		STUDENTS			TEACHERS			
					students are likely to know		I would want to use	
		n	%	rank	n	%	n	%
36	intransitive verb	17	11.4	35	0	0.0	2	28.6
37	uncountable noun	126	84.6	13-14	5	71.4	7	100.0
38	present participle	26	17.4	30	1	14.3	4	57.1
39	indefinite article	19	12.8	34	5	71.4	6	85.7
40	present progressive tense	15	10.1	37	3	42.9	1	14.3
41	indirect object	3	2.0	45-46	1	14.3	2	28.6
42	possessive adjective	6	4.0	41-42	1	14.3	1	14.3
43	subjunctive	4	2.7	44	0	0.0	1	14.3
44	complement	1	0.7	48	0	0.0	1	14.3
45	finite verb	12	8.1	39	1	14.3	2	28.6
46	conjunction	103	69.1	18	2	28.6	5	71.4
47	interrogative	8	5.4	40	1	14.3	2	28.6
48	concord	0	0.0	49-50	0	0.0	1	14.3
49	indirect speech	67	45.0	23	2	28.6	3	42.9
50	superlative adjective	32	21.5	29	2	28.6	3	42.9

Appendix 2. Learner/teacher results compared (according to percentage ordering of student scores)

RANK	ITEM	STUDENT %	TEACHER %		problematic
			students know	teacher use	
1	2 verb	100.0	100.0		
2	4 past tense	99.3	100.0		
3-4	3 sentence	98.0	100.0		
	1 noun	98.0	100.0		
5	5 future tense	96.6	85.7		
6	17 present continuous tense	96.0	57.1		
7	5 subject	94.0	85.7		
8	11 countable noun	93.3	71.4		
9	26 adjective	92.6	100.0	100.0	√
10	9 passive	89.9	85 7		
11	14 preposition	87.9	85.7		
12	7 singular	87.2	85.7		
13-14	29 plural	84.6	100.0		
	37 uncountable noun	84.6	71.4		
15	10 adverb	83.9	57.1		
16	28 present perfect tense	77.9	57.1		
17	15 object	75.8	57.1		
18	46 conjunction	69.1	28.6		
19	24 infinitive	65.8	57.1		
20	6 pronoun	63.8	85.7	100.0	
21	16 reported speech	59.7	57.1		
22	35 comparative adjective	49.7	14.3		
23	49 indirect speech	45.0	28.6		
24	12 past participle	36.9	28.6		
25	21 clause	32.9	42.9	85.7	√
26	22 auxiliary verb	29.5	0.0		
27	8 definite article	27.5	57.1	85.7	√
28	19 transitive verb	24.2	0.0		
29	50 superlative adjective	21.5	28.6		
30	38 present participle	17.4	14.3		
31	18 noun phrase	16.8	14.3		
32-33	27 agreement	16.1	57.1	85.7	√
	30 direct object	16.1	14.3		
34	39 indefinite article	12.8	71.4	85.7	√

RANK	ITEM	STUDENT %	TEACHER %		problematic
			students know	teacher use	
35	36 intransitive verb	11.4	0.0		
36	34 relative pronoun	10.7	14.3		
37	40 present progressive tense	10.1	42.9	14.3	
38	23 possessive pronoun	8.7	42.9	82.7	√
39	45 finite verb	8.1	14.3		
40	47 interrogative	5.4	14.3		
41-42	31 verb phrase	4.0	0.0		
	42 possessive adjective	4.0	14.3		
43	33 imperative	3.4	0.0		
44	43 subjunctive	2.7	0.0		
45-46	13 modal verb	2.0	14.3		
	41 indirect object	2.0	14.3		
47	32 determiner	1.3	0.0		
48	44 complement	0.7	0.0		
49-50	25 predicate	0.0	0.0		
	48 concord	0.0	0.0		

5 HONG KONG LEARNERS AND ENGLISH WORDS: THE FORMAL-SEMANTIC GAP

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1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that Chinese learners of English are particularly successful at learning vocabulary. In the recent IEA Study of Reading Literacy, which compared reading achievement in thirty-two schools systems (Elley 1994, p52), it is not surprising to find that it was Singapore whose students scored highest in the tests of (English) word recognition. It is also widely recognised that Chinese learners spend a large part of their study time memorising texts and lists of words (e.g. Biggs 1992, Watkins 1983). For many Chinese learners, vocabulary learning involves the systematic memorisation of bilingual word lists, the laborious annotation of the unfamiliar lexis of English textbooks and, in present-day Hong Kong, the immediate recourse to an electronic dictionary whenever a new English word is encountered. The highly developed visual memory of Chinese learners obviously places them at a considerable advantage over other learners when faced with the task of learning vast quantities of English words. However, the extent to which good visual memory leads to understanding of the language being learned has already been called into question (Wong 1988).

Chinese learners, in common with other L2 learners, are believed to have particularly large passive vocabularies and they are able to understand far more English words than they can use productively. Unlike their counterparts in the People's Republic of China, students in Hong Kong receive most of their formal education through the medium of English and, in various ways, are exposed to enormous amounts of English words by the end of secondary education. Hong Kong students are taught most of their school subjects from textbooks written in English, they submit their coursework in English and they write their examinations in English.

What affect does this type of exposure have on Hong Kong students' vocabulary knowledge? The purpose of this paper is to report on an experimental study which examines aspects of English vocabulary knowledge. The paper focuses, in particular, on aspects of formal and semantic knowledge and addresses the following question: To what extent do students understand the meaning of the English words which they encounter in school?

2. Literature Review

Second language vocabulary development: the "continuum" view

A number of researchers regard L2 vocabulary knowledge as "a continuum between the ability to make sense of a word and ability to activate the word automatically for productive purposes" (Faerch, Haastrup & Phillipson, 1984, p100 and cited in Palmberg 1987, p201). This view assumes that for each learner there are varying numbers of words at different points on the continuum at any one time. At one extreme are the words which Palmberg (1987) refers to as "potential" vocabulary, i.e. words not previously encountered but which the learner can comprehend on first encounter. Further along the continuum are words which learners have learned at some stage and can understand, but cannot use productively ("passive real vocabulary"). At the other end of the continuum are the words which can be both understood and used productively ("active real vocabulary"). The continuum view assumes that learners begin their acquaintance with new words with a grasp of their meaning and then move on to acquire other aspects of word knowledge en route to productive control. However, the path through the different aspects of word knowledge (e.g. pronunciation, grammar, collocations, register, idiomatic uses) is not clearly specified.

Separating semantic and formal aspects

A different view of word knowledge is proposed by Meara (1984 and 1990), who suggests that entries in the mental lexicon have two parts: information about formal aspects of words (phonological and orthographic) and semantic information. Comparing the organisation of the L2 mental lexicon with that of L1, Meara (1984, p234) writes, "It is more loosely organised, and the semantic factors are frequently overridden by extraneous phonological factors, such as the chance resemblance between a form in the L1 and another in the L2." This separation of form and meaning assumes that our knowledge of L2 words is often incomplete and can take the form of different patterns, such as knowing parts of a word's form and some of a word's meanings. This view of L2 vocabulary knowledge would also allow for L2 words whose forms may be familiar to a learner and which can be recognised easily, but whose meanings are not understood at all.

According to Meara's view of the L2 lexicon, the notions of active and passive (or productive and receptive) vocabulary might be better understood by assuming that most of the L2 words we know are dormant in our mental lexicon until they are activated and spring into life for a short time, and trigger off other related words in the process. According to this view, it is context

rather than dimensions of knowedge which is the key element in determining when a word becomes active.

L2 word knowledge as a set of dimensions

As mentioned above, it has also been suggested that development of vocabulary knowledge involves the mastery of different dimensions of word knowledge (Nation 1990, McNeill 1994). The specification of these different dimensions is also reflected in the development of vocabulary tests designed to measure quality of vocabulary knowledge (e.g. Read 1993, Wesche & Paribakh 1993), rather than tests of vocabulary size, which inevitably focus on quantity .

Vocabulary knowledge: implicit and/or explicit?

The recent interest in consciousness in second language learning (e.g. Schmidt 1994) has focused attention on the extent to which L2 development involves unconscious and conscious processes and has raised the question of whether learning vocabulary relies more on conscious or unconscious processes. According to Ellis (1994):

"... vocabulary acquisition as a whole reflects both conscious and unconscious processes, but (that) there is a sharp dissociation whereby the recognition and production aspects of vocabulary learning rely on unconscious processes, whereas meaning and mediational aspects of vocabulary heavily involve explicit, conscious learning processes." (p39)

Ellis proposes that processing the meaning of words involves explicit knowledge, whereas recognition and production of word forms take place through an unconscious process, using implicit knowledge. As far as our understanding of the nature of second language vocabulary knowledge is concerned, this distinction is potentially very valuable and will be referred to again in the discussion of the data from the present study.

3. Three Models of L2 Vocabulary Development

Before discussing the data, three simple models of L2 vocabulary development are proposed and described briefly (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Three models of L2 vocabulary development

A. MEANING → RECOGNITION → PRODUCTION

B. RECOGNITION → MEANING → PRODUCTION

C. RECOGNITION → PRODUCTION → MEANING

Model A describes a situation in which students learn most of their L2 words directly from their teacher in a formal classroom setting. The model assumes that the learners have not come across the words before. Typically, a teacher will begin a language lesson by explaining the meaning of the new words which occur in the teaching material. The students will then be able to recognise as well as understand the words when they meet them in texts and eventually, possibly, use them productively.

Model B describes indirect vocabulary learning and assumes that learners are first exposed to words (e.g. in written and spoken texts) and begin their vocabulary learning process by simply recognising words as familiar and only later, if at all, learn their meanings. This model assumes that learners only use words productively once meaning has been acquired.

A third permutation of the three elements produces Model C which, at first sight, looks less plausible as a description of L2 vocabulary development. The model assumes that words are first recognised, then used productively before meaning is acquired. In Model C meaning has been relegated to third place, after recognition and production. The data in the present study will be discussed with reference to the above models.

4. Research Questions

There are two main research questions:

1. To what extent do Hong Kong learners understand the meaning of the lexical content of their reading materials?

2. To what extent do Hong Kong know the forms of the lexical content of their reading materials?

Two supplementary questions were originally posed, with a view to investigating aspects of recognition and retrieval. However, as the results

show, data from the study did not allow this line of investigation to proceed very far:

1. Which parts of words do Hong Kong learners find most difficult to recognise?

2. Which parts of words are the most difficult for Hong Kong learners to produce?

5. Design

5.1 Subjects

Two groups of subjects took part, all of whom were Form 6 pupils in the secondary school system and could be classified as upper intermediate level learners of English. Group 1 (n=43) were from a Band 1 school, while Group 2 (n=30) were from a Band 3 school (Band 1 representing the highest of the five bands used to stream pupils according to academic ability).

5.2 Materials and Procedure

Three tests were constructed based on a text currently used for reading comprehension practice with Form 6 pupils. The text, "Existing Problems" (reproduced in Appendix A) is an extract from a Hong Kong Government consultation document on public health provision.

The subjects were given the text to read and a copy of Test 1 (Word Meaning). The subjects were encouraged to refer to the text while completing the test, so that they would give the meaning of the target words as used in the text and so that they could make use of contextual clues to infer the meaning of unfamiliar items. After twenty minutes, the Test 1 answer sheets were collected in and the subjects immediately took part in Test 2 (aural recognition). At the end of Test 2, the answer sheets were collected and Test 3 (written production) was administered. The three tests are described below.

5.2.1 Test 1: Word Meaning

30 lexical items were selected from the text and used for a simple test of word meaning. The items were identified by the researcher and the teachers of the two classes as representing the 30 items which the pupils were least likely to know. The test asked the subjects to give the meaning of each of the word,

using L1 (Chinese) or using an English explanation. By providing the option of L1 equivalent or an explanation using English, it was considered that the subjects would be able to convey their understanding of the words' meanings if they knew them. Test 1 is reproduced in Appendix B.

5.2.2 Test 2: Aural recognition

Each of the 30 words from Test 1 was incorporated into a topic sentence, using the same context as in the reading passage. The sentences were recorded at normal speed onto a tape by a native English speaker. An answer sheet was prepared using the 30 topic sentences, but with a gap at the position of each of the target words. Using a multiple-choice format, four words were given after each sentence (the target word and three distractors) and the subjects were asked to indicate which of the words they heard on the tape.

The distractors were selected because of their resemblance to the target word in one or more respects. Each distractor contains a blend of the following elements:

(a) Semantic:
The meaning of the distractor fits/does not fit the context.

(b) Form:
The form of the distractor is close/not close to the form of the target.

(c) Syntactic or Collocation:
The distractor is either acceptable/unacceptable syntactically in the sentence, or the collocation created is acceptable/unacceptable.

(These two have been included together since only one of them tends to apply to each of the target word, according to the grammatical classes involved.)

The purpose of this highly controlled arrangement was to try to shed light on what influences students' choice of word form when matching information which they hear with a corresponding written form. The idea was to try to isolate particular features and to measure their influence on students' aural recognition of words. It was hoped that an analysis of the errors on this test would provide an answer to Supplementary Research Question 1.

Examples of the test items used in Test 2, together with an analysis of the assumed potential of the distractors are given in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Examples *(with analysis)* of items in Test 2: Aural Recognition

A. The recent improvements in the healthcare system might ..... the old problems.

(a) exacerbate (b) exaggerate (c) accelerate (d) eggs acetate

target	*+sem*	*+sem*	*-sem*
	+col/syn	*-col/syn*	*-col/syn*
	+form	*-form*	*-form*

B. Pressure on the healthcare system have been caused by ..... changes.

(a) demographic (b) geographic (c) democratic (d) telegraphic

target	*+sem*	*-sem*	*-sem*
	+syn/col	*+syn/col*	*-syn/col*
	+form	*+form*	*-form*

C. The Government provides funding at a .....

(a) flat rate (b) fast rate (c) fat rate (d) flag rate

target	*+sem*	*+sem*	*-sem*
	+syn/col	*-syn/col*	*-syn/col*
	+form	*+form*	*+form*

D. There is a need to ..... the staff duties.

(a) re-align (b) redefine (c) redesign (d) read a line

target	*+sem*	*+sem*	*-sem*
	+syn/col	*-syn/col*	*-syn/col*
	-form	*+form*	*-form*

5.2.3 Test 3: Written production

In Test 3 the subjects listened again to the thirty sentences on the tape and read the sentences on their answer sheet. The 30 test words were missing from the written sentences and the subjects had to write out the target words when they heard them spoken on the tape. It was hoped than an analysis of the error patterns produced would help to answer Supplementary Research Question 2.

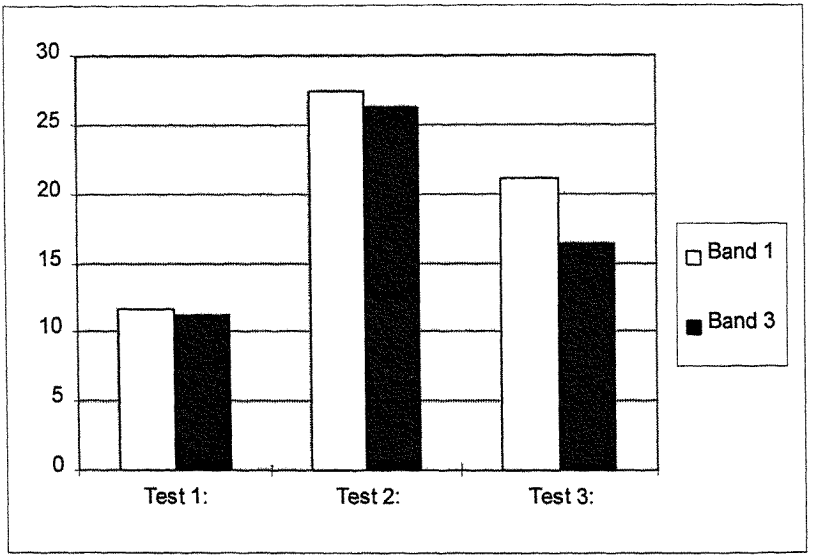
6. Results and Discussion

The results of the three tests with both groups of subjects are shown in Table 1 and Figure 3.

Table 1: Mean scores for the three vocabulary tests for Band 1 and Band 3 subjects:

	Test 1: L1 Equivalent (max. 30)	Test 2: Oral Recognition (max. 30)	Test 3: Written Production (max. 30)
Band 1 (n=43)	11.6 (3.1)	27.4 (1.7)	21.1 (4.4)
Band 3 (n=25)	11.2 (2.8)	26.3 (1.9)	16.4 (5.3)
	t=.66 (p=.513)	t=2.47 (p=.017)	t=3.68 (p=.001)

Figure 3: Mean scores on the three tests, Band 1 (white), Band 3 (shaded)



Test 1: Word meaning
Test 2: Aural recognition
Test 3: Written production

The pattern of results for both groups is similar. In general, the subjects were able to identify the spoken forms of the target words with a very high degree of accuracy. They were also able to produce correct written forms of more than half of the words. However, subjects in both groups were only able to give the meaning of about one third of the target words. The overall picture suggests that the subjects' knowledge of word forms exceeds their knowledge of word meaning. On the test of meaning, there is no significant difference between the groups (t=.66, p=.513). The difference on the test of aural recognition is small but significant (t=2.47, p=.017), while the difference on written production is highly significant (t=3.68, p=.001). To refer back to the three models of L2 vocabulary development (Figure 1), the results appear to support Model C, which predicts that knowledge of word meaning follows not only recognition, but also production. If this is the case, a "continuum" model of L2 vocabulary acquisition which places recognition at one extreme and production at the other may be inadequate to account for the type of L2 vocabulary development observed by the subjects in this study.

The levels of difficulty experienced by the two ability groups on individual items on the test of meaning are quite similar, as shown in Table 2. The overall correlation is high (r=.959) and there is no significant difference between individual means (t=1.26, p=.216).

Table 2: Vocabulary items used in the study and their rank order of difficulty in Test 1 (L1 Equivalent)

		% of subjects who got item right in Test 1	
		Band 1 Gp (n=43)	*Band 3 Gp (n=25)*
No.	*Item*		
1	detraction	0	0
2	flat (rate)	0	0
3	throughput	2	0
4	demographic	2	0
5	referral	2	10
6	appalling	2	50
7	paradoxically	5	13
8	screening	5	17
9	safety net	7	0
10	token fee	9	7
11	stream	12	0
12	conducive	12	37
13	influx	23	33
14	manning	26	23
15	exacerbate	35	30

		% of subjects who got item right in Test 1	
		Band 1 Gp (n=43)	Band 3 Gp (n=25)
16	inequitable	37	53
17	retention	47	53
18	milestone	49	30
19	dampen	53	20
20	re-allign	58	47
21	constraints	63	47
22	clog	63	63
23	surgery	67	53
24	re-orient	67	63
25	recruitment	72	53
26	subsidize	79	43
27	advancement	81	53
28	relatively	95	70
29	outdated	95	90
30	manpower	100	90

(r=.959
t=1.26, p=.216)

7. Analysis of Error Patterns

7.1 Aural Recognition

Contrary to expectation, the subjects performed extremely well on this test, which meant that the original intention of measuring the effects of the different distractor types on recognition was not particularly fruitful, since relatively few errors were actually produced. However, an informal analysis of the items in which errors tended to occur showed that there was a clear preference for distractors which were semantically unrelated to their target and where the formal similarities between target and distractor were high. In selecting the distractors, care was taken to include words which were of a higher frequency than the target word. It would obviously have been unreasonable to include distractors which the subjects had not come across before. In the case of the sample items analysed in Figure 2, the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Examples of aural recognition errors with frequency of occurrence

TARGET	DISTRACTOR	% OF SELECTIONS
exacerbate:	eggs acetate	10
	accelerate	8
	exaggerate	2
demographic	democratic	12
	telegraphic	4
	geographic	2
flat rate	flag rate	10
	fat rate	6
	fast rate	2
re-allign	read a line	10
	redefine	4
	redesign	2

The pattern of results suggests that students are likely to confuse words whose phonological forms are similar, even if their meanings are quite different. It also appears from the confusions mentioned that the subjects relied entirely on paying attention to words in isolation, with little regard for the semantic information provided by the context. There is a some similarity in this pattern of phonological confusion with the "synforms" observed by Laufer in her analysis of students' errors in processing written forms of words (Laufer-Dvorkin 1991). Similar lexical forms (i.e. similar both in orthographic and phonological forms) appear to be more important than meaning in the way many of the subjects performed in Test 2.

7.2 Written Production

Subjects were required to produce a correct written version of the words spoken on the tape. In marking this test, a written version was accepted as correct only if it was identical to the target or if it was identical except for some grammar feature, such as the addition of a plural "s" or a past tense "-ed" ending. It was interesting to note how frequently words appeared correctly

written, but modified in some way from the base forms used in the test. For example "referral" was frequently given as "referred" or "referrals". It is not immediately clear why students add grammatical indicators gratuitously in this way. One possible explanation is that many students do not know what the base form of a particular word is and do not distinguish inflected or derived forms when they learn words. For many of the subjects in the present study it cannot be assumed that their L2 words are stored as lemmas and that they make use of the morphological system to produce the forms they need.

In asking the subjects to reproduce the target words orthographically, it had been assumed that many of the versions produced would be only partially correct and that a molecular analysis of the answers would provide some insights into which parts of words were more easily recalled than others. In the event, there were few instances of partially correct words. Instead, subjects tended to produce correct whole words, though not necessarily the words they heard on the tape. Generally, there was a reluctance to try assembling words using components. This "all or nothing" approach adds further support to the view that a large proportion of the subjects are word-based both in their processing and production of English. Examples of whole word substitutions are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Examples of whole word substitutions

Target	*Substitutions*
DETRACTION	DESTRUCTION, DEFLATION, CONTRACTION
RETENTION	DETENTION, INTENTION, ATTENTION
MILESTONE	LANDSTONE, MILLSTONE, MILD STONES
SCREENING	SCREAMING
EXACERBATE	EXCESS

8. Conclusion

The subjects' impressive knowledge of word forms and the corresponding relatively poor grasp of word meaning invites speculation in a number of directions. It is, of course, quite possible that all L2 learners have a rather vague understanding of many of the words which they not only recognise correctly but actually use. The same might be argued, but to a lesser extent, for native speakers. Is an imbalance between formal and semantic knowledge more likely to be found in learners who rely on a highly developed visual memory when learning a second language? Studies which compare the performance of learners from different language backgrounds are needed to establish the influence of previous learning styles and strategies.

Among speakers of Chinese, there are learners who study English in a systematic, even scientific manner, such as students at schools and universities in China. By contrast, learners in the English-medium education system of Hong Kong receive less formal instruction about the nature of the English lexical system, yet are exposed to far more English words than their counterparts in China. A replication of the present study with students in Nanjing is being carried out and it is hoped that the results will shed light on the effects of formal vocabulary instruction both on knowledge of word meaning and word forms.

The approach to English vocabulary development in Hong Kong schools relies heavily on mere exposure to words rather than analysis of and in-depth interaction with words. Ellis's (1994) assertion, referred to above, that second language vocabulary acquisition draws on both implicit and explicit knowledge is relevant here. Ellis argues that knowledge of word meaning involves explicit knowledge, whereas knowledge of word forms relies on implicit knowledge. It is probably true to say that English vocabulary development within the Hong Kong system draws almost entirely on implicit knowledge, since word meaning is seldom a focus of instruction. Instead, words forms are freely recognised and produced in course assignments and examinations, with little monitoring of the extent to which meaning has been acquired.

From their analysis of how native speakers develop an understanding of meaning in English, Anderson and Nagy (1991) conclude that high priority should be attached to word meaning within any English-medium education system:

> Word meanings are learned to serve as tools for comprehension and new learning, not simply as facts to be remembered. ... there is no knowledge addressed in schools in

which application is more crucial than knowledge of word meanings. (p721)

The data from the present study suggest that the status of word meaning in Hong Kong schools is far from clear.

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Appendix A: Reading Text Used in the Study

Existing Problems

Overloading

2.10 Demographic changes, rising costs, new medical challenges and enhanced consumer expectations have all brought new pressures on the healthcare system. Until recently, hospitals were often lined with camp beds. Long queues still clog the clinics. That is a constant source of dissatisfaction to, and a point of complaint from, the public. Some of these problems are capable of solution by better management and are being put right by the Hospital Authority. The Department of Health is also taking steps to make it more convenient and pleasant to visit its clinics, such as by shortening waiting times and improving the environment in waiting areas. Paradoxically, these improvements may exacerbate old problems by causing a new influx of patients from the private sector.

2.11 A less apparent symptom of overloading is the appalling waiting time at specialist out-patient clinics. This is the number of days that a person has to wait for first attendance upon referral. It may be the result of inadequate manpower and resources, but other possible causes include unnecessary referrals, lack of screening for urgent cases, poor organization of clinic time, low throughput of cases and one-way referral from the private sector. The same reasons may explain the long waiting time for hospital admission or surgery.

Manpower Constraints

2.12 The problem of overloading has dampened the morale of healthcare staff, who have to work long hours in a stressful environment. It has added to the problems of staff recruitment and retention. In response, a range of improvements has already been made to the pay and service conditions of doctors, nurses and supplementary medical professionals. Significant milestones have also been set in establishing the Hospital Authority and Hong Kong Academy of Medicine - for better management of hospitals and enhanced postgraduate training of doctors. Despite these efforts, it remains difficult to recruit and retain nurses. Detraction from tasks that nurses are trained for and engagement in non-professional and menial work have made nursing work relatively frustrating and unattractive. The manning ratios in hospitals are outdated and unsuitable for present-day application. Clearly, there is a need to re-orient and re-align duties, and to improve career prospects and training

opportunities. Measures such as the introduction of Ward Stewards and Clinic Assistants to take up non-professional duties, and the development of a professional stream of Nurse Specialists, are only the first steps forward. More needs to be done as rapid advancement in medical technology requires greater professional skills and specialization. The Hospital Authority is currently finalising its manpower review. A comprehensive strategy and plan of action wil be formulated upon completion of that review.

Inequitable Fee Structure

2.13 All public health services are heavily subsidized by Government. The level of subsidy reaches 80% or more of the costs in most cases. The rest is covered by an all-inclusive fee at a flat rate. The rationale is that the public sector acts as a safety net for those who are less fortunate and that no one would be denied adequate treatment through lack of means. In practice, even those who can afford to pay more than the token fee use the highly subsidized services, particularly hospital services. Moreover, the fact that public health services are cheap to the patient may not be conducive to public awareness of the high cost of maintaining community health.

(from *Towards Better Health*, consultation document, Hong Kong Government, 1993)

Appendix B: Test 1 (Word Meaning)

Give the Chinese equivalent of the following words, as used in the passage, "Existing Problems". If you prefer, you can give an explanation of the meaning using English:

1. demographic _____
2. constraints _____
3. clog _____
4. paradoxically _____
5. exacerbate _____
6. influx _____
7. appalling _____
8. referral _____
9. screening _____
10. throughput _____
11. surgery _____
12. dampen _____
13. recruitment _____
14. retention _____
15. milestone _____
16. detraction _____
17. relatively _____
18. manning _____
19. outdated _____
20. re-orient _____
21. re-allign _____
22. stream _____
23. subsidize _____
24. flat (rate) _____
25. safety net _____
26. token fee _____
27. conducive _____
28. advancement _____
29. manpower _____
30. inequitable _____

NAME: _____

6 EXPONENTS OF REPAIR AND OTHER INTERACTIONAL FEATURES IN SMALL GROUP WORK

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The popularity of communicative language teaching has had a dramatic impact on textbook publishing and research. The use of communicative tasks is prominent in recent language teaching texts (see the review in Nunan, 1989b), yet the interaction-based pedagogical approach is based on a series of assertions which have only been minimally tested by research. This study analyzed the impact of two common classroom tasks on small group interaction. It focused on three questions: Which task generates more negotiation of meaning? Which task generates more interactional features? Which task generates more talk?

Based on the assumption that "one learns how to do conversation, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction syntactic structures are developed" (Hatch, 1978, p. 404), it has been argued that learners will negotiate and build meaning cooperatively given the opportunity. According to Plough and Gass (1993), learners discussing together have the opportunity to work towards comprehensibility through the use of repair and other communication strategies, to hear language from their peers for later integration, and to express concepts beyond their current linguistic capability (p. 36).

In particular, it has also been argued that through negotiation of meaning a learner's attention is focused on some aspect of an utterance which requires modification (Stevick, 1981), thus leading to grammar development. Some studies have pointed to the ways in which learners can learn from one another. Pica (1994) cites research which shows that learners were able to modify and manipulate initial utterances into more complex forms (Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnel, unpublished data, 1993). Bruton & Samuda (1980), Ellis (1984), and Bygate (1988) have found learner-generated adjustments towards more correct production through, for example, expansion strategies to extend their messages, imitation of other speakers, or the use of 'satellite units' to cooperatively build discourse.

However, Skehan (1993) argues against the views of Stevick (1981) and others (see above) by suggesting that comprehension and communication strategies actually allow a learner to bypass their weaknesses and overcome the need to modify their interlanguage; thus a focus on negotiation of meaning with its time stress emphasizing brevity and efficiency could lead more directly to fossilization.

This fear of error reinforcement and fossilization has also been confirmed by research (Higgs & Clifford, 1982; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; White, 1991; and Wong-Filmore, 1992).

One of the problems which may have lead to conflicting results has been the lack of consistent definitions of a communicative task in general and specific task types. In this study, task was defined as,

> a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right. (Nunan, 1989a, p. 10)

The tasks were set within the framework of Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993) which characterizes tasks according to *interactional activity* and *communication goal.* Interactional activity involves *interactant relationship* and *interaction requirement. Interactant relationship* refers to whether interactants share mutual or hold independent pools of information. (see Long (1980, 1985) for a discussion of one-way and two-way information exchanges.) *Interaction requirement* refers to whether interaction is required, expected or possible (ie., optional) to complete the task. Communication goal includes *goal orientation,* which may be convergent or divergent (see Duff, 1986, for a discussion of these terms), and the number of acceptable *outcome options*, ie., one or more. (see the criteria for task type in Figure 1.)

Figure 1

Task Framework (based on Pica, Kanagy & Falodun, 1993)

Interactional Activity
- Interactant relationship:
  - mutual or independent pools of information
- Interaction requirement:
  - required expected or possible

Communication goal
- Goal orientation:
  - Convergent or divergent
- Outcome options:
  - one or more

Using these criteria, Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) then proceeded to classify pedagogical and research tasks into five types: jigsaw, information gap, problem solving, decision-making, and opinion exchange. Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993) have suggested the most ideal task would meet the following conditions: (1) each participant holds a different portion of the information, (2) all are required to share their information to complete the task, (3) the goal is convergent , and (4) there is only one possible solution. Therefore, a jigsaw task is considered most ideal for generating interaction and negotiation of meaning. The remaining tasks are given in order of most to least ideal conditions.

The classroom tasks selected for this study belong to the two 'least ideal' types. In both the 'decision-making' and 'opinion exchange' tasks the interactants hold and share the information (or parts of it) in common, thus they are expected but not actually required to share, and more than one outcome is possible. However, in the 'decision-making' task there is a convergent goal, whereas there is no convergent goal for the 'opinion exchange'. Thus the framework suggests more negotiation of meaning and interaction would take place for the former than for the latter task.

Research is only beginning to resolve the conflicting views and research findings on the effects of task type on interaction. By setting the two tasks of this study within the framework of Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993) and also by replicating the data analysis systems of previous researchers, this classroom research projects has attempted to contribute to a coherent body of comparative data on the effects of task on interaction.

Subjects

The participants in this study were fourteen Arts students at the University of Hong Kong. They were members of a required first year *English enhancement* class comprised of twelve females and two males. They shared the same first language, Cantonese. Their English levels, as measure by the *Use of English* (a local standardized assessment test conducted at the end of secondary school), were relatively typical for Arts classes, with 75% (8/12) earning a C on this test. Three students received grade B and one, grade D.

Procedure

Students divided themselves into 4 groups for project work. This resulted in 1 group of 5 students, and 3 groups of 3 students. One group had 2 males and 1 female; the others were all females. The participants were familiar with one another, with tape recording of discussions, and with working in cooperative groups.

Audio tapes of two half hour discussions were made in regular classes during two consecutive weeks During the first week, students prepared issues-related project proposals; during the second week, they held a discussion on the topic of 'sex and gender' which had been a topic of study over a one-month period in class.

Ten minutes of each tape were transcribed from the middle third of the discussion, resulting in a total of 80 minutes of data for analysis. The word count was carried out by computer, after deletion of speaker identification. Tapes were then analyzed for exponents of repair and other interactional features. Coding was carried out independently by the researcher and another EFL teacher, and then cross-checked to reach the final counts of items. The results were totaled, and compared to test the hypotheses.

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were set, based on the framework proposed by Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993):

1. Students will display a greater amount of negotiation of meaning on the decision-making task than on the opinion exchange.
2. Students will display a greater range and number of interactional features during the decision-making task than during the opinion exchange.

3. The amount of interaction will be greater on the decision-making task than on the opinion exchange.

Independent Variables

The independent variables were the decision-making and opinion exchange tasks. The tasks selected met the criteria for these tasks as characterised in the framework of Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993).

Prior to the project planning discussion, students had held at least one discussion and completed preliminary investigations on their project, so they held some information in common. They were expected to share in the project decisions, but if some had been willing to accept the decisions of their group members, their input was not essential to completing the task. The convergent goal was a project plan which they were expected fulfill in the following weeks; multiple outcomes were possible. The choice of project topic, type of research, and presentation outcomes were all open.

The opinion exchange was a final discussion on the topic of 'sex and gender' which had previously been covered in the class through reading, video viewing, and discussion. Thus students shared information which they were only expected to exchange during the discussion. No convergent goal or single outcome was required as students were not asked to reach any consensus, though they were asked to report on the discussion to the class afterward.

Dependent Variables

There were three dependent variables: negotiation of meaning, interactional features, and amount of talk generated.

Negotiation of meaning was measured by exponents of repair following the definitions of Berwick (1993b) in his study of repair strategies. Thus,

> the ways learners signed and repair misunderstandings over language used to conduct a task are viewed here as tactics learners use contingently to increase the comprehensibility of task language through negotiation and permit the task to move forward. The exponents of repair include indications of lexical uncertainty, requests for clarification, confirmation checks, self-repetition, self-expansion, other-repetition, other-expansion and code switching — all of which have been

> applied to research documenting relationships between task type and task language (See Long, 1981; Porter, 1983; Gass & Varonis, 1985; Ross & Berwick, 1992; Berwick, 1993a.)
> (Berwick, 1993b, p. 254).

In addition, I have distinguished between speaker and listener-responder roles in an attempt to further tease out the dynamics of the interactions which took place.

Definitions of exponents of repair and interactional features are given below for interactants in the role of speaker and listener-responder. Definitions are based on those used by Berwick (1993a, 1993b). A sample excerpt from a transcript with analysis is given in the Appendix.

Exponents of Repair used by Speakers:

1. *Comprehension check*: A speaker checks whether the listener has understood the utterance.
2. *Definition*: A speaker states what a word or phrase means, either in response to or in anticipation of the listener's lack of comprehension; the definition typically takes the form of "A is a (type of) B".
3. *Self-expansion*: Partial or complete rephrasing of one's own utterance, often occurring within the speaker's turn but possibly occurring within the speaker's next turn.
4. *Self-Repetition*: Exact, partial or semantic (equivalent) repetition of one's previous utterance within five turns of that utterance. The self-repetition frequently occurs within the speaker's own turn.
5. *Lexical uncertainty*: Hesitant or tentative attempt to recall or properly employ a particular word; often characterized by repetitive production of incomplete or incorrect forms of the lexical item.
6. *Code switch*: A speaker uses Cantonese to clarify or expand information, or to express information more easily.

Exponents of Repair used by Listener-Responders:

1. *Clarification request:* The listener indicates lack of understanding through an implied or explicit request for the speaker to expand or reformulate an utterance. This also includes utterances such as 'Huh?', 'Pardon?' and 'What?', spoken with rising intonation.
2. *Confirmation check*: A speaker requests confirmation that the previous utterance has been heard correctly by repeating a word or phrase from the utterance and adding a rising intonation.

3. *Echo*: Exact, complete or (typically) partial repetition of words, with flat or falling intonation, of the preceding speaker's utterance.
4. *Other-repetition*: Exact, partial or semantic repetition of the previous speaker's utterance within five turns of the utterance.
5. *Other-expansion*: Partial rephrasing of the previous speakers utterance. Rephrasing typically includes new material in addition to the repetition.
6. *Code Switch*: This is the same as above, except by the listener/responder.

Other interactional features are the same as those identified by Plough and Gass (1993). No distinctions were made between form and function except in the case of overlaps and interruptions where functional considerations came into effect. As noted by Plough and Gass (1993), "What appear to be similar forms, may be serving two distinct functions; and what appear to be two different forms may serve the same function" (p. 39).

Definitions of Interactional Features of Listener-Responders:

1. *Clarification request*: see definition above.
2. *Confirmation check*: see definition above.
3. *Echo*: see definition above.
4. *Back channel cue*: Any reply, such as 'uh huh', 'Mmmm', and 'Yeah' made by a listener-responder during or immediately after another speaker's utterance.
5. *Overlap*: This includes any instances of simultaneous speech where it does not cause a change in topic or speaker, or other specified feature.
6. *Interruption*: This refers to an instance of simultaneous speech which causes a change in topic or speaker.
7. *Sentence completion*: This includes instances in which the listener/responder appears to finish the sentence which another speaker began.

All examples of simultaneous speech were coded as back channel cues (4) or overlaps (5) as well as another category if appropriate.

Amount of interaction was measured by a computer word count of the transcripts, after removal of the speaker identification details.

Results And Discussion

As this was a pilot study involving only a small number of learners (14) no sophisticated statistical analysis was conducted. Despite this, a number of interesting features emerged.

Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis, that students would display a greater amount of negotiation of meaning (as measured by use of specified exponents of repair) on the decision-making task (Task 1) than on the opinion exchange (Task 2) was not confirmed. There were a total of 188 exponents of repair for Task 1 and 195 for Task 2, an almost equal number. *(see Table 1.)*

Table 1.

Exponents of Repair used in the Roles of Speaker and Listener-Responder for Decision-making (Task 1) and Opinion Exchange (Task 2).

TASK	1	2	TOTAL
SPEAKER			
Comprehension check	0	0	0
Definition	3	1	4
Self-expansion	58	65	123
Self-repetition	19	19	38
Lexical uncertainty	7	14	21
Code switch	1	4	5
TOTAL	88	103	191
LISTENER-RESPONDER			
Clarification request*	27	27	54
Confirmation check*	10	11	21
Echo*	20	17	37
Other repetition	12	11	23
Other expansion	30	22	52
Code switch	1	4	5
TOTAL	100	92	192

When the learners in the roles of speaker and listener-responder are viewed separately, there is also no confirmation of the hypothesis: as speaker 88 exponents of repair were used during Task 1 and 103 during Task 2, as listener-responder 100 exponents were used during Task 1 and 92 during Task 2. There were, however, more examples of lexical uncertainty and code switching for Task 2 than Task 1, but the number of items is very low.

The speaker's preference of exponents of repair was clear. Self-expansion occurred 123 times, that is more than three times as often as any other strategy. Code switching, comprehension checks and definitions were used minimally (0-4 times), whereas self-expansion, self-repetition and definitions appeared 7 to 19 times.

There was less variation in the listener-responders use of exponents of repair with a range of 5 to 54 examples. The most commonly used exponents were clarification request (54) and confirmation check (52).

The total numbers of exponents of repair used by students as speakers and listener-responders was almost equal (191:192). By specific exponent there were greater variations. In the speaker role there were no comprehension checks to see if the listeners understood, but there were 54 clarification requests and 21 confirmation checks by the listener-responders to ensure their understanding, suggesting that students expected the listener-responders to take more initiative to ensure comprehension. However as speakers, students used other exponents to ensure understanding. Speakers used self-expansion about three times as often as listener-responders used other-expansion (123:37). Speakers also repeated themselves 38 times which was less than listeners repeated, categorized as other repetitions (23) or echoes (37). Students used a variety of exponents to negotiate meaning and build discourse cooperatively, with only minimal code-switching (10 examples for all groups and both tasks) which is in clear contrast to usual small group discourse in class when there is no recording being made.

The difference between the hypothesis and the result may be due to two factors. The two tasks were very similar, the only difference being between convergent and divergent goals, though this is in line with the task framework of Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993). However, even this difference could also have been minimized by the students' interpretation of the assignment to report back on the results of their discussion as meaning one group view. It may also reflect a cultural bias of Cantonese learners in favor of consensus.

Though total exponents of repair were equal for the two tasks, if the data for one group (B) is omitted, the results of the other three groups show a trend in support of the hypothesis (Task 1-118:Task 2-87). (*see Table 2).* Thus one group has skewed the results in this regard.

Table 2.

Exponents of Repair Used by Group and Task

GROUP	A	B	C	D	ALL
Task 1	36	73	36	46	191
Task 2	36	105	28	23	192
TOTAL	72	178	64	69	

Table 2 shows further impact of Group B on the total use of exponents of repair. This group, for example, used about 2.5 times as many exponents as group C for the two tasks (178:64). It also used twice as many exponents as groups A and C for Task 1 (73:36) and almost 5 times as many exponents as group D for Task 2 (105:23). Group B, which was composed of five females who were very talkative and friendly with one another, engaged in much more negotiation of meaning than any of the other groups.

Hypothesis 2. The hypothesis that students would display a greater range and number of interactional features during the decision-making task than during the opinion exchange, was somewhat positively supported by the results of interactional features displayed by the listener/responders. *(see Table 3.)* Overall there were 26.5% more interactional features found for Task 1 as compared to Task 2 (302:222). However, this variation in features requires further consideration, as again group B skewed the data by accounting for 44% of all of these features. If Group B is excluded from the calculations , the result for the remaining three groups is more similar (Task 1-168 examples:Task 2-125 examples), showing less support for the hypothesis.

Table 3.

Interactional Features used by Listener-responders

TASK	1	2	TOTAL
LISTENER-RESPONDER			
Clarification request*	28	27	55
Confirmation check*	10	11	21
Echo*	20	17	37
Back channel	77	59	136
Overlap	129	83	212
Interruption	17	21	38
Sentence completion	21	4	25
TOTAL	302	222	524

The least commonly used features were listener confirmations (only 21 instances) and sentence completions (25). The most commonly used were overlaps (212). and back-channel cues (136). About half of the instances of overlaps (102 out of 212) were due to Group B.

Group D, composed of two males and one female, used almost twice as many interactional features for the opinion exchange (Task 2) on the topic of 'sex and gender', during which many differences of viewpoint were evident, than on the

project planning task (70:45). This is in contrast to the other three all-female groups which had much less difference of opinion during their Task 2 discussion, and perhaps for this reason used less interactional features than during the first task.

Clearly difference in interactional style as well as task topics and the opinions of group members appear to be a dominant feature influencing the data.

Hypothesis 3. The results also result in a rejection of the third hypothesis that the amount of interaction would be greater on the decision-making task than on the opinion exchange. *(see Table 4)* There was 21.0% more talk produced during Task 2 than Task 1.

Table 4.

Word Count by Group and Task.

GROUP	A	B	C	D	TOTAL
Task 1	365	856	738	408	2367
Task 2	612	765	782	838	2997
TOTAL	977	1621	1520	1246	

The most notable feature again was the variation between groups in word counts, both in terms of the total word counts for each group and the variation between tasks for different groups. The most talkative group (B) spoke 39.7% more than the least talkative for the two tasks combined. Interestingly two groups, A and D, spoke about twice as much during Task 2 as compared with Task 1, which would have supported the hypothesis, while groups B and C spoke relatively equal amounts for both tasks. More specifically Group A used 40.4% and D 51.3% more words on Task 2 while Group B used 10.6% less and Group C used only 5.6% more. Group D (2 males, 1 female) spoke twice as much in the opinion exchange than during project planning.

Different group results may very likely be related to the differences in the groups themselves in terms of their personal relationships, styles of interaction, and degree of difference of opinion.

Conclusion

Although the small sample size precluded statistical analysis which could have confirmed or disconfirmed the hypothesis, the results suggest that none of

the differences would have been significant. Perhaps this was due to the very similar nature of the tasks used in this study; though they met the criteria of the task framework of Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993), they still varied in only one respect (ie. in divergent and convergent goals).

The limitations of this pilot study are the small number of participants and the variations between self-selected groups in terms of size and composition. Nonetheless, the results of this study illustrate the complexity of factors which have an impact on interaction in small groups. Task interpretation, specific topic, group, cultural and gender factors appear to have had greater impact on interaction than task type in this study. All of these factors deserve focused study.

Before either rejection or application of the five task framework of Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993) in the classroom, validation of the proposal is essential. Further research studies both in the classroom and experimentally, with a maximum of potentially intervening variables controlled, need to be carried out with a large number of subjects at various levels of competency.

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the University of Hong Kong Committee on Research and Conference Grants (No. 337/091/0005) and the contributions of her research assistant, Lillian Wong.

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Appendix

Sample Transcript and Analysis

	3 Females Students discuss gender roles	**Repair**	**Interaction**
F1	Also is a result of ah more education for women. They are highly educated so they can get a higher position.	L-OEXP	
F2	Huh?	L-CLAR	L-CLAR
F1	Higher education so they can get higher	S-SEXP	
F3	and they know how to fight.	L-OEXP	L-SENT
F2	How to fight with men?	L-CONF	L-CONF
F1	how to fight//	L-ECHO	L-ECHO
F3	But they can try to fight//		L-OVER
F2	Not fight, not fight with men.		L-INTR
F1	I have mentioned before they dare to speak up.	S-SEXP	
F3	Challenge?	L-CONF	L-CONF
F2	Yeah//		L-BACK
F1	Yes, challenge men.		L-OVER

NOTE:

L-listener, **S**-speaker, **OEXP**-other expansion, **CLAR**-clarification request, **SEXP**-self-expansion, **SENT**-sentence completion, **CONF**-confirmation check, **ECHO**-echo, **OVER** & //-overlap, **INTR**- interrupt, **BACK**- back channel cues.

7 TOWARDS A CRITICAL COMPETENCE

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Introduction

The concept of critical competence implies the view of language as social behaviour. It recognizes that an individual's use of language must conform to accepted standards, in contexts, where such conformity is required. It is the ability to explain things, to connect events and to place these events and objects in the context of patterns, structures and causes. There is a capacity to recognize the socially constructed and conventional nature of language. It is also an ability to relate the use (or teaching) of language to constructs such as class, race, gender and power.

Other better known competences which have been used in relation to language learning and teaching are competences such as grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic (cf. Canale and Swain 1980). Grammatical competence is that which is considered grammatically correct in a language. It is, in essence, competency with regard to the technical mastery of the language system. Sociolinguistic competence refers to what is considered socially acceptable in language or to the manner in which individuals use language in literacy tasks in order to operate effectively in specific contexts. It is a question of individuals being able to read and write in a range of contexts, in an appropriate and adequate manner. Strategic competence refers to the knowledge of how to use communicative strategies to communicate intended meaning.

Where critical competence is concerned however, the language system is viewed not as a neutral transmitter of meaning or a mere receptacle for meaning but rather as one which constrains and enables the kinds of meaning that can be made. Language learning is intrinsically tied to the learning of culture (Halliday 1975, 1978), and is therefore, enculturation.[1] Individuals need to gain access to the meaning culture in order to function in it effectively and productively. However, at the same time, they have to realize that meaning systems are always selective and sectional; representing particular interpretations and classifications. Thus, the critical dimension is one which enables the individual not simply to participate in the culture but also, in various ways, to transform and actively produce it.

This paper analyses how the lack of a critical competence can affect life's chances in a crucial encounter such as the admission interview in an educational institution in Singapore and puts forward a case for the promotion and cultivation of such a competence in language teaching and language learning (cf. Chew 1994).

The Interview

Admission interviews, like job interviews, political interviews and judicial interrogations, form a highly structured rule-governed ritual, characterized by genre-specificities. They differ in many ways from everyday talk.

The most striking feature of the interview ritual which distinguishes it from the routine properties of everyday talk is its overt and strict allocation of rights and duties. It is an interaction characterized by a highly conventionalized routine demanding a great degree of shared knowledge and experience. Formal rules of status relations and the means of expression in language are exceptionally overt, strict and legitimatized by the interview genre. This "orderly talk" of the interview is best expressed through the performance of rituals especially pronounced in the central device of interrogative structures which strictly map out the turns one may take. Questioning by the IR (Interviewer) and answering by the IE (Interviewee) are the order of the day since the interview is conducted exclusively through chains of questions and answers. Like the classroom or courtroom, the IR has the right to ask questions and questions therefore predominate, start and terminate the interview.

This one-sided interaction in the interview may be better understood as the working out of a power relation, as a recognizable attempt by one party to guide the talk of the other (Hickey 1986). Its asymmetry is enhanced by the fact that both participants come with differential knowledge of each other. While the IR usually has prior knowledge of the IE through the latter's resume or dossier, the reverse is not true. Such prior knowledge available to the IR provides a powerful tool which may be used during the interview to manipulate the IE, thus perpetuating the power asymmetry between them.

To be successful in an interview, the IE will have to be aware of the rules and rituals of the interaction as well as her status as the subordinate party in such an interaction. She would need to adhere to its requirements and to anticipate and answer in the content and manner expected. Failure to follow ground rules on the part of the less powerful subject will therefore result in a penalty. Such a knowledge reflects the possession of not only a grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence but also a critical competence. The concept of critical

competence in an admission interview, and which is the focus of this paper, is the acknowledgement of the power differential by both the IE and the IR and the awareness that this differential creates interactional rights and duties for both and which presupposes a specific distribution of knowledge between them. A critically competent IE would realize that admission interviews are "gates" to ensure that the "right" people get to the "right" place in society and that this is tested mainly through the Discourse (with a capital D) they use (Gee 1992).

Site in Question

The site in question is the admission interview for applicants to an educational institution conducting childcare and kindergarten courses in the Republic of Singapore. Permission was obtained to videotape and transcribe the proceedings of the interview.[2] In order to be certified as a childcare teacher, each candidate, in this case the IE, was required to enroll in childcare courses. Admission to the course required the possession of certain educational qualifications as well as a pass in the interview. In this interview, candidates were judged on criteria from oral language testing literature such as *oral ability, poise, attitude, personality and knowledge.* No description was appended to these categories as it was assumed that they were commonsensical terms known to all. Scores for each category ranged from "1" representing "poor", to "3" representing "good", and the applicant was deemed to have "passed" the interview if she had obtained a total minimum score of 7 marks. The immediate task of the three interviewers was their individual grading of the applicant followed by the averaging of scores among themselves. Successful graduates of the course would receive a diploma which would be accepted by the Government of the State and with which they could use to apply for work as a childcare professional in any of the kindergartens or childcare centers in Singapore.

Of the 343 candidates who went through the interview, 259 or 75.5% were successful. While all the interviews were videotaped for the purpose of this study, it was decided to transcribe only 20 interviews selected randomly - 10 of those who were successful and 10 who were unsuccessful.

Much data were found which threw light on how candidates displayed their various competences as they tried to answer the numerous questions posed at them. Due to the limitations of space, only the IE's possession or lack of critical competence as revealed in her response(s) to the *last* question of the IR in the closing section of the interview will be examined.

The Closing Question

Sequentially speaking, an interview may be said to have three distinct although at times overlapping stages: an opening, a main sequence and an end. These stages have their own peculiar characteristics (Komter 1991). In such a formal event as the admission interview, all interactions have to be closed appropriately. On such occasions, the close-salutation of greetings is highly conventionalized, takes a variety of forms and serves a number of functions (cf Button 1990).

Closings are often initiated by the more powerful party, in this case by the IR. A critically competent IE must realize that when the IR had made up her mind as to the potential admission of the IE, she would signal this by an invitation to her to ask a few token questions. As this is a complete reversal of the roles of questioner and answerer, as well as an abrupt change of subject from the immediate conversation, it must therefore be interpreted as a signal by the IR that the interaction is to end. This signal for the IE to ask questions is normally phrased directly and overtly by the IR: "Are there any questions you want (or would like) to ask us?" Despite its interrogative form, the IE must be able to interpret it as a pseudo-question, signaling the desire of the IR to end the interview. Her realization of this is also an indirect acknowledgement of her inferior power status because by playing into the role, it would make it appear that it is the IE, rather than the IR, who has consented to the closing of the interview. An overt power relationship is therefore neutralized through such verbal strategies.

Extract 1

IR: Uh okay, so are there any questions you like to ask us?
IE: Not at the moment (5)
IR: Okay. Thank you.
IE: Thank you very much ((gets up to leave))

The critically competent IE would also realize that occasionally the closing question may be phrased indirectly through a show of concern by the IR as to whether the IE knows what the course is about. Such a question is significant since it is the first question that seems to indicate some concern about how the IE might perform in the course; the other questions addressed to her prior to this were all centered on obtaining information on herself.

Extract 2

IR: Do you know what you are in for on the course? You know what this course is about?

(or)

IR: All right, I expect you know about this course from people at the center, do you?

Faced with such a question, the IE has two "acceptable" choices: if she replies in the affirmative, the interview can proceed to a "logical" conclusion; if, however, she replies in the negative, then she is free to proceed "rationally" to ask what the course is about. Very often such questions are phrased in the positive: "You know what this course is about?", because the IR hopes to conclude the interaction quickly by obtaining an affirmative answer from the IE. The IE must also realize, like in the second example of Extract 2, that sometimes the force contained in the tag and the modality "All right" makes it expedient for her to answer in the positive.

Should this expedient course be chosen, a dismissal sequence must be expected which takes the form of one of the following moodless questions which may occur either singly or in a series:

All right?

(or)

Okay?

(or)

Any questions?.

The critically competent IE must understand that such moodless questions are used to seek agreement that everything has been settled and are also covert declarations that the interview is ended.[3] The IE must then anticipate that the IR does not expect her to have any questions to ask but is nevertheless offering her an opening following the democratization ritual so common now in unequal discourse. On realizing that this is not a real offer the IE may, if she wish to succeed in the interview, offer thanks and reject the offer so as to usher in a well-formed closing to the satisfaction of the more powerful party. In pleasing the more powerful party, she is also rewarded in the sense that she has created a favorable impression.

In addition, a critically competent IE must realize that depending on the mood of the situation, some closings may be extended. Here, the IE may respond to the invitation, take up the option and *really* ask a question. This may also have the advantage of showing that she is alert and interested just as it allows the IR the advantage by demonstrating that she is democratic and approachable. This is not the norm but allowable as long as one or not more than two questions are asked. The questions at her disposal should be those which would preferably elicit only short factual answers as in the following:

Extract 3

IR: ... any questions you like to ask us
IE: (6) If I were to know the results...
IR: You will be notified
IE: Okay thanks. Bye, bye
IR: Thanks. Bye bye.

Extract 4

IR: Okay, Jeanette. Do you have any questions for us?
IE: uh not really. uh which days is the course on?
IR: Tuesdays and Fridays...,...,..., All right?
IE: Yah, thank you.
IR: Off you go.
IE: Thank you.

Due to her position as the less powerful subject, the IE would however put herself at high risk if her questions were not factual but controversial. In the following the IE implies that the course might not be useful to the practicing teacher. Her question, however "innocent" it may appear to herself, contains an irrelevant allegation in the mind of the IR. This precipitates a rather brusque closing on the part of the IR, possibly indicating irritation.

Extract 5

IE: = Sometimes I heard from...my colleagues that they say that the way that the lecturers taught us is... I mean... is completely different from what we can do in the childcare center. Is that true?
IR: Okay that's all. Off you go.
IE: What? ((in surprise))
IR: I think we have enough. Thank you very much
IE: Thank you. ((Gets up to leave))

Here, the IE faces the penalty of being treated as a little school child and is the recipient of the immense power of the IR through imperative forms such as, "Okay. That's all. Off you go". The interaction is terminated prematurely without the slightest hint of apology.

It is important that the IE must possess the critical competence to ask a suitable question. In the next two extracts, the IE has unwittingly gone beyond the boundaries of what is appropriate to ask.

Extract 6

IR: any questions that you want to ask us?
IE: ah... about the course....? uh...
IR : you know ... the course is 6 months?
IE: 6 months....so ah... what could we really benefit ...from the course?
IR: Oh for that, YOU will have to attend the course, then you will know what you will benefit.
IE: yes but =
IR: = it's not for us to tell you what we think you will benefit, right?
IE: yes...
IR: Thank you very much.

and

Extract 7

IR: are there any questions that you like to ask us?
IE: (visual)
IR: any questions, any questions for us?
IE: uh... my colleague asked me to ask this question: when is this course commencing?
IR: why your colleague? Is your colleague attending?
IE Yes because they attend the -
IR: and you, you yourself already know?
IE: pardon?
IR: you do not wish to know when to start but your colleague wish to know?
IE: me too
IR: yah okay.
IE: sorry
IR: That's why I'm a bit worried why your colleague is asking
not you -

In Extracts 6 and 7, the IE has gone beyond the boundaries of what is permissible in her role as the less powerful subject to ask. By asking what she would benefit in Extract 6, she had put her counterpart in the salesman position and thereby demeaned her status. By asking on behalf of a colleague in Extract 7, she had appeared too presumptuous of her interaction rights.

Time is of the essence in an interview and questions posed by the less powerful subject must be to the point. In Extract 8, the IE seems to have some difficulty phrasing her question and fails therefore in her bid to ask one.

Extract 8

IR: good! okay! ((IE clears throat)) any questions you like to ask us
IE: I like to ask you ... basically... cos I'm kind of frustrated, you see when it comes to. I just don't want my children to stay in the classroom.. for such long hours. I want them to get more to go outside, but its so sad there so limited places you know on nature. Sometimes, it really frustrated me you see. So I wish to ask -
IR: alright, thank you
IE: thank you.
IR: off you go
IE: Have a good day! ((gets up to leave as she utters this))

Armed with critical competence, an IE would play the role of the less powerful subject during the closing ritual. In essence, she should be responsive but subordinate. Should she actively and literally take up the suggestion by the IR to ask questions, she might be penalized for being out of role. Questions asked must be chosen with great care and precision. Her position in the interaction requires her to conform to the established norms of the interview situation. The presence of a system of immediate (although usually tacit) rewards for correctly identifying and sanctions for failing to identify the illocutionary force intended by the speaker often ensures the necessary obedience (cf. Hickey 1986).

Conclusion and Implication

The ability to relate the use of language to constructs such as power is therefore vital in crucial encounters where life's chances are at stake. Competent language users are those who are able to relate their answers to the context in question, and understand the implication of power rights and obligations involved in such interactions. Language learners need to recognize the socially

constructed and conventional nature of language if they are to succeed in important social encounters. They need the critical realization that their use of language must conform to accepted standards in contexts where such conformity is required; and they must realize that the willingness or unwillingness, capability or incapability, to reproduce such a conformity comes with rewards and penalties. Failure in crucial encounters is often due to a lack of critical competence and not just grammatical, sociolinguistic or strategic competence, although all contribute to make an important impression. Such a failure, as Hirsch (1987) puts it would mean exclusion from the "goods" controlled by the dominant group in society.

The pupils' critical consciousness of the environment and critical self-consciousness should be developed. Schooling has a particularly significant role to play in the process that this involves, indeed to use Bernstein's phrase, schooling must be regarded as a "critical socializing agency" (1971). Learners need to gain access to the meaning culture in order to function in it effectively and productively. The unconscious has to be made conscious and common and linguists should not hesitate to reveal all that they know about presuppositions and entailments, concealed agents, existential, deletions, hidden pretenses of all kinds, intonation and gesture.

The teaching of critical competence would also empower learners both in their future roles as the more powerful subject and the less powerful subject. As the less powerful subject, they would be able to connect events and to place these events and objects in the context of patterns, structures and causes. As the more powerful subject, they would be aware of the possible exploitation of directive and constitutive power strategies which they may use unconsciously and which may be unjust and unfair. This would encourage them to consciously play down differences in power and dispense with judgmental preoccupations.

Notes

1 Conversely, to learn culture and become an effective functioning participant in the culture involves learning the language and becoming competent with regards to using it as a resource for meaning

2. A broad system of transcription was adopted for the transcription and minute detailed features such as intonation and other paralinguistic features were only included when it become an aid to contextual meaning and when its inclusion helped in the avoidance of ambiguity and misinterpretation (See Appendix A)

3 It may be the case however that sometimes, no question is asked, only a short phrase is given to signal the termination of the exchange. The offer of a question as a means of terminating the interaction is, however, more the norm (approximately 75% of the data). This may range from an indirect "thank you" to an overt "That's all, off you go". The "thank you" signal may be immediately preceded by modalities such as "okay" and "All right".

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Appendix

The transcription techniques and symbols used are much influenced by those devised by Gail Jefferson in the course of research undertaken with Harvey Sack. Techniques and symbols, however, are revised, symbols added or dropped as they seemed useful to work. Generally, I have decided to keep to the standard written conventions for spelling and punctuation because its visual familiarity would facilitate reading, rather than use modified orthography for representing the pronunciation of lexical items (for example, "is" instead of "ees" as is common in the Singapore basilect and lower mezolect) except in cases where the wrong or exaggerated pronunciation is significant to interpretation. It must be noted however that adherence to the conventions of standard orthography created a few minor problems, for example, it may be noted that the comma is merely a grammatical device to facilitate reading and speakers do not necessarily pause at those places marked by commas (e.g. "for mathematics, it covers more on accounting, tracing and matching and for arts and crafts, we train up the children's motor skills.") In many cases, a complex sentence uttered by the IE comes all in one breath.

The transcription symbols used are indicated below:

IR - the interviewer.
IE - the interviewee.

Loudness

Marked by capital letters
e.g. "COME HERE"

Emphasis

Marked by italizing the specific word with a given utterance.

e.g. "You mean you want *this*

Lengthened syllable.

Marked by colons ":"

e.g. "Oh I see::::: I see :::"

Intonation.

"?" marks high rise. Usually indicating a question.

"." marks low fall. Usually indicating the end of a sentence.

"!" marks exclamatory utterance.

"..." every 3 periods means a pause of 1 second. These periods are separated by a space.
e.g. "What do you do with them uh... during outdoor play?"

"-" a hyphen means a deliberate cut off.

"=" The equal sign are used to indicate that no time elapsed between the objects "latched" by the marks. E.g.

IE: I can learn to do that =
IR: when?
IE: = and try to capture their imagination.

(Utterance).

Used whenever an utterance was unclear to the observer but tentative interpretation of words or phrases was possible

(_____)

Used whenever an utterance was unclear and no interpretation was possible.

(1)

Number encased in parenthesis indicates the seconds ensuing between utterances or speaker turns. This may also be used to indicate the duration of pause in a speaker's turn.

Non-verbal acts

These are not transcribed unless they are deemed by the observer to relate strongly to verbal interpretation. When nonverbal acts is deemed significant to the discourse, it is placed in double parentheses.

e.g.

IR: so are you enjoying it then?
IE:((visual signal for "quite"))
IR: which age range do you have, which group?

ote: All names and references to places in the transcript have been changed.

8 WHEN DOES A CARROT BECOME A STICK? - CHANGING ATTITUDES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF HONG KONG STUDENT TEACHERS

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Introduction and Methodology

Crew (1994) sought to investigate changes, both relative and absolute, occurring in the English language proficiency and attitudes towards the English language of a notional complete year group of Hong Kong Chinese full-time teacher trainees as it progressed through Grantham College of Education between September 1990 and June 1993. In so doing, the English proficiency of the students was tested three times (on entry to the College, at mid-course and on exit from the College), using parallel versions of an established standardised placement test (Allan 1984). Attitudes were similarly and simultaneously tested, using a modified Gardner and Lambert (1972) Attitude and Motivation Index (AMI) based on Gliksman, Gardner and Smythe's 1982 version, together with additional sections based on the work of Pierson and Fu (1982) and Spolsky (1969)/Oller et al (1977).

Prior to 1959, when Gardner and Lambert's seminal study found that motivation, in addition to linguistic aptitude, was relevant to second language achievement, there had been little systematic research into the specific functions and interaction of affective factors in second language acquisition. Subsequently, a large body of work has been carried out in this field, frequently focussing on the relationship between attitudinal and motivational factors and proficiency in a second language. It is to this research paradigm that the present study belongs. At the design stage it was not known which factors would correlate most closely with proficiency and therefore a reasonably wide selection was made, which will be described shortly. In a longitudinal study of this nature, it is of course impossible (and, indeed, irrelevant) to control the multitude of influences which may bear on the variables being investigated. It was assumed that all or some of the variables selected would vary in some way in their relationships with the acquisition/proficiency factor and the *cause* of any such fluctuation would not be directly germane to the findings, interesting though it might be to speculate thereon.

It was accepted that as the subjects of the study were aware that they were participating in a research project, their responses may not be as "natural" or "true" as one would wish. This is perhaps more the case with the attitude and motivation segment of the study than with the proficiency testing, as the latter was carried out to all intents and purposes as part of normal College assessment procedures. Insofar as test results are usually affected to some extent by the mental stress perceived by the testees, scores may not have reflected "normal" proficiency, but as this factor affected the entire sample equally and as the test selected was not a highly-refined instrument, it is not felt that this was in any way crucial. Responses to attitude and motivation questions may have been influenced by students being aware of the fact that they were participating in a research project and/or by repeated (3) applications of the same (format) test - boredom, mischieviousness, unthinking responses etc.. In such a large sample, it is very difficult to control for such reactions beyond attempting to design the questionnaire items in such a way that contradictory responses to similar items can be statistically noted and adjusted. Again, as the propensity for such behaviour affects the whole group equally, this is not felt to be an unacceptable factor in reaching conclusions regarding that group.

Although certain results were anticipated, it is not felt that the study suffered to any significant degree from subjectivity problems. The focus of investigation (language proficiency measured against an array of attitudinal and motivational factors) was clear and factors were included rather then excluded in order to minimise researcher judgement bias in the initial stages and in fact to delay the stage of interpretative judgement until as late as possible in the research process. Furthermore, the instruments selected for the sampling were objective and replication using identical instruments and similar samples would not present any difficulty for someone seeking to question reliability and validity. Interpretation of the data is, of course, more subjective, particularly in terms of which items/factors should be ignored or taken into account and to what degree, but decisions in such matters were taken solely on statistical grounds, rather than from any desire, either conscious or unconscious, to bias the findings in some way.

Analysis of the data collated, comprising in its final raw form three sets of responses by 198 subjects to 190 attitude questionnaire items, together with their related English proficiency (placement) test scores, was carried out using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Before moving on to the findings, however, it is first appropriate to discuss in rather more detail the sample and test instruments employed.

The Sample

The design-stage sample for the study comprised the entire first year full-time student intake of Grantham College of Education for the academic year commencing in September 1990. Ages of subjects on entry to the College and therefore at first questionnaire and test completion varied between 17 and 23, with the vast majority in the 18-20 range. As there is little variation in age across the sample, this was not felt to be a significant factor. Obviously, for the purposes of the study it was essential that all subjects included in the final sample database should have completed all three phases of the data collection process. This requirement resulted in an initial total sample population of 303 declining, due to absence from one or other phase of the data collection process, to a final total of 198, or approximately two-thirds of the original figure (65.35%). Most of the fall-off occurred due to occasional absences by students. The size of the final sample is felt to be perfectly adequate to enable conclusions to be drawn from the data collected.

The sample population subdivides for analysis purposes into several groups, as follows:

Group 1: The entire sample (198), both two-year English-medium and three-year Chinese-medium students

Group 2: All two-year English-medium students (129)

Group 3: All two-year English-medium students not taking English as an Elective subject i.e those theoretically studying through the medium of English, but not intending to specialise as teachers of English and therefore not taking English as an Elective subject (105)

Group 4: All two-year English-medium English Elective students (24), i.e. those studying English as an Elective subject for teaching specialisation purposes.

Group 5: All two-year English-medium English Elective students who attended a six-week immersion course in English in Britain (17) at the mid-point of their College course (August-September 1991). That this would take place was not known at the design stage of the study, nor in fact until three months before the students' departure for Britain, but in view of the likelihood that this sub-group may, as a result of their visit to Britain, have developed different attitudes and/or levels of proficiency from the students who were not selected to go, it was essential to consider them as a discrete entity at some stage.

Group 6: All two-year English-medium English Elective students who did not attend the six-week immersion course (7).

Group 7: All three-year Chinese-medium students (69).

The Proficiency Test

The test used to establish students' initial proficiency level and to monitor their progress in English proficiency through their College careers was the Oxford Placement Test (Allan 1984). In view of the large number of subjects involved it was decided at an early stage in the design of the study that tests with time-consuming interview, tape-recording or other oral components were not practical with the limited resources available to the researcher. In addition, it was felt that a highly precise measure of English proficiency was not strictly necessary as the study took a broad approach to the concept of changes in proficiency level and in essence was concerned only with relative changes, not absolute determination of proficiency against external norms.

Three parallel (alternate form) versions of the Oxford Placement Test exist (1, 2 & 3), which were used in order with the subjects i.e. OPT 1 on entry, OPT 2 at mid-point and OPT 3 on exit. Each test comprised two main sections, each of 100 items, the first part being primarily a test of reading and listening skills involving knowledge and application of the sound and writing systems of English in order to select the correct utterances (from alternatives provided relating to a cassette recording) for inclusion in written sentences containing appropriate blanks. The second part, again in written, multi-choice format, tested students' knowledge and application of grammatical function and structure. Both sections aimed to provide for a range of ability from beginner to near-native speaker and were designed to be completed concurrently, with ten minutes recommended for Part A and fifty minutes for Part B. In practice these recommendations proved quite satisfactory - although time limits were never overtly given during test administration, even the slowest students never took longer than 55 minutes to complete the whole test on each occasion.

Administration of the tests was carried out on a year-group basis i.e. all two-year students took the tests as a group, with three-year students as a separate group.

The Attitude and Motivation Questionnaire

As previously stated, this instrument was modelled on the Language Research Group National Test Battery as presented by Gliksman, Gardner and Smythe, with additional content influenced by the work of Pierson and Fu and Spolsky/Oller et al. Effectively, the questionnaire may be divided into the initial Gardner-type direct measure test battery (subdivided into the Likert scale items - the majority - and the multiple-choice items) and the Spolsky-type indirect measure section which follows it.

Despite the tried and tested nature of the National Test Battery (vide, inter alia, Gardner and Smythe 1981 for a thorough treatment of its development process) in the French-Canadian and (to some extent) other settings, it was appreciated that its validity in the Hong Kong context could not be assumed, even though most modifications to the content were essentially very minor, largely involving the substitution of "English" for "French", "Westerners" for "French-Canadians", "Hong Kong" for "Canada" etc.. In addition to this, it was wished to introduce an additional section investigating the notion of "English and Cultural Identity", a concept touched upon by Pierson and Fu in several of their studies and which seemed likely to prove fruitful.

A draft version of the questionnaire was prepared, therefore, and piloted extensively, as a result of which it was then reworked and took its final form, as below:

Direct Measures (Likert Scale *+3 .... -3*)

Scale A - Parental Encouragement	(10 items)	
Scale B - Need Achievement	(10)	
Scale C - Degree of Integrativeness	(5)	
Scale D - Degree of Instrumentality	(5)	
Scale E - Attitudes towards learning English	(10)	
Scale F - English Class Anxiety	(5)	
Scale G - Interest in Foreign Languages	(10)	
Scale H - Ethnocentrism	(10)	
Scale J - Attitudes towards Westerners	(10)	
Scale K - English and Cultural Identity	(5)	(Total 80 items)

Multiple Choice Scales (1-3)

Scale L - Motivational Intensity	(10)	
Scale M - Desire to Learn English	(10)	(Total 20 items)

Indirect Attitude Measures (*Very well ... Not at all*)

Scale N - Self	(30) (15 positive/15 negative)
Scale O - Hong Kong (Chinese) people	(30) (15 positive/15 negative)
Scale P - Westerners generally	(30) (15 positive/15 negative)
	(Total 90 items)

Total of all items: **190**

Items 1-100 (the direct measures) were randomised within the questionnaire rather than appearing as blocks of obviously related statements. Items 101-190 (the indirect measures) were randomised in terms of "positive" and "negative" within the first block of 30 traits (applicable to Self), with the same item order then repeated for the second and third blocks i.e. Hong Kong Chinese and Westerners.

The AMI/OPT was then completed by the subjects of the study as follows:

Two-year English-medium students :
1. September 1990
2. September 1991
3. June 1992

Three-year Chinese-medium students:
1. September 1990
2. January 1992
3. June 1993

Due to the constraints of the paper format, it is not possible here to enter into matters of reliability, validity etc..

Findings

A vast amount of data was generated by this study, resulting in a considerable number of findings. For the purposes of the current paper it is obviously not necessary to report all these findings, only those relevant to the specific focus. Similarly, great detail is unnecessary as general trends are most appropriate. Attention is directed, therefore to Table 1, which illustrates the overall points being made.

(i) The Proficiency Test (OPT)

Table 1
Changes in English Proficiency Means as Measured by OPT1-3

Group	OPT1	OPT2	OPT3	OPT1-2 % diff.	OPT2-3 % diff.	OPT1-3 % diff.
1 Whole sample	142.1	144.8	137.1	+ 1.8	- 5.3	- 3.4
2 All English-medium	146.5	147.2	141.4	+ 0.4	- 3.9	- 3.5
3 English-medium non-Elective.	144.7	144.4	139.1	- 0.1	- 3.7	- 3.9
4 English Elective	154 6	159.5	151.5	+ 3.1	- 4.9	- 1.8
5 English Elective immersion	153.7	160.2	153.1	+ 4.2	- 4.4	- 0.2
6 English Elective non-immersion	156.8	157.5	147.8	+ 0.4	- 6.1	- 5.7
7 All Chinese-medium	133.9	140.3	129.1	+ 4.7	- 7.9	- 3.2

To summarise:

- The OPT scale varies between 0-200. The scores achieved by the students in the sample indicated, as expected, that the general level of English language proficiency varied between Lower and Upper Intermediate.

- Relative rankings between groups were maintained throughout the period of the study, but the degree of differentiation was variable.

- There was a general pattern of slight gain, followed by marked decline and overall loss of English proficiency.

- Group 7 did not follow the expected pattern of continuous decline and in fact the performance of these students in the proficiency tests exhibited several unexpected elements, not least the relatively higher gains in proficiency than English-medium groups at OPT2 stage.

- The proficiency level findings for Groups 5 and 6 were volatile, possibly in response to the influence of immersion course factors.

(ii) AMI and Overall Findings

The histogram representations of the findings (Appendix) illustrate the overall points being made. Please note that for OPT histograms, upward movement of histogram blocks is positive, whilst the reverse is true of attitude scale histogram blocks. Attention is directed in particular to variations between Groups 5 and 6, to Group 7 OPT performance, and to changes in the F (English Class Anxiety) scale and in the N (Self), O (Hong Kong people) and P (Westerners) scales.

It will be recalled that English language proficiency as measured by the OPT on entry generally followed the expected pattern i.e. Chinese-medium students lower than English-medium students, English Elective students highest. This ranking set was maintained throughout the period of the study, though there were movements within the established rankings at various stages. There was a general pattern of slight gain in proficiency at mid-point, followed by marked decline and overall loss, to varying degrees.

It is evident that reported attitudinal change varied considerably between groups AMI1-2. No single scale became more positively oriented over all groups and only one (Cultural Identity) became consistently more negative. English Class Anxiety improved for all except Group 7, Parental

Encouragement for all except Group 6. Desire to learn English for Groups 2-5 also improved. Group 5 showed improvement in more scales than any other group (9, compared with 6 for Group 6) and was the only group to register overall (net) positive change over the set of 15 attitude scales. The OPT gain for Group 5 was also highest, tempting a hasty conclusion that changes in proficiency may easily and proportionately be related to changes in attitude. Group 7, however, only became more positive on three scales yet achieved approximately the same OPT gain.

All groups declined in proficiency OPT/AMI2-3, but those declining least (Group 3, Group 2) registered improvement in most attitude scales. However, even a cursory examination of the data for other groups reveals that this is fallacious e.g. Group 7, which recorded the greatest OPT loss, became more positive on five scales; Group 4, falling only 7.8 OPT points compared with 11.1 for Group 7, only made gains on two scales. Again, there is little consistency in response change: Cultural Identity, the most consistently (negatively) performing scale AMI1-2, became the most consistent positively performing scale AMI2-3.

Overall - AMI/OPT1-3 - groups displayed even greater variety of change, English Class Anxiety being the only scale to show positive movement and Cultural Identity, despite a positive trend at AMI2, showing an overall negative trend. Self-rating improved for most groups, as did perceptions of Hong Kong people. Westerners were viewed less positively by all.

(iv) Summary

It is clear from the data findings that students' English language proficiency as measured by the OPT declined over the period of the study.

Equally clearly, the findings show that students' professed attitudes towards English and the language learning situation, as measured by the repeated administrations of the AMI, become more negative overall in the vast majority of cases, the most notable and consistent exception being the group of students who attended the U.K. immersion course, though even here, positive shift was limited and inconsistent.

In summary, then, it appears that after initial gains students on the whole decline in English language proficiency, registering as net loss by the time they exit the College. Similarly, overall, attitudes become more negative, exceptions being English Class Anxiety, Self and Hong Kong people. Self and Hong Kong people were not, however, shown to be markedly relevant (in correlation terms)

to OPT score. English Elective students attending the U.K. immersion course declined least in proficiency, contrasting with those English Elective students rejected for the immersion course, whose proficiency suffered most. Students in the latter group frequently registered greatest negative attitude change, particularly so in the second half of their course, raising obvious questions regarding the advisability of competitive selection for such courses.

Discussion

Given that the limitations of the Oxford Placement Test are accepted and therefore that the scores resulting from administration of the OPT do represent in adequately valid form the English language proficiency of the sample population, the most clearly notable finding is the marked decline in proficiency of Group 6 during the period of the study, together with marked attitudinal changes (e.g. a shift towards more negative attitudes towards Westerners, but an increasingly positive trend in terms of Self-image). Although it may be technically unsafe from the data available to ascribe a cause and effect relationship to rejection from the U.K. immersion course and decline in proficiency/attitudinal change, it is, nevertheless, an obvious conclusion to move towards. If the assumption is made that the immersion course is a major causative agent (i.e. a "stick" rather than a "carrot"), a number of further, currently unanswerable points inevitably arise with respect to the relative roles of attitude and proficiency. For example, do worsening attitudes professed by Group 6 after AMI2 lead to worse performance, or does non-selection for the immersion course due to worse performance result in worsening attitudes which in turn lead to even poorer performance etc., etc.? Is there a negative spiral in existence in which cause and effect are indistinguishable but in which attitudes and proficiency appear to drive each other - a "chicken and egg" situation?

Whatever the truth of this, in principle the remedial measures necessary appear relatively simple i.e. inclusion of all English Elective students on the immersion course, though there are, of course, practical limitations on this as a course of action, not least the financial constraints involved. The converse aspect, that Group 5 students performed best in language proficiency terms, a finding from which it seems intuitively reasonable to assume that the immersion course experience was influential, is not without its complications. Whilst the positive performance of Group 5 at OPT2 can be accounted for in this way, it is interesting that the beneficial effects of the immersion course appear to have dissipated quickly, as evidenced by the sharp decline in proficiency registered between OPT2 and OPT3. Plainly, this raises the issue of the intrinsic value of the course itself, but perhaps more importantly, of the attitudes towards the course and follow-up action taken by the administration.

The present researcher is aware from personal experience that upon students' return from the U.K., an emphasis has sometimes been placed by the authorities on "making up for lost time" (*sic*) (the course overlaps the beginning of the academic year by two weeks) and on keeping attendance on the course and, by extension, what has been learned, low-profile in order not to arouse jealousy and/or complaints by other students or College Departments not eligible for such courses. Essentially, this appears to constitute suppression of the effects of the course, with consequent negative influence on language proficiency gains. It would be interesting (if somewhat unfair) to investigate this as an experimental study, using two immersion course groups, one of which on return was treated in a high-profile, encouraging fashion and the other in the current manner.

The remaining major and rather disturbing finding in terms of language proficiency is that, against all predictions, Chinese-medium students (Group 7) gained more in proficiency at OPT2 than any other group with the exception of Group 5, the English Elective immersion course students. This is an unanticipated finding which gives rise to speculation regarding the reasons for this highly positive showing, particularly in comparison with Group 2 and Group 3, both of which might with some confidence have been expected to out-perform the Chinese-medium students. The situation is further complicated by the additional finding that proficiency declines markedly in the second half of the study period. The degree of decline at this stage is quite consistent across all groups and three major questions present themselves, therefore:

1. Why does the English language proficiency of Chinese-medium students improve more than that of English-medium students in the first half of the course?

2. Why is this specific Group 7 trend reversed in the second half off the course?

3. Why does the English language proficiency of all students decline in the second half of the course?

It is natural to seek answers to these questions in terms of attitude change. In so doing, however, it is useful to point out that multiple regression analysis estimated that attitudes and motivation as measured by the AMI could only account for 25-30% of "static" OPT variation. It is entirely possible, if not probable, therefore, that factors not included in this study may be responsible in part or in whole for the language proficiency trends observed.

From the findings one can move tentatively towards a conclusion that Englis Class Anxiety is likely to be a comparatively strong inherent factor in languag proficiency, but cause and effect is much more uncertain, of course, as th presence of a correlational relationship does not denote anything other than link.

This conclusion corresponds with overall findings indicative of a motivationa dimension which is significant in the context of the language proficiency of th sample population. As all groups suffered language proficiency loss in th second half of the study and direction and degree of attitude change for al except English Elective students was similar at this stage, it is perhap justifiable to project the importance of English Classroom Anxiety. Again, i principle this may be acceptable, lacking evidence to the contrary, but in strictl practical terms there are obvious extensions to these questions which attrac answers only of a conjectural nature. Given, for example, that attitudes becom more negative, especially during the second phase, and that certain of thos attitudes are influential in (and/or are influenced by) language proficiency, wh does this happen? In the case of Group 6 students, it is relatively easy to pu forward intuitively appealing reasons for disaffection, but this is far mor difficult for the other groups, which have no readily apparent single cause o causes. It is also reasonably simple to indulge in supposition, which may o may not have some basis in fact e.g. that students' motivation declines in th latter stages of their College careers as it becomes increasingly evident to then that an enhanced degree of proficiency in English is not necessarily a key facto - and in fact may well be marginal - in their future careers; that students motivation in English language study merely reflects a general loss o motivation in all or a majority of College subjects as they become more an more cynical about a range of educational and vocational issues; that th approach of the 1997 change of sovereignty is affecting Hong Kon increasingly and by no means all of the ways in which this is so would b apparent to non-Chinese people or, indeed, to anyone, in an overt sense.

In short, at this stage firm answers to the questions raised earlier are few an far between.

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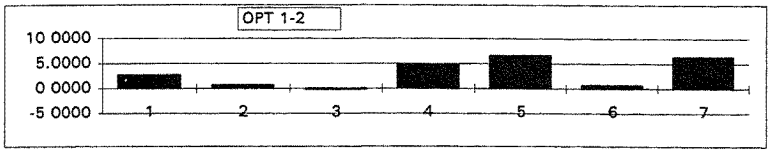
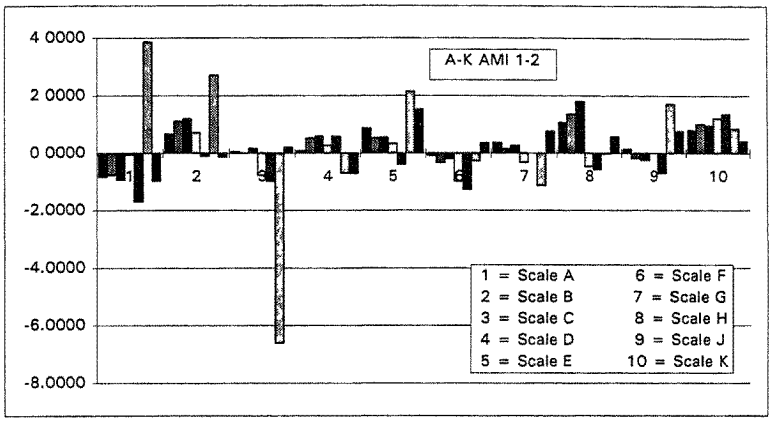
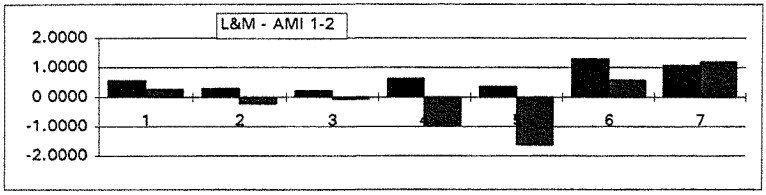
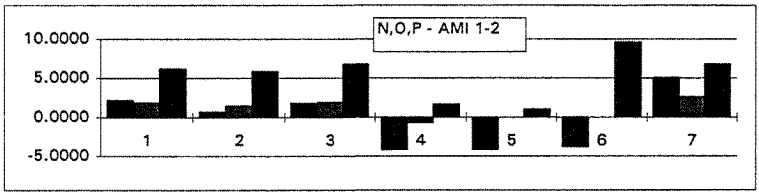
Appendices

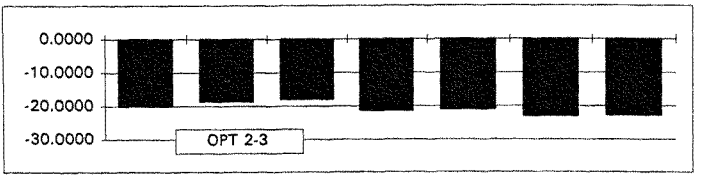
Appendix I OPT/AMI 1-2







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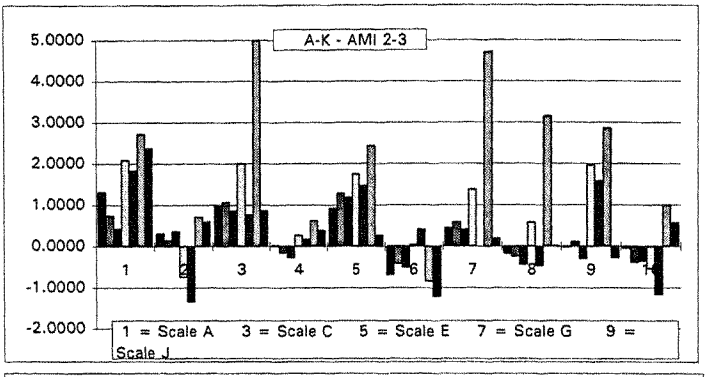
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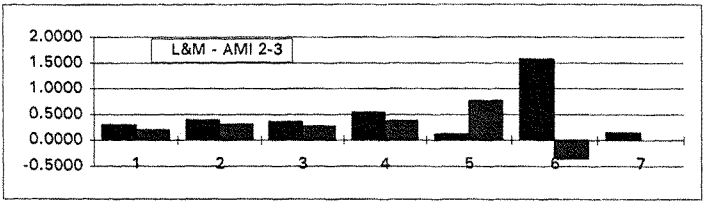
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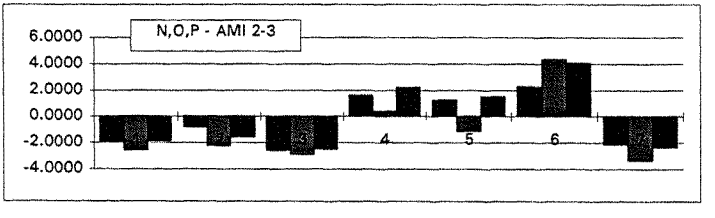
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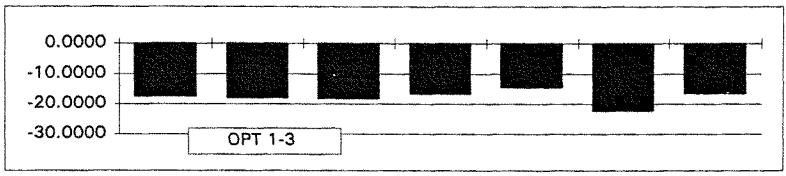
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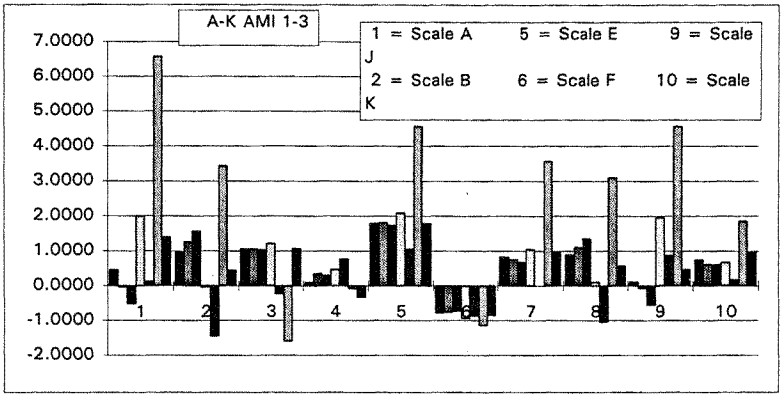
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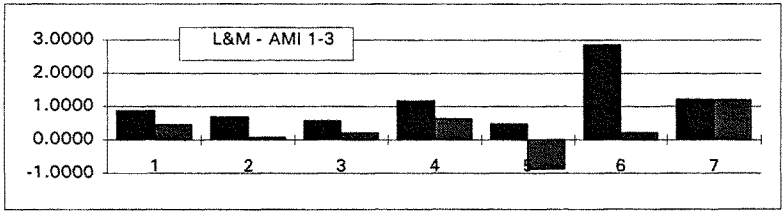
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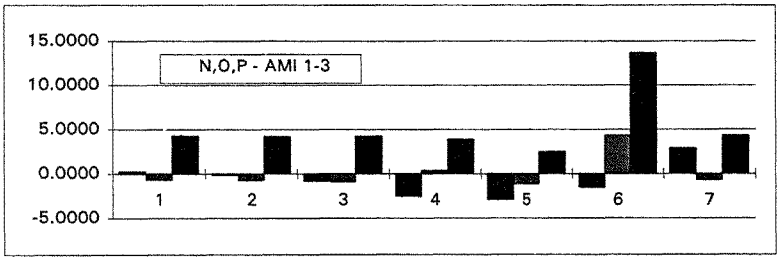
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9 INVESTIGATING THE ORAL FLUENCY OF 15 EFL TEACHERS: A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH REVISITED

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Introduction

This is a report on a research study designed to adopt a predominantly quantitativ approach to investigate three related aspects of oral fluency: (1) fluenc improvement; (2) correlation between subjective judgements and objectiv counts; (3) variation of fluency in different speech interactions. Three quantitativ variables: the number of "pruned" words per minute, the number of filled pause per T unit and the % of T units followed by pause as suggested by Lennon (1990) were used to track fluency progress of 15 EFL teachers before and after a 20-weel full-time in-service course for teachers of english in secondary schools run in th Bonham Campus of Hong Kong Institute of Education in 1993.

One of the main objectives of the Course is to extend the fluency and enhanc the confidence of participants in spoken English. It is however not explicitly spel out how if at all the fluency of the teachers is expected to change. This stud therefore attempted to describe, in more concrete terms using three quantitativ parameters employed by Lennon (1990), the way the oral fluency of 15 teacher on the ES 931 course developed over time.

In the context of investigating fluency improvement, the second set of closel related questions was addressed as well. How are the listener's qualitativ judgements related to the quantitative measurements of fluency of the speaker How far are quantifiable characteristics of fluency indicators of perceive fluency?

Last but not the least, this research also investigated the fluency performance o the teachers under two different speech contexts to see if fluency is a context dependent variable.

Improvements in oral fluency

Lennon's (1990) study is the most thorough and influential in quantifying the characteristics of oral fluency and comparing values of quantifiable variables between two time points to gauge oral improvements, if any. He analyzed samples of the spoken performance of four female West German university students, advanced learners of English, who had been subjectively assessed by a panel of judges to have advanced in fluency after six months' residence in Britain. In a battery of 12 quantifiable variables, it was found that significant improvements across the four subjects over time at the .05 level (one-tailed) test were found for three variables, namely speech rate, filled pauses per T-unit and % of T-units followed by pause. Lennon's research has significant contributions to the objective measurement of fluency development over time.

Objective counts as indicators of perceived fluency

Quantifiable variables have been used to compare native with non-native fluency in speech. Lennon's (1984) study, for example, aimed at comparing the speech of 12 sample members at the University of Kassel, all native speakers of German, with that in a model recording. Results showed that the 12 learners had a lower speech rate than that of the model speech of a native speaker. In addition, 96% of pausing in the model occurred at clauses boundaries or after statements; almost no pauses occurred within the integral elements of clauses. For the sample members, however, between 17% to 85% of pause time occurred within the integral elements of clauses. Percentages of pause time both at all clause boundaries and after statements were very much lower than those in the model.

In a study devoted to comparing characteristics of spoken texts of advanced German speakers of French and French speakers of German to see the observable results of the relevant processes underlying speech production, Mohle (1984) also suggested using temporal variables such as speech rate, the length and positioning of silent pauses, and the frequency of repetitions and self-corrections as possible measures of fluency.

Fluency difference in different speech contexts

Research studies have confirmed that fluency may be a context-dependent variable. In a study by Grosjean (1980), for example, the results obtained were very different across the two tasks: description of cartoons and a recorded interview. The distribution of speaking rates did not overlap: the lowest rate obtained in the interview was the same as the highest rate in the description of

cartoons. Descriptions, when compared with interviews, were produced more slowly and with many more hesitations and pauses. They occurred in very similar syntactic positions, though.

Mohle's (1984) study in which important temporal variables in measuring fluency were identified echoes similar findings. Results indicated that the more highly pre-structured task (ie. cartoon description) required without exception more time to carry out and apparently permitted only a more limited planning range with shorter speech units than the less structured task (i.e. interview) did. Both the German and French described the cartoons more slowly and in shorter speech units than they did when answering questions.

That temporal variables of speech may vary according to speech context was also supported by two kinds of tests carried out by Sajavaara & Lehtonen (1980): reading tests and tests of free or spontaneous delivery of speech. Results confirmed that the amount of pauses was much higher in spontaneous speech than in reading. The rate of reading was clearly higher than the rate of speaking due to longer and more frequent pauses in free speech.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Improvements in oral fluency over time

Hypothesis 1
The markers' impressionistic ratings of the teachers' oral fluency will be higher after the 20-week in-service course.

Hypotheses 2 (i) - (iii)
2 (i) The speech rates of the teachers will increase after the 20-week in-service course.
2 (ii) The teachers will have fewer filled pauses per T-unit after the 20-week in-service course.
2 (iii) The teachers will have lower % of T-units followed by pause (filled and unfilled) after the 20-week in-service course.

Correlations of subjective judgements and objective counts

Hypotheses 3 (i) - (iii)
3 (i) Fluency ratings will show positive correlations with speech rates.
3 (ii) Fluency ratings will show negative correlations with numbers of filled pauses per T unit.

3 (iii) Fluency ratings will show negative correlations with percentages of T units followed by pauses (filled and unfilled) .

Fluency difference in different speech interactions

Hypotheses 4 (i - iii)

4 (i) The speech rates of the teachers will differ significantly in tasks (a) and (b).

4 (ii) The numbers of filled pauses per T-unit will differ significantly in tasks (a) and (b).

4 (iii) The % of T-units followed by pause (filled and unfilled) will differ significantly in tasks (a) and (b).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Subject Selection

Teachers attending the ES 931 In-service Course for Teachers of English in Secondary Schools were recruited on a voluntary basis and 15 were randomly chosen.

Data collection

To gauge improvements in oral fluency over the 20-week time gap, taped language samples were collected from each of the 15 subjects for study. They were recorded before and after the In-service Course in a sound-proof recording-studio in the Institute. The researcher was the only person present with individual subjects during all recordings.

Procedure

Two different tasks i.e. task (a) and task (b) were designed for the subjects. Task (a) was basically a reporting task. Each individual subject was given about 3 minutes to read a feature article (taken from a local Chinese newspaper) outlining three typical types of teachers in Hong Kong. The subjects had to re-tell the gist of the article in English.

Task (b) followed immediately after the first task. The researcher started a conversation with the subject on various topics. Several pre-set questions which were mainly concerned about the teaching profession in Hong Kong and their experience on the UK Extension Course were used for most subjects at times 1 and 2 respectively.

Rationale for the choice of tasks

The two tasks were meant to provide the subjects with more opportunities to elicit speech samples in different speech interactions. In task (a), the subjects basically had to re-tell factual information from the article read. This called for some knowledge of information routines for presentation of facts (Bygate 1987). The task, which involves planning and producing relatively precise talk on the part of the speaker, is believed to resemble the picture narrative condition used in Lennon's study (1990).

The oral-interview format adopted in task (b) was expected to tap familiar interactional routines appropriate for casual chats or informal interviews. It was not so much information routines as interaction routines which were called for.

In a word, tasks (a) and (b) were chosen on the assumption that they offered different environments that could generate different speech interactions.

Processing of language data

Extraction of language samples

In both the pre- and post- course recording sessions, a five-minute extract was taken from the rendering of every subject for subjective rating and objective counting.

Subjective judgements of the language extracts

The five-minute extracts of all the 15 subjects were given to two independent markers for subjective fluency rating. A nine-point scale was adopted, with point one indicating the lowest level of achievement and point nine approximating native-speaker level.

Objective counts of language extracts

All the extracts were fully transcribed for objective counts. The measurement methods employed in Lennon's study (1990) for the three temporal variables (i.e. speech rate, number of filled pauses per T unit, percentage of T units followed by pauses) were used in this study.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Fluency improvements over time

There was no perceptible improvements in the verbal fluency of the subjects in relation to the impressionistic ratings of the markers over time. Nor were there

any marked improvements in terms of the number of "pruned" words per minute, the number of filled pauses per T unit and the % of T units followed by pauses after the 20-week Course.

The "Ceiling" effect

Unlike the young student learners of English in Mohle's (1984) and Lennon's (1990) studies, subjects in this study were adults who had already mastered quite an advanced level of spoken English when they joined the In-service Course. It is possible that these adults might have reached a "ceiling" as regards their development of speech rate.

Qualitative aspects of the quantitative parameters of oral fluency

Hence, it would be more appropriate to postulate that improvements in oral fluency if any among very advanced speakers of L2 is one of quality but not of quantity. Quantitative parameters of fluency alone are not as sufficient indicators of fluency improvement for advanced as for elementary learners.

It is proposed that qualitative changes might have taken place as regards to each of the three quantitative parameters.

Qualitative changes in the type repeated or self-corrected words

The use of "pruned" words for measuring speech rate simply discounts all repeated or self-corrected words in the transcribed data irrespective of their roles and functions to achieve communicative needs.

There have been research studies supporting that repeated words, if used appropriately, could be ways and means to establish fluency in speech (Hieke 1981, Olynak 1990). Similarly, self-correction as a device of monitoring, if done appropriately and moderately, can enhance fluency. In fact, repair or reformulation is an ingredient of fluency.

The word count approach dismisses all the repetition, repair and reformulation work needed in achieving accuracy to improve perceived fluency. Indiscriminate discounting of all repeated or self-corrected words cannot reflect fluency enhancement effects intended for by the deliberate deployment of some repeated or self-corrected words.

Qualitative changes in the functions of pauses

Pausal phenomenon was expected to decrease after the language proficiency Course. Yet the results do not support this hypothesis.

The problem of relying solely on a quantitative approach to fluency rating is again obvious here. There exists the problem of insensitivity of the measure of filled pause itself to the difference between the hesitation of not being able to think of what to say next and the need to search for proper lexical or syntactic expressions. The former type of pause does not necessarily constitute dysfluency in speech whereas the latter kind may always do. A pause during speech may be occasioned by speech planning, speech execution, or information-processing activities either singly or in combination with each other. In a word, pausal phenomenon is just natural for the formulation of ideas. They do not necessarily signify an inability on the part of the speaker to express himself or herself linguistically.

Qualitative changes in the positions of pauses

The explanation used by Lennon (1990) for expecting a lower % of T-units followed by filled and unfilled pauses is that more "run-on" units are produced as a result of fluency improvement. This is not the case as indicated by the present research results.

Fluent speakers do not normally pause within the integral elements of clauses but they do pause at major boundaries, eg. end of a T unit to reorganize or formulate thoughts (Chafe 1979). General or global planning ahead takes place at clause boundaries in fluent speakers. As for non fluent speakers, they do not have sufficient time at clause boundaries, so they resort to pausing within clauses for lexical search (Rehbein 1987). Difference in pause positioning affects perceived fluency. Pauses clustering around clauses do not affect perception of fluency whereas pauses within clauses do.

Based on this, I would have thought that separation of T units by hesitation phenomena of some kinds such as filled and unfilled pauses is not only accepted but expected.

Pedagogic implications

The basic notion is therefore to devise measures of verbal fluency which can accommodate qualitative changes. The types of changes and the appropriate qualitative variables that should be investigated would depend on the aims and content of a course or programme which aims at bringing about fluency change in the participants. In other words, the course has to be quite specific as to what sort of fluency improvements it aims to achieve. Only when the specific aspects of fluency are determined can appropriate fluency measurements (quantitative and/ or qualitative) be employed to track fluency progress. Without a clear and specific definition of fluency, it would be difficult to recommend appropriate measuring

instruments and parameters. This echoes Fillmore's recommendations (1979) that different measurements are needed to measure different types of fluency.

Quantifiable parameters as objective indicators of oral fluency

Speech rate as a powerful indicator of oral fluency

Results of correlation tests and multiple regression method have confirmed that fluency is closely associated with speech rate or the normal tempo of speech (Tables 1 & 2). The subjective impression of "constant flow of speech" or "periods of relative speech continuity" is highly likely to be accounted for by the speed of delivery. The speaker does not need an inordinate amount of time and effort to produce stretches of utterances. That is to say, speech rate is a promising measurable parameter to define fluency of a speaker. To employ Lennon's (1990) terminology, speech rate could be regarded as a "core element" of oral fluency.

Frequency of filled pauses as an objective parameter for fluency

Results of this study do not support any correlation whatsoever between the number of filled pauses and subjective fluency ratings at both time points.

The primary reason may be due to the fact that filled pauses do serve different functions in speech. Frequency of filled pauses is an observable manifestation of the speaker's cognitive process in search for ideas and not necessarily for linguistic help. This argument is more convincing for this study than for Lennon's (1990). Whereas learners in Lennon's study had to verbalize a series of cartoon strips without the need to search for ideas, the subjects in the present study had to perform two tasks, one of which demanded of them to recall past experiences and give personal opinions. In consequence, a lot more filled pauses might have been needed to gain time to formulate and express ideas.

Positioning of pauses as an objective indicator of oral fluency

The findings of the present research at the two time points as regards the relationship of this quantifiable parameter with subjective fluency judgement do not support the hypothesis.

First, unlike Lennon's study (1990), the present research did not measure unfilled pauses objectively by setting a cut off point (e.g. over 0.5 second). All the unfilled pauses were determined subjectively by the ear but not by a machine. Hence, they were perceived pauses rather than "absolute" pauses. In a sense, the quantitative parameter is not purely objective.

Secondly, there exists the basic problem of bias in transcription in general. There is no absolute assurance that the speech record as transcribed reliably contains the aurally captured, unaltered sound streams and words. There is bound to be some degree of inaccurate records by human perception and possible interpretation.

To make matters worse, spoken language is not written language spoken out. Clause boundaries are simply not clearcut; very often, distortions and fragments of clauses are found. A certain degree of subjective judgement creeps in when it comes to the identification of pauses and T units and consequently the overall objectivity of the parameters can only be relative.

Pedagogic implications

It has always been difficult to define oral fluency. Teachers need to know what exactly constitutes fluency in order to specify the aims of language teaching and develop oral skills of students more effectively. Now speech rate seems to be a good candidate as a quantitative parameter of verbal fluency, and hence expectations of oral competence can be explicitly spelt out. Teachers can help learners improve on the speed of production, which will be one of the concrete aims of teaching spoken English.

Fluency differences in different speech interactions

Speech rate

Results of T tests (for correlated samples) were in line with Mohle's results (1984), confirming that there was significant difference across the two tasks in terms of speech rate at both time sessions (Table 3).

The phenonmenon that production was slower in the reporting task (a) than in the conversation-based task (b) is a fair reflection of the higher cognitive and linguistic demands required for the former than the latter task. Task (a) involved, among other things, some degree of memory load and the linguistic encoding of a Chinese article. The subjects had to search for particular words and appropriate paraphrases.

Cognitively, task (a) was also more demanding than task (b) because the speaker had to be quite specific about the main ideas to be reported back. It was not possible for subjects to substitute ideas in the article with novel ones. On the contrary, in the semi-interview/conversation in task (b), the subjects could express their ideas freely. They could avoid ideas that they had difficulty in expressing and substituting topics which were unfamiliar with familiar ones.

Frequency of filled pauses

The difference in terms of the frequency of filled pauses was not that marked across the two tasks. This finding raises a fundamental question about the nature of the two supposedly "different" tasks : how different are the contextual variables inherent in the two speech tasks?

First, in both tasks, only the researcher and individual subjects were present. In fact, the subjects were participants and the researcher was a tutor on the Course. This created an inescapably asymmetrical role relationships and status in both tasks.

Second, norms of interaction in tasks (a) and (b) were not that different. The conversation-based task (b) created a pseudosocial situation. It was not a real conversation because there was hardly any spontaneous speech elicited in the task. The subjects were granted relatively uninterrupted chances to answer short questions. Norms of interaction were not that different from those in task (a) in which they took long turns to speak.

With regard to setting and scene, they were identical in the two tasks. The subjects finished task (a) before proceeding to task (b) in the same location for recording at both time sessions.

All in all, the nature of the two tasks was different only to a limited extent. It was not great enough to cause differences in some aspects of the quantitative features of fluency.

% of T units followed by pauses

The insignificant difference in the % of T units followed by pause could indicate that speakers tend to pause at similar locations across tasks, regardless of their nature. This is particularly true for breath pauses and junctures pauses (ie. end of T units). No matter how contextual variables such as participants, roles, setting and formality level may vary, fluent speakers still have to pause and more importantly at appropriate locations. Run-on T units therefore may not be common in fluent stretches of speech.

Pedagogic implications

The fact that there was significant difference in speech rates in different speech tasks and interactions suggests the need for providing learners with a diversity of learning opportunities to practise a broad range of speech styles. This is believed to be necessary because students are likely to be engaged in authentic situations in

which different speech styles and interactions are required in different communicative environments. In other words, different speech contexts embodying different contextual variables (eg. role relationship, setting, formality level, topic) should be engineered in the classroom. By so doing, the learners can be exposed to and given chances to practise different speech rates and possibly fluency levels inherently required in different speech contexts. This can help improve their fluency performance in different speech situations.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings of the present study have confirmed that the three quantitative parameters (ie. speech rate, number of filled pauses per T unit, % of T units followed by pauses) are not sufficient to track progress in oral fluency that may have reached a ceiling effect. Additional measures involving the analyses of transcribed data to see if there are qualitative changes in the three quantitative parameters before and after the Course are needed.

It has also been found that subjective judgements and objective counts are related. Speech rate is a powerful predictor for verbal fluency and probably a strong candidate for being one of the "core" components of fluency.

In the context of investigating the aforementioned issues, it has been validated that speech rate does vary in the reporting and interview tasks. As speech rate is a powerful contributor to fluency, there is a strong case to argue that fluency may vary from one speech context to another.

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Appendix

Table 1

Objective Counts as Indicators of Subjective Judgements

Correlation values between perceived fluency and speech rate, number of filled pauses per T-unit, and % of T-units followed by pauses at both time points 1 & 2

Correlations	Fluency T1	Fluency T2
Speech rate T1	+ .5990 p = .009	/
Speech rate T2	/	+ .6584 p = .004
Filled pauses T1	- .2551 p = .179	/
Filled pauses T2	/	+ .0241 p = .466
T-units T1	+ .0125 p = .482	/
T-units T2	/	- .4984 p = .029

The above results show that correlation values between speech rates and impressionistic ratings at both time points were significant at .05 level.

Table 2

Causal relationship between subjective fluency rating and the number of "pruned" words per minute at time points 1 & 2

	Time 1	Time 2
Multiple R	.59903	.65842
R Square	.35884	.43352
Adjusted R Square	.30952	.38995
Standard Error	.94504	.84258
Beta Value	.599033	.658424
Significance of T	.0183	.0076

Results of multiple regression analysis show that at both time points 1 & 2, fluency was best predicted by speech rate, i.e. 35.88 % of variance in fluency was accounted for by the number of "pruned" words per minute at time point 1 and 43.35% at time point 2.

Table 3

Fluency Difference in Different Speech Interactions

Number of "pruned" words per minute taken at time point 1 and time point 2

	Time 1		Time 2	
	Task (a)	Task (b)	Task (a)	Task (b)
Mean value	106.93	118.93	113.87	122.53
S.D.	17.17	16.52	14.62	14.46

	Time 1	Time 2
T-value between tasks (a) and (b)	- 2.50	- 2.42
P = .05		

(14 degrees of freedom)

T-values at both time points were significant at p = .05 level, suggesting that there was significant difference in terms of the number of "pruned" words per minute between tasks (a) and (b) at both time points.

10 COHERENCE RATING: WHAT GOES ON IN THE RATERS' MINDS?

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1. Introduction

Within the field of language assessment, a major concern for teachers and test administrators is the reliability and validity of coherence rating. This is particularly important in assessing student writing. However, Connor and Johns (1990:2) states, "coherence is very difficult to study and to teach because it embodies a large number of variables." Falvey (1993:42) shares the same view and says that "the unity of text is not identifiable with any combination of linguistic features and will never be absolute". Not only is coherence difficult to study and to teach, it is difficult to rate, as "(t)he same text may be found coherent by one reader and incoherent by another, though an overwhelming consensus can be achieved for most naturally-occurring texts" (Hoey 1991:166).

Fortunately, in recent years, advances in text linguistics have allowed researchers to study coherence of texts more vigorously. In addition, by using protocols, researchers can investigate the strategies humans use when engaging in the processes of thinking and making judgements. These two tools have made it possible to study coherence rating in greater depth than hitherto.

This paper reports an exploratory study which investigates how coherence raters perceive coherence and what factors influence them most in rating coherence.

2. Background to the Study

Ten raters, all experienced teachers of English at the tertiary level, were invited to rate the coherence of a number of scripts written by first-year university students in Hong Kong. They were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 6, against two criteria, proficiency and coherence (Appendix A). Spiegel and Fitzgerald (1990) used a four-point scale, and this format is also advocated by King of the Hong Kong Examinations Authority (Bunton 1992:63). However, in this study, the researcher chose to use a wider and more refined scale of 6, so as to eliminate the problem of raters using the highest score too often (Wong

1993:101). A set of descriptors for each score was given to the raters, and a standardization meeting was conducted. Despite all these safeguards to ensure the standardization of rating, it was found that while the raters differed widely in their judgement about the coherence of some texts, they agreed almost unanimously on the coherence of others. This prompted the researcher to investigate the factors accounting for such a phenomenon.

3. Research Questions

There were two research questions:

(1) Do the scripts themselves possess unique qualities which prompted either unanimous coherence rating or extremely divergent judgements?
(2) Do the raters' coherence rating criteria match with their perceptions of coherence?

4. Review of the Literature

In this section, we will first briefly examine the concept of coherence. After examining coherence, we will go on to examine the question of holistic rating, as many teachers and test administrators use holistic methods to rate the coherence of texts in recent years.

4.1 Coherence

Coherence is defined as "conceptual connectivity" (de Beaugrande 1980). It refers to a smooth, logical flow of ideas in a discourse, and it is this flow which gives the discourse a sense of unity.

According to McCutchen and Perfetti (1982), there are four major sources of discourse coherence, namely, topic knowledge, text form constraint (genre), topic coherence (the semantic unity of information) and local connectedness (which includes cohesion, thematization and punctuation).

4.2 Holistic Rating

Holistic rating is defined as "any procedure which stops short of enumerating linguistic, rhetorical, or informational features of a piece of writing" (Cooper 1977:4). Despite the popularity of holistic rating in recent years, two issues are involved, scorer reliability ("the extent to which (an assessment) yields the same result on repeated trials" (Hamp-Lyons 1991:8)) and construct validity

("the extent to which (an assessment) can be said to measure an underlying capacity or trait" (ibid:11)). In investigating these two issues, a number of studies have been conducted. It was found that writings which are rated as good in holistic rating are usually associated with:

a) Mechanics (e.g. freedom from spelling errors and other surface errors) (Stewart & Grobe 1979),
b) Content & Organization (Freedman 1979),
c) Word Choice (Nold & Freedman 1977, Neilson & Piche 1981, Grobe 1981),
d) Essay length (Stewart & Grobe op.cit.), and
e) Handwriting (McColly 1970, Vaughan 1991).

Researchers have expressed disappointment with such findings, e.g. "(i)t is disconcerting to find holistic scores, which are supposed to be a qualitative measure, so directly predictable by such mundane quantitative measures as the length of the sample, the number of errors and the number of unusual vocabulary items." (Charney 1984:75)

5. Method

To investigate Research Question (1), raters were asked to study two scripts (Scripts A and B), which had received divergent grading, as well as two other scripts (Scripts C and D), which seemed to have prompted unanimous coherence grading (Figure 1 refers). Raters were then asked to engage in "think aloud" protocols as to what had led them to make such judgements.

Figure 1: Coherence Scores - Trends by Script

Script	Score				
A	5(1)	4(2)	3(3)	2(1)	1(3)
B	5(3)	4(2)	3(2)	2(3)	
C	4(7)	3(3)			
D	3(4)	2(6)			

Note:
The number in brackets stand for the frequency with which the score was awarded.

To investigate Research Question (2), raters were interviewed. They were first asked to state what elements contribute to coherent writing. Then they were requested to elaborate their views about coherence. A comparison was finally

made between the raters' perceptions of coherence with the criteria for coherence judgement mentioned in their protocols.

6. Findings

6.1 Research Question (1)

The answer to Research Question (1) is affirmative - salient features of a script, such as mechanics and organization, as mentioned in 4.2, did make an impression on raters, leading to either unanimous rating or divergent judgement. To illustrate this point, the raters' comments on one paragraph of each of the four scripts will be examined in detail. Verbatim citation will be preserved throughout. (For the full texts, please refer to Appendix B.)

The title of the essay on which the four scripts are based is:

> *"Recently, there have been a lot of comments about the dangers caused by hawkers. For example, they may affect our health and safety. On the other hand, some believe that they provide a useful service. What are your views on this?"*

Paragraph 1 of Script A reads:

> *"Many hawkers on the streets is one of the characteristics of Hong Kong commercial activities. It is not uncommon to see many hawkers in Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po which are the commercial centre. The hawkers also concentrate in the estate. That is clear that hawkers are in every corner of Hong kong. Then our lives are closely related to the hawkers. It is seemly that we cannot live without hawkers. However, there are potential danger for the hawkers occupy our space."*

The first point where the raters disagreed was about the scene setting of this paragraph. Some raters thought that the scene is well set, as the writer has stated that hawking is a characteristic of Hong Kong commercial activities, and that we cannot live without hawkers. However, some other raters thought otherwise. They claimed that even after reading the whole of this paragraph, they still could not figure out what the writer's viewpoint is: whether he thinks that hawkers are good or bad. Therefore the scene is not well set at all.

The second issue concerns the use of examples, such as "Mongkok", "Sham Shui Po" and the "estate(s)". Two raters commented that this provides good

background information. Yet three other raters said that this makes the writing verbose.

The last issue is related to the development of ideas. For some raters, the ideas are logically developed: the scene is set, to be illustrated by examples and rounded up by conclusions. However, some other raters objected to this viewpoint, arguing that the first half of this paragraph is too narrative in nature as to be able to establish a causal relationship in the second half. One rater suggested the substitution of the word "hawkers" by "rats": *"It is not uncommon to see many rats in Mong Kok ... ."* She claimed that although we can come to the conclusion *"That is clear that rats are in every corner of Hong Kong"*, we cannot go on to draw the conclusion that *"Then our lives are closely related to the rats"*, not to mention the final conclusion that *"It is seemly that we cannot live without rats"*. By the same token, the writer should not have arrived at such a conclusion with relation to hawkers.

Let us now examine Paragraph 1 of Script B, which reads:

> *"An accident happened in Lunar New Year may be familiar to you: a driver mistakefully dashed into a passenger-passway & caused over 40 people hurted. At that moment, the passway was blocked by hawkers & therefore there were not enough space for the passengers to find shelter. This tragedy arises the concerns from the public to the issue of, again, the hawkers."*

The source of disagreement evolving around this paragraph is the genre of this piece of writing, and its appropriate style. Two raters asserted that this is a piece of argumentative writing, and therefore the writer should not have used an attention-getter, which is too journalistic in style, as an introduction. Another rater refuted this, saying that it is perfectly acceptable to start off a non-academic piece of writing with a journalistic style. A fourth rater argued that the writing style is not journalistic at all; what the writer has done is to use a recent example from real life to illustrate his point, which is commendable. Yet for two other raters, the example is no good. They felt that it is too removed from the issue "hawking". They pointed out that the accident was, after all, directly caused by the car, not by hawkers. A better example would be the spilling of oil over pedestrians during the hawkers' escape.

Unlike the paragraph just discussed, Paragraph 3 of Script C prompted great consensus among the raters. It reads:

"However, some may believe that hawkers provide a useful service to them, but it do not seem true to me. I think what people think of useful service is offering cheap products and the easily accessable of hawker. But what useful service actually mean low quality products, unclean food and it also cause others to do extra work behind these useful services such as, extra work need to clean up the place "

Most raters agreed on the poor proficiency of this paragraph. They also reacted strongly to the wrong use of cohesive devices. For example, they asserted that "however" and "but" should not have been used together in the same sentence. One rater was against the use of "but" to start off a sentence, while two other raters pointed out that using "however" to introduce this paragraph represents a "false turn": In the preceding paragraph, a demerit of the hawkers is discussed. Since the writer begins this paragraph with "however", the readers will expect that he will be talking about a merit, but this is not the case.

Another point many raters commented on is the organization of ideas. To them the arguments are recursive. On the other hand, some ideas need elaboration as they are too compact. One example is the proposition *"what useful service actually mean low quality products"*. A final comment was about the balance of ideas: although one rater found it disappointing that the arguments are lop-sided, with only the demerits of hawkers mentioned, the majority of the raters thought that it is unnecessary for the writer to produce both sides of the argument. These raters were very "sympathetic", saying that it is understandable that sometimes one just cannot come up with the other side of the argument. One rater said that it is easier to argue for one side only, and this could contribute to coherent writing. Another rater commended the clear stance expressed by the writer, who has not taken the "wall-rider", the uncommitted approaches of many student writers.

Paragraph 2 of Script D also generates unanimous judgement among the raters. It reads:

"From my point that I concede that the hawkers provide a useful service. Most of them sell different kinds of food and fruits and these all are good taste for everyone. I believe that everyone had bought something from the hawkers before. However, I fully support the point of people said that they may affect our health and safety. I think it is why I agree, too. let me talk about the effect of health first."

The first point agreed upon is the organization of ideas: The raters stated that some propositions, like *"everyone had bought something from the hawkers before"*, are badly linked with the rest of the paragraph. There is also an abrupt turn at the end of the paragraph: *"let me talk about the effect of health first"*.

The second point raised by most raters (seven out of ten) is about the clarity of ideas: First, the writer asserts, *"I concede that the hawkers provide a useful service"*. In the middle of the paragraph the writer suddenly changes his mind and says, *"I fully support the point of people said that they may affect our health and safety."* Finally, he draws a conclusion, *"I think it is why I agree, too."* Three raters expressed that they could not figure out what is agreed upon, and a fourth rater observed that this writer seems to agree with everything.

The last issue is the relevance of ideas: The raters pointed out that the assertion that *"Most of them sell different kinds of food and fruits and these all are good taste for everyone"* is irrelevant. One rater found the argument *"everyone had bought something from the hawkers before"* particularly irrelevant. She suggested that this argument is as meaningless as the statement that *"everyone has used the toilet before"*.

6.2 Research Question (2)

The findings show that for some raters, there is a perfect match between (a) their coherence rating criteria, mentioned in their "think aloud" protocols, with (b) the elements which they think contribute to coherent writing, mentioned in the interviews. However, for some other raters, there is not such a perfect match (Table 1 refers).

From the table it can be seen that for all raters, there is a perfect match between the frequency mentioned in the interviews (the "perceptions") and the protocols (the "rating criteria") in regard to two aspects, "cohesion" and "proficiency". However, for "content", "logical flow of ideas", "choice of expressions", "writer/reader relationship" and "genre", the frequency mentioned in the interviews is higher than that in the protocols. This shows that the number of elements some raters consciously think coherence involves seems to be greater than the number of criteria they used to judge coherence.

Table 1: Match between raters' perceptions of coherence & their coherence rating criteria

Elements contributing to coherence/ criteria for coherence rating	R 1	R 2	R 3	R 4	R 5	R 6	R 7	R 8	R 9	R 10	Fre m Inter- views (the percep tions)	Fre.m Protoc ols (the rating crite ria)
@ Cohesion	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	10	10
Proficiency #	IP	N	N	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	N	7	7
@ Content #	I	IP	IP	IP	IP	I	I	IP	IP	IP	10	7
@ Logical flow of ideas #	IP	IP	IP	IP	I	IP	I	I	I	I	10	5
Choice of expressions #	N	IP	IP	IP	N	N	N	N	N	IP	4	4
Writer/ reader relationship	N	I	N	IP	I	I	IP	IP	N	N	6	3
@ Genre	I	I	N	N	I	N	N	I	N	N	4	0
Others	*	*	N	N	N	N	N	*	*	N	4	N.A

Key:

IP	Elements/Criteria mentioned in both interviews & protocols
I	Elements/Criteria not mentioned in protocols but mentioned in interviews
N	Elements/Criteria not mentioned in interviews nor protocols
*	Criteria other than "criteria in common"
N.A.	Not applicable
@	Match with "four major sources of discourse coherence" (McCutchen & Perfetti op.cit.)
#	Match with research findings on holistic rating

Notes on *:
* Rater 1 - Objective of writing
* Rater 2 - Handwriting #
* Rater 8 - Tone
* Rater 9 - Length of scripts #

7. Discussion

To recapitulate, the finding of this study in regard to Research Question (1) is that there are certain qualities in the texts themselves which prompted either unanimous coherence rating or extremely divergent judgement, but it is hard to pinpoint what these qualities are. They vary from text to text. However, as Vaughan (op.cit.:121) has observed, "(w)ith ... borderline cases, raters may be more apt to fall back on their own styles of judging essays." The example given by Vaughan (ibid) is an essay having clear organization but simplistic sentence structure and weak content. An example found in this study is Paragraph 1 of Script A, which can be said to be acceptable in terms of proficiency. (No rater has made any negative comments on this aspect.) However, its content (use of examples) and idea development did generate much disagreement among the raters.

As for Research Question (2), it was found that there is a perfect match between the coherence rating criteria and perceptions of coherence for some raters, but not for every rater. Several other observations can also be made:

The findings of this study confirm those of some earlier studies, mentioned in the Literature Review. Firstly, all the "four major sources of discourse coherence" (McCutchen & Perfetti op.cit.), (namely "topic knowledge" as revealed in "content", "genre", "topic coherence" and "local connectedness", one element of which is "cohesion") were included in the raters' perceptions of coherence or their coherence rating criteria. The same phenomenon could be found in regard to the "six qualities associated with good writings" identified in the holistic rating studies (namely, "mechanics", "content", "organization", "word choice", "essay length" and "handwriting"). (Please refer to the "key" of Table 1.) An interesting point is that while "cohesion" was not found to be one of the features associated with good writings in the other studies, it had a prominent place in the perceptions and rating criteria of all the ten raters in this study. This may confirm the belief that a lot of, if not too much, attention is paid to the teaching of cohesion, in the form of the use of cohesive devices, in Hong Kong. Some teachers even think that they have taught coherent writing if they have given instructions on cohesive devices.

The second observation is that "content" and "proficiency" also had prominent places in the perceptions and rating criteria of most raters, although "proficiency" was already a separate rating criterion in this study. The validity of the coherence rating could be in question.

The last observation is that the raters shared similar ideas of what contributes to coherence, and they also used similar criteria in their coherence judgement,

as revealed in the number of "elements/criteria in common" (Table 1 refers). This might have led to the unanimous rating for some scripts. On the other hand, it seemed that the raters placed different emphasis in regard to some of the elements/criteria. This can be illustrated in the transcriptions of interviews quoted below. During the interviews, the raters were asked if their coherence rating was influenced by the language proficiency of the writer. Three raters had completely different views in this aspect:

Rater A: *"Would proficiency affect coherence? Yes, of course. Teachers are always upset by surface errors."*

Rater B: *"Sometimes if you have more tolerance, you'll understand what the students say, not because I understand their writing, but because I understand their thinking, because I have the same culture. I experience the same things they've mentioned in the essay, so I have more tolerance."*

Rater C: *"I can follow the ideas because I jump over the obstacles posed by grammatical inadequacy. You can do so after teaching English for 15 years, or you're not doing justice to students' logical mind. We should be sympathetic - we have no problem in learning English but most L2 learners have problems."*

Therefore the answers to the above question, as inferred from the interviews, were "always", "sometimes", and "seldom", for Rater A, B and C respectively. This difference in perspective might have led to the divergent rating of some scripts.

8. Further Questions to Consider

The results of the findings of this study pose some further questions for us to consider, both in the areas of research and classroom teaching.

8.1 Research

Charney (op.cit.:77) states that "(t)he answer to the validity question (of holistic rating) is not a simple yes or no." Similarly, we can make the assertion that "the answers to the validity question and reliability question of coherence rating are not a simple yes or no". More research is definitely needed in these two areas.

A possible study is about the distinction between "coherence" and "cohesion" in coherence rating. As mentioned above, "cohesion" had a prominent place in the perceptions as well as rating criteria of all the raters in this study. However,

some raters expressed during the interviews that "coherence" and "cohesion" are elusive concepts to them. A further study could be done on how well the raters can distinguish between these two concepts, and whether some of them have confounded "coherence" and "cohesion" in their rating. This might provide a partial answer to the validity question of coherence rating.

In the discussion above, it is suggested that the difference in the raters' perspective in regard to the various rating criteria might have led to the divergent rating of some scripts. To investigate this question, a study could be done on the hierarchy the raters place on the elements of coherence. In the present study, the raters were asked to state what they think the elements contributing to coherence are. In a further study, they could be asked to rank these elements. Their ranking could then be compared with the rating criteria they used, to see how closely these two areas are related.

8.2 Pedagogy

Two questions are worth considering in terms of classroom teaching: Firstly, in an exam situation, is it sufficient or better to give an overall impression score to a piece of student writing, or a separate score on "content", "proficiency" and "coherence"? If the latter is preferred, how can it be ensured that raters will not confound the three criteria in the assessment? The second question is: how about in a classroom situation? Should an overall mark or a separate score be given to the three criteria mentioned above?

9. Conclusion

The findings of the present study confirm Vaughan's (op.cit.:120) remark that "(d)espite their similar training, different raters focus on different essay elements and perhaps have individual approaches to reading essays." Yet it is the researcher's belief that by investigating the processes in which judgements of coherence are made, both the validity and reliability of coherence rating can be improved, because "(o)ne of the first steps in improving the evaluation and teaching of teaching of student writing is understanding how evaluators evaluate as they do." (Freedman op.cit.:337)

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Appendix A

Instruction Sheet

Here are a number of compositions, written by some first year tertiary students. Please read each of these compositions twice and award a mark each time. The first time, read for COHERENCE and award a mark for coherence. The second time, read for ENGLISH PROFICIENCY and award a mark for proficiency.

The COHERENCE mark should reflect how well the ideas of a composition flow, as well as the organization of ideas and the unity of text. Therefore, even if there are many good points in a composition, if these are badly linked or illogical, the composition is still incoherent. You can actually tell whether a composition is coherent by doing the following: on one fast reading ask yourself this question

"to what extent can I follow the writer's meaning through this whole composition?"

and match your response to the specifications below.

1 - totally incoherent: lacking a topic; no orientation for readers; having no plan; no cohesive ties; no closure
2 - generally incoherent: topic not clearly presented; insufficient orientation for readers; no obvious plan; few cohesive ties; closure not clear
3 - fairly incoherent: some attempts at presenting a topic, giving orientation to readers, including a plan, using cohesive ties and providing a closure, but not every attempt is successfully made
4 - fairly coherent: topic rather clearly presented; some orientation for readers; rather obvious plan; some cohesive ties; closure provided
5 - generally coherent: topic clearly presented; good orientation for readers; obvious plan; appropriate cohesive ties; logical closure provided
6 - totally coherent: topic very clearly presented; thorough orientation for readers; very obvious plan; good use of cohesive ties; convincing closure provided

The ENGLISH PROFICIENCY mark should reflect the students' performance in accuracy in grammar and spelling, and/or the breadth of vocabulary. When you are rating, ask yourself the following question:

Compared with the average first year tertiary students, this student's English proficiency is

1 - very weak
2 - weak
3 - fairly weak
4 - fairly good
5 - good
6 - very good

Then rate the composition accordingly.

Please try to use the full range of the scale, but don't expect the marks will necessarily form a normal curve with the majority towards the middle of the scale - they may or may not.

The composition title is printed below for your reference:

"Recently, there have been a lot of comments about the dangers caused by hawkers. For example, they may affect our health and safety. On the other hand, some believe that they provide a useful service. What are your views on this?"

Your help is most sincerely appreciated. Thank you very much!

Appendix B

Script A

(1) Many hawkers on the streets is one of the characteristics of Hong Kong commercial activities. It is not uncommon to see many hawkers in Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po which are the commercial centre. The hawkers also concentrate in the estate. That is clear that hawkers are in every corner of Hong kong. Then our lives are closely related to the hawkers. It is seemly that we cannot live without hawkers. However, there are potential danger for the hawkers occupy our space.

(2) Hawkers help to improve our quality by providing goods at lower price. Since they need not pay any rent, therefore, the price of goods can be lower. Sometimes, the price is lower several times than the price in the shop. It is because the shop always sell the price higher than the cost at least two times.

(3) Moreover, it is more convenient for us to buy goods from hawkers than from the shop. It is obvious that some hawkers are always occupy a particular area. It is easy for us to buy the goods we want from hawkers. It is save our time for going to the shopping centre. Do you ever heard that you need to line up to buy the goods from hawkers such supermarket? Since the hawkers are mobile, they can also provide service in particular place or situation. Have you ever gone to the concert at Hong Kong Stadium? If there is a concert, many hawkers will concentrate there and sell `B-B'. Will you buy the `B-B' in advance before going to concert? It is obvious that the hawkers provide services to us.

(4) Of course, there are some hawkers which cause danger for us. I think the hawkers who sell the food such `fish-ball' causing the greater danger than others. Let me call this type of hawkers as `danger' type.

(5) First of all, when they escaped, the hot oil spill over unavoidable and it always hurt the pass-by. Secondly, the hygency is very bad and they are also the source of some disease. It is affect our health. Thirdly, there is also environmental impact which spoil our scene.

(6) To sum up, I think there are two type of hawkers. One of them is the useful one which provide useful service to us such low price and convenience. Most of them sell clothes, bags and so on. The other one is `danger' one, I think we eliminate this type, since it is potential danger is so large and the benefit which they provide is so little.

Script B

(1) An accident happened in Lunar New Year may be familiar to you: a driver mistakefully dashed into a passenger-passway & caused over 40 people hurted. At that moment, the passway was blocked by hawkers & therefore there were not enough space for the passengers to find shelter. This tragedy arises the concerns from the public to the issue of, again, the hawkers.

(2) To many people, hawkers seem not to have a positive image: noisy, unhygiene & blocking pavement for all the time. But it is certain that everyone must have gone to the hawker for food or goods, since their price is really attractive. Actually, hawkers do affect our life to an unbelievable degree.

(3) Since there is no need to own a store, the items can be offered in a lower price. Many well known brands have their products discounted & the worth may be half of that from department store or even lower! It is truly a great deal to many people. More, the choice is comprehensive - any brand, any type, any price, any size & any more. For example you may seldom buy a shirt made in HK in a department store, but it is possible to see it hanging in Sam Po Kong's street. Goods from all over the world come together & are waiting to brought into your home. Any megamarket is not comparable.

(4) Hawker also provides opportunity for one to start his career. Many families now live on the business since the cost was low & the payback is unestimateable. It needs no special knowledge. Even a handicapped can push his cart on the street & sell. It is a very good chance for one to study the market & learn trading skill too - the most original & basic market is nothing but hawkers. You can also deal at anywhere you like. You can also be tax-free, as your income usually do not need to be recorded.

(5) And do remember it is our traditional business. Many old-fashioned food are still seen on the street. To the tourist, it is a "must" to visit the hawkers & it is one of the most outstanding characteristic of Hong Kong. That is why the island is so called the "Tourist Paradise"!

(6) While hawkers play an important role of bringing proporsity, it also has its evil side. Basically, there is no gaurantee for the consumers. The quality varies in a large range & also you can't find the dealer to complain often. Though it does not cost much but it does frusturate you when you find your goods is not all right. The nearby stores are also seriously upsetled. Due to the price difference, they lose a big deal of customers. Business is lost also due to the location of store & hawkers: hawkers occupy their spaces on the road & infront of the stores. It does affect one's desire to go in & make deal.

(7) Hawkers bring crime, too. Triads like to charge hawkers for "protect-fee". A few hundreds dollar daily is not a problem to a hawker but the fund is enough for triud to grow. Bootlegs are also popular on the carts of hawkers. Many of them are smuggled from Mainland or other countries. It is a real hurt to the manufactors.

(8) The Most affected is the society. Tax-free hawkers make the government losing money which can be used on the public like education, medical, welfare ... . Blocking public place is also great trouble the road-users & passengers. Unhygienic food is sold & that may be a source of disease. The environment of the neighbourhood is made massy, unhygienic & noisy. Danger occurs as chasing hawkers causes accident like spoiling hot oil, hitting passersby; etc.. Even category III videos and toys are available at some of hawkers.

(9) Things also have its good side & bad side. To devote the most to the society, it depends on how to utilitize & control it. So is the hawkers.

Script C

(1) Recently, a car accident that happened in Tsuen Wan, Tai Ho Road has arised our attention to the protential danger cause by illegal hawking. The accident that cause so many wounded, most of the people think is because the ways people try to escape were blocked by the hawkers.

(2) Danger cause by illegall hawking is not a recent topic. Early in the past, Government has already realize that uncontrolled hawking business will endanger the save of predestrian. In most case, when the hawkers rush off and trying to escape from being catch, an uncontrollable and chaotic situation in which hawkers together with their trolleys rushing around, children screaming and hawker shouting are always the senario. Other than this extreme situation, protential hazards are always exist. Hawkers together with the buyers always fill out the predestrian, people are always force to walk on the road, which cause inconvenence and great danger to the predestrian.

(3) However, some may believe that hawkers provide a useful service to them, but it do not seem true to me. I think what people think of useful service is offering cheap products and the easily accessable of hawker. But what useful service actually mean low quality products, unclean food and it also cause others to do extra work behind these useful services such as, extra work need to clean up the place.

(4) Beside, hygiene is also a problem cause by illegal hawkings. Until now, the hygiene condition of illegal hawking is still not under the control of the Government. The food they made and their ways of cooking is not monitored by health inspectors. That is, disease can easily proliferate through this way.

(5) To me, illegal hawking has done more bad than good to the over society, so I think the Government should make have hawker registered in order to have a proper controll of them.

Script D

(1) Last few weeks, I heard a terrible news that occurs in Tuen Wan. On the time wa holiday and people did not went to school or work. There had many people went t shopping and many hawkers Therefore, the street was so crowded that people wa hard to walk. Suddenly, a private car was out of control and then collided to th pavement. Although people saw the car toward themselves, they cannot take prompt action. Thus, the accident occured and Above ten people were injured an killed. As the incident occured, many people are awared to the problem of hawker Someone asked that there are so many hawkers in the street that may affect th health and the safety of each citizen but, why did the government not enforce severe law to make them under control? Nevertheless, others argued that the hawker are also citizen and do not commit any crime. Moreover, they provide another kin of service to everyone. They all are good citizens and they are innocent.

(2) From my point that I concede that the hawkers provide a useful service. Most o them sell different kinds of food and fruits and these all are good taste for everyone I believe that everyone had bought something from the hawkers before. However, fully support the point of people said that they may affect our health and safety. think it is why I agree, too. let me talk about the effect of health first.

(3) Firstly, people often buy food from the hawker is not good for them because th treatment of food is not sufficient to kill all the bacteria and they, very often, us their dirty hands to carry food and the food always put in a dirty bag and cup fo carrying. Worst still, some of them may mix with some kind of harmful substance i order to make the taste good. Very often, we eat these food with other rubbish an many bacteria, too. I believe that it is hazardous to our health when we eat these foo before. One day, I got ill health because I had eaten the dirty food. I think someon may experience the same incident as me before.

(4) Besides the effect of health, the safety of people is essential that everyone never wan to be treathened anytime. However, the hawkers were made much more trouble t each people walking on the street and even affect the transportion. We often see i Mongkok where it is much crowded from day to night. From the accident I ha mentioned before. The number of injured and killed may decrease when there is n hawker.

(5) All in All, I recommend that the government should enforce laws and order t control the number of hawker.

11 SELF ASSESSMENT OF PRONUNCIATION BY CHINESE TERTIARY STUDENTS

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1 Introduction

Being able to accurately assess one's own proficiency and progress in a foreign language is an important ingredient to successful learning and a necessary condition for learner autonomy (Holec 1985, Oskarsson 1980). Studies rating the accuracy of learner self-assessment measured against scores on 'objective' tests have shown that most learners can successfully evaluate themselves, with generally high correlations reported between self-assessment and external ratings, although there seems to be a tendency for high proficiency learners to underestimate their ability and low proficiency learners to overestimate (Blanche and Merino 1989). In the area of pronunciation, however, correlations have been on the whole much lower, and learners have shown a much greater tendency to underestimate (Anderson 1982, Heidt 1979, Raash 1980, Wangsotorn 1981).

Self-assessment of pronunciation may be difficult for learners for several reasons. One may be that, perhaps more than any other aspect of language, pronunciation involves the presentation of the self (Pennington, in press), and may be so intimately related to personality that learners have difficulty judging it objectively. It also involves both productive and receptive skills; learners must have accurate auditory discrimination if they are to successfully judge their articulation (Goto, 1971). Finally, most learners have little explicit knowledge of pronunciation with which to assess their performance. Pronunciation is generally the language skill on which learners get the least feedback and have the least opportunity for revision. The self-assessment of language ability by means of standardized forms is a complex act of 'information processing' involving such steps as:

1) understanding the questions
2) searching memory for relevant information
3) evaluating information in terms of appropriateness for question and self image
4) fitting information onto scale presented in instrument (Heilenman 1990)

These processes are doubtless made even more difficult if subjects have little formal training in the area they are to assess.

A further complication in testing the accuracy of self-assessment in speaking is the reliability of the 'objective' rater (Oskarsson 1980), particularly when the learners and raters may be approaching pronunciation with different 'standards' or 'targets' (Brown 1989). The cultural background of both learners and raters may also be a factor in how accurately their responses match and how learners cope with the task of self-assessment (Anderson 1982, Miller and Ng 1994).

Perhaps the most intriguing question is: What makes a good self-assessor? If particular characteristics or practices can be identified, there is hope that less accurate learners can be 'trained' to be more self-aware. Firth (1987) hypothesizes that four conditions are necessary for a learner to become a successful self-monitor of pronunciation:

1) motivation
2) explicit explanations
3) practice
4) supportive and accurate feedback

Other factors that might play a role are overall proficiency, sex and attitudes towards the target language and its speakers.

2 Procedure and Methodology

The aims of this research project were to find out how accurately a sample of tertiary level students in Hong Kong were able to assess their pronunciation, to examine their relative accuracy in responding to questions in different phonological areas, and to determine what strategies they used when asked to judge their own pronunciation.

The subjects were 15 Cantonese speaking students (8 females and 7 males) taking a variety of undergraduate courses at City University of Hong Kong Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Baptist University. All of the subjects had attained a grade 'D' in the Hong Kong 'A' Level Use of English Examination.

In the study the three researchers each engaged five students from their institution in a 10-minute taped conversation about language use in Hong Kong now and in the future. The purpose of the research was not mentioned for fear that the subjects would become too self-conscious about their pronunciation. After the interview, the subjects were asked to fill in a 'self-assessment of oral proficiency questionnaire'.

The questionnaire asked the students to rate themselves using a 4-point Likert scale on 29 items relating to oral proficiency, including questions on communicative competence, fluency, grammar, stress and intonation and segmental pronunciation. A variety of items was used in order to shift the focus of the questionnaire away from explicit questions on pronunciation, to avoid the anxiety learners might associate with such questions.

The researchers then exchanged the tapes. Each researcher and two tertiary level teachers from each separate institute (one a native English speaker, one a Cantonese speaker) listened to the five subjects on the tape and filled in a teacher assessment form, which contained the same items as the student self-assessment questionnaire. The student and rater responses were then compared. On the basis of the results, the researchers conducted follow-up interviews with the subjects, who were asked to reflect on the strategies they used when completing the questionnaires.

2.1 Hypotheses

Based on previous research in self-assessment, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Student assessment of phonological features would not closely match that of the raters.
2. The three raters (two native speakers, one Cantonese speaker) would be fairly consistent in their assessments.
3. Discrepancies between assessments of subjects and raters would be lower for questions of a broadly communicative nature, and higher for more specific questions about phonology and grammar.
4. Lower proficiency subjects would overestimate their abilities, while higher proficiency subjects would underestimate their abilities.

3 Findings

3.1 Analysis of Subject-Rater Responses

Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficients were calculated for subject and rater totals (Appendix 1). As expected, the correlation between student self-assessment and average rater scores was quite low (.161). The scores of the researchers and the native English speaking raters, on the other hand, correlated very highly (.808), indicating high inter-rater reliability. The Cantonese speaking raters, however, tended to assess the subjects slightly higher than the native English speakers. The Cantonese rater of the second group assessed her subjects significantly higher than her native English speaking counterparts. This particular rater was the youngest, had the least number of years teaching experience, and the subsequent interview revealed she felt a high degree of empathy with the learners.

The average discrepancy of rater-learner score for the three groups was 0.54 on a 4 point scale (Appendix 2). However, this average obscures some aspects of the differences in ratings of learners and the other raters. Most of the subjects underrated themselves, consistent with previous studies on self-assessment of speaking and self-assessment by East Asian learners (Anderson 1982, Wagonston 1981). Subjects who were assessed highly by the raters were the most likely to underestimate their ability. A notable example is Subject 5, who was rated third in terms of proficiency, and who underestimated by 1.22. The four subjects with the lowest proficiency all overestimated their ability, confirming our hypothesis.

Females tended to underestimate their ability, all but one giving themselves lower scores than the raters, while half of the male subjects overestimated. Female subjects also tended to match rater assessments more accurately.

3.2 Item Analysis

Appendix 3 shows the items on the questionnaire in rank-order based on the mean learner-rater discrepancy. Although a discrepancy might occur for a number of reasons, including lack of reliability of the instrument, if we regard incidents of high discrepancy as indications of student misassessment, some interesting patterns emerge. Students seemed to be able to more accurately assess themselves on broad, communicative questions and 'global' questions. They had trouble with more specific or 'technical' questions. This was true for both the phonological and grammatical items.

Although students were able to match raters on broad phonological questions like 'pronouncing words correctly', there was a high degree of discrepancy for

segmental questions (saying words with /b/, /d/, /g/, /n/, /l/ and 'th' sounds). A notable exception was the question regarding the sounds /v/ and /w/, which showed a very low discrepancy. When interviewed, the subjects indicated previous training in the production of these particular sounds and could describe how they were made. They were unable to demonstrate this knowledge regarding the sounds for which there was higher discrepancy. This suggests that self-assessment is difficult in areas where students have limited knowledge.

Average discrepancy was generally high on phonological questions dealing with long stretches of speech (varying stress, pausing, speaking without hesitation). Question 16 regarding varying stress had the highest discrepancy, and this is a particular problem for Cantonese speakers. In contrast, the discrepancy was relatively low for question 5 about putting the stress on the right syllable, possibly because students have more explicit knowledge of stress on word level.

For grammatical questions, although the discrepancy was low for question 25--a more 'global' question regarding proper use of verb tenses--there was high average discrepancy for questions 19 and 20, more specific questions dealing with formation of verb tenses. These questions combine grammatical competence and phonological accuracy, and the high discrepancies are consistent with the findings at the segmental level and suggest a relationship between phonology and grammar.

Average discrepancy for the two repair questions was also high. The subjects significantly underestimated their ability to self-correct and to cope with the breakdown of communication. This would appear to be consistent with their answer to the question about being confident when speaking English, which they also significantly underestimated. Affective factors, therefore, seem to have played an important part in their responses to these questions.

3.3 Follow-Up Interviews

The interviews focused on the strategies the subjects used when answering the questionnaire as well as their attitudes about pronunciation and methods of study. On the whole, more accurate students exhibited the conditions mention by Firth (1987); they were more highly motivated, practised more, had more explicit training, and more feedback from both teachers and native-speakers of English in authentic situations.

The profile of subject 12, the most accurate self-assessor, illustrates these findings. She clearly has a highly positive attitude to the language and a large degree of 'intrinsic' motivation (see Richards 1993), seeks out opportunities to

speak to native speakers, and, when answering the questionnaire, based her responses on the recollection of authentic situations. She wants to sound like a native speaker, and to this end mimics speakers on English language television and radio. She has received explicit training in phonology as part of a linguistics module, and was the only subject who indicated that she 'tested herself' when confronted with segmental questions by saying words containing the sounds to herself and consciously applying 'rules'. Most of the subjects just reflected on past feedback from teachers or in communicative situations. Obviously, the willingness to independently experiment and 'test oneself' can contribute to more accurate awareness of ones capabilities.

Subject 7, the greatest overestimator and an engineering student, shows more instrumental motivation. He has few opportunities to speak with native speakers, and most of his practice is focused on receptive skills (reading and listening). He does not try to sound like a native speaker, but rather aspires to a local standard: a Hong Kong accent.

The profile of Subject 5, the greatest underestimator, suggests a learner who is very dependent on teachers, but starved for feedback. When answering the questions, she thought back to previous teacher assessments, and, on items she perceived as difficult, she automatically gave herself a low score. She rarely has a chance to speak to native English speakers, and her strategy for improvement is to take more English courses. She does not want to sound like a native speaker, probably because she does not feel capable of it.

4 Conclusions and Implications for Teaching

The limited quantitative study along with the follow-up interviews can give us some indication as to what is involved in the self-assessment of pronunciation and what we can do to make our students more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. The factors that might affect learners' assessment of their own pronunciation which came out most strongly in our study are:

1) how 'technical' or specific the question is
2) how much explicit knowledge the learner has about the area covered in the item
3) what kind of motivation the learner has for studying the foreign language
4) how much exposure the learners has to native-like pronunciation
5) what accent the learner chooses as a model

Increasing learners' awareness of their own pronunciation can help them more readily identify areas in which they wish to improve. A number of measures can

be taken to foster such self-awareness. Our interviews with successful self-assessors argue for more explicit training in phonology and pronunciation, including ear-training (Dickinson 1987) and explanations of how sounds are produced. At the same time, such training should also focus on more communicative aspects of pronunciation and provide students with meaningful practice on the suprasegmental as well as the segmental level (Pennington 1989). This, of course, implies that teachers themselves should be better equipped with a working knowledge of phonology; sadly, teacher training courses even at the Master's level which offer instruction in phonology are few and far between (Pennington, in press).

Teachers should also rethink the traditional ways of teaching pronunciation though decontextualized drills, and work to develop more analytic, reflective and self-directed approaches to the teaching of pronunciation (Pennington, in press) by giving learners clear and supportive feedback on their pronunciation and encouraging self-assessment and peer-assessment with the assistance of audio and video taping. Through increased self-awareness, learners will understand better the their own criteria for 'good pronunciation' and become more motivated to work towards their individualized targets.

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Appendix 1

Correlation Tables

Spearman Rho Correlation Coefficients

(all values significant at .01)

subjects/ rater average	.1615
researchers/ native English speakers	.8087
researchers/ Cantonese speakers	.4351
native English sp./ Cantonese sp.	.5197

Appendix 2

Rank Order Student-Rater Discrepancies

ANSWERS (in order of average discrepancy)		student	resear	nat spk	canton	rater	*rater m -*	average
TYPE	*QUESTION*	mean	mean	mean	mean	mean	*stud m*	discrep
commun.	*2. Choosing word appropriate to the situation*	2.64	2.57	2.50	2.29	2.45	*-0.19*	0.45
segmentals	*22. Saying words with v, w*	2.71	2.57	2.64	2.79	2.67	*-0.05*	0.52
	18. Being polite when you want to be	2.21	2.36	2.00	2.14	2.17	*-0.05*	0.62
stress/inton.	*8. Linking words to make speech sound natural*	3.50	3.07	3.36	2.86	3.10	*-0.40*	0.64
grammar	*23. Using verb tenses appropriately*	3.00	2.79	3.00	2.71	2.83	*-0.17*	0.71
commun.	*1. Choosing the right word to express meaning*	2.79	2.50	2.50	2.29	2.43	*-0.36*	0.71
	4. Saying long words	3.07	2.43	2.71	2.79	2.64	*-0.43*	0.71
segmentals	*6. Pronouncing words correctly*	2.64	2.57	2.93	2.36	2.62	*-0.02*	0.71
	27. Speak accurately without thinking too long	2.86	2.71	2.79	2.29	2.60	*-0.26*	0.71
stress/inton.	*5. Putting stress on the right syllable*	2.86	2.36	2.54	2.36	2.42	*-0.44*	0.76
commun.	*10. Being able to say what you mean*	2.50	2.21	2.38	2.43	2.34	*-0.16*	0.76
commun.	*14. Making yourself understood*	2.36	2.07	2.36	2.14	2.19	*-0.17*	0.76
	28. Being comfortable when speaking English	2.43	2.00	2.14	2.07	2.07	*-0.36*	0.76
	13. Expressing feelings or attitudes through voice	2.86	2.86	3.00	2.36	2.74	*-0.12*	0.79
stress/inton.	*17. Making voice rise & fall at appropriate times*	2.79	2.86	3.21	2.57	2.88	*0.10*	0.81
	3. Different ways to say it when no best word	2.36	2.57	2.79	2.64	2.67	*0.31*	0.88
stress/inton.	*7. Putting words together quickly*	3.07	2.64	2.93	2.57	2.71	*-0.36*	0.88
	9. Using contractions	2.71	2.57	3.36	2.57	2.83	*0.12*	0.88
	11. Speaking naturally without hesitation	2.79	2.71	2.86	2.64	2.74	*-0.05*	0.88
	29. Being confident when speaking English	2.93	2.14	2.07	2.00	2.07	*-0.86*	0.88
segmentals	*21. Saying words ending in b, d, g*	2.86	2.86	3.00	2.79	2.88	*0.02*	0.90
segmentals	*24. Saying words beginning with th*	2.29	3.00	2.86	2.50	2.79	*0.50*	0.93
segmentals	*23. Saying words with n, t*	2.64	2.86	2.71	2.50	2.69	*0.05*	0.95
repair	*15. Coping w/ misunderstanding or breakdown*	3.14	2.43	2.21	1.79	2.14	*-1.00*	0.98
grammar	*20. Using irregular verb forms correctly*	2.50	2.86	3.21	2.57	2.88	*0.38*	0.98
stress/inton.	*12. Pausing at appropriate places*	2.86	2.50	2.62	2.50	2.54	*-0.32*	1.00
repair	*25. Being able to correct when make mistake*	2.50	2.50	2.93	2.64	2.69	*0.19*	1.00
grammar	*19. Verb endings & plural nouns*	2.50	3.14	3.29	2.64	3.02	*0.52*	1.05
stress/inton.	*16. Varying stress of words & syllables*	2.79	3.07	3.14	2.21	2.81	*0.02*	1.07
	AVERAGE	2.73	2.61	2.76	2.45	2.61	*-0.12*	0.82
	MEDIAN	2.75	2.57	2.82	2.50	2.68	*-0.08*	0.85

Appendix 3

Mean Discrepancy per Item in Rank order

1 = excellent	2 = good	3 = fair	4 = poor

SUBJECT RATINGS (in order of proficiency)

subj #	sex	self assess	resear	nat speak	canto speak	rater avg	avg discr	+/- estim.
1	F	2.21	1.59	1.94	1.91	1.81	0.39	-
15	F	2.17	1.59	2.72	1.66	1.99	0.55	-
5	F	3.45	2.31	2.44	1.94	2.23	1.22	-
12	F	2.38	2.38	2.34	2.13	2.28	0.10	-
8	M	3.24	2.50	2.38	2.00	2.29	0.95	-
3	M		2.53	2.44	2.06	2.34		
2	M	2.59	2.34	2.25	2.66	2.42	0.22	-
9	M	2.79	3.13	3.13	1.41	2.55	0.68	-
6	F	2.86	2.97	3.16	2.13	2.75	0.38	-
4	F	3.34	2.47	2.88	2.97	2.77	0.57	-
11	F	2.93	2.84	2.88	2.69	2.80	0.13	-
7	M	1.90	3.19	2.94	2.38	2.83	0.94	+
13	M	2.90	2.59	3.17	3.41	3.06	0.36	+
10	F	2.55	3.44	3.25	3.13	3.27	0.72	+
14	M	2.90	3.09	3.19	3.66	3.31	0.42	+

average 0.54

12 FIRST LANGUAGE LITERACY AND SECOND LANGUAGE READING

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This paper describes a project being carried out at Nanjing University in China in the Nanjing University/United Board College English Teacher Training Program. "College English", in this context, means English for students who are not specialising in foreign languages, and the program, which is housed in the University's Department of Applied Foreign Language Studies, is sponsored by an American organisation, the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, in order to promote professional development among those who teach such students. The participants come from all over China and have a wide range of teaching experience: some have been teaching for as much as ten years, others have only just started, but they all are anxious to improve their own proficiency in English, and they all share a concern about the state of English teaching and learning in China.

The project was designed to address both of these concerns. First, it was carried out in the context of a proficiency course, that in reading and writing, and, since it was a course for graduates in academic careers, its focus was on academic text: the programme participants were given professional articles to read so that they could both learn the conventions of English academic discourse and develop new reading strategies in order to deal with it; and to consolidate what they were learning, they were asked to write academic essays themselves about topics related to the readings. Second, the subject-matter of the course was directly related to the participants' interests as learners and teachers: the articles that they read and the essays that they wrote were themselves about literacy and the English language; thus the participants were reflecting constantly on the processes by which they and their students learned so that they became increasingly aware of the social and psychological issues involved. Finally, the project also had a research aim, for through it we were attempting to address a broader question about the relationship between cultural background and language learning: namely, how does people's literacy in their first language affect what they do and how they learn through reading in their second?

This question has its roots in the controversy about literacy that has developed since the publication of Goody and Watt's much cited article, "The Consequences of Literacy", in 1963. That article, together with other publications such as Goody's *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (1977), Olson's "From Utterance to Text" (1977) and Ong's *Orality and Literacy* (1982) promote what Street (1984, 1993) describes as an "autonomous" model of literacy, one that views literacy as an independent variable that has, of itself, important and psychological and social consequences. Street, for his part, rejects this model, arguing that it reflects an ethnocentric view based on the experience of people educated in the western European tradition. Literacy, Street asserts, is a highly variable characteristic, the nature and consequences of which depend crucially on the people among whom and the purposes for which it is used, and he characterises his alternative model as an "ideological" one because he maintains that people's conceptions and uses of literacy are deeply embedded in the ideology that informs social interaction within their communities.

That the use of language in written form does indeed vary from one community to another has been amply demonstrated in a number of empirical studies. Heath (1983), in particular, shows that books, newspapers, magazines, and so on play quite different parts in the social lives of three South Carolina communities that she calls "Trackton", "Roadville", and "Maintown", and there is equal variation in the ways in which the children of these communities learn to read. Other studies, which focus more on classroom contexts, show that children from different cultural backgrounds come to school with different concepts of language and literacy, and that these different concepts radically affect their success or otherwise in acquiring the kind of literacy that is favoured in school (Cazden, John, and Hymes 1972; Cook-Gumperz 1986; Hedley and Baratta 1985; Schieffelin and Gilmore 1986). These studies, moreover, show only the extent of variation among English-speaking communities; among communities that use different languages, including different scripts, we can expect even greater variation—and such variation has been documented in, for example, the edited collections of Foorman and Siegel (1986) and Street (1993), and also in individual studies such as those of Scribner and Cole (1981) and Wagner et al. (1989).

But how do such differences affect what individuals actually do when they read? In particular, how do they affect what learners of English as a second or foreign language do when confronted with an English reading task? Surprisingly, although there have been several studies of individual and group differences in reading strategies (see Block 1992; Gu 1994; Johnson, Shale, and Law 1989; Koda 1988; Parry 1991; Pritchard 1990), no attempt seems to have been made to relate such differences to the broader argument about differences

in literacy. Yet it seems only reasonable to assume that there is a connection: anyone who has taught students of different cultural backgrounds knows that beyond individual differences among students there are certain commonalities within cultural groups and certain contrasts between them; these differences are reflected in their reading strategies as well as in other aspects of their behaviour, and, as I have put it in an earlier article:

> It seems likely that the strategies themselves, as well as readers' decisions as to when to use them, [are] "socially constructed", that is, that they [grow] out of individuals' experience of text, or written language, as used in the society in which they [grow] up, and, more specifically, of schooling, the social process by which they [are] explicitly taught to read. (Parry 1993: 151)

Thus, our aim in the Nanjing programme was, first, to characterise this process of social construction as the programme participants themselves had experienced and observed it, and, second, to relate it to the participants' examination of their own and their students' strategies for reading in English.

The project, or rather, course procedures were as follows. Every Tuesday the participants were given one or more articles to read to which they were expected to produce a written response on Friday; the readings were drawn from both the ethnographic literature about literacy and the pedagogical literature about reading strategies. Then, over the weekend, the participants worked on essays of their own that were thematically linked to what they had read. Each essay was written in three drafts, to the first of which I responded with questions on content and advice on organisation, to the second with grammatical and stylistic suggestions, and to the third with evaluative comments—in short, I used the now widely accepted method of teaching writing that is known as "the process approach". Since one draft was written each week, the work naturally fell into three-week units, each of which was centred on a single theme: the first such theme was "Literacy at home", the second "Literacy in school", and the third "Literacy in society" (but, because of the National Day holiday and other interruptions the students wrote no essay on this one); the fourth theme was "Approaching English", and the fifth was "Making sense of English text".

It is these essays that constitute the data for this report. The participants, I should point out, were writing only out of their personal experience and observations; they had made no systematic study of the social trends that they reported. Nevertheless, in articulating their own perceptions, these young Chinese teachers represent voices that have not yet been sufficiently heard in

western discussions of literacy and language—and as the numbers of Chinese people learning English increase, we can expect these voices to become increasingly important.

Harvey Graff, in his book *The Legacies of Literacy* (1987) points to the constant interplay between "continuities and contradictions" in the history of literacy (by which he means only western literacy). The participants in the Nanjing programme, though unacquainted with Graff's work, brought out the same theme, although it is of the "contradictions" that they seemed to be most aware. When asked to write on "Literacy at home", seven of the twenty-three who did this assignment wrote about the contrast between their children's experience and their own; one went further, and examined changes in Chinese literacy instruction over four generations; while five others, while focusing on only a single generation, emphasised the view (consonant with Street's ideological model) that what literacy means is contingent on political and social circumstances. As one, Zhu Xiao Wen, put it:

> It is easy to understand the changes in literacy education which have taken place among generations, as China's social structure has been shaken and reconstructed by the three important revolutions of this century, as well as the economic reform which is now taking place.

Consequently, in the essays on "Literacy at home", there are several references to the traditional education handed down in private schools called *sishu*, where work began with the *Three Word Scripture*, proceeded to the works of Confucius and Mencius, and never went beyond the Chinese classics; and the participants emphasised the contrast with the public schools introduced after the 1911 revolution where children learned to read standard modern Chinese, as opposed to classical, and studied such subjects as maths, geography, and biology.

A still stronger contrast was drawn between the early education the participants themselves received and that which they are giving their children. In some of this writing there is a poignant sense of regret, as in this comment by Du Qun Hua:

> I really envy the children of the nineties, who receive so much more care and teaching from their parents than I did. I often think if my parents hadn't worked so hard, or if I hadn't been born in that particular period, things would have been quite different. My parents would surely have taught me how to read and write....

The deprivation was brought about, of course, by the Cultural Revolution, during which classical books were destroyed or had to be hidden and formal education seemed to have little value. Another participant, Sheng Ping, commented on that period,

> There used to be a slogan, "Whoever has knowledge is a reactionary element." [People] burnt and destroyed many valuable books, everything, in fact, except for books of Chairman Mao's quotations. People couldn't buy any good books in bookstores. Generally speaking, most parents wouldn't teach their children to read at home, for they thought it was useless to read and write.

Yet children of the Cultural Revolution did learn to read and write, in what can be considered a more egalitarian kind of literacy, for, being based on a limited range of texts, it was more readily accessible. As Sheng Ping wrote later in her essay,

> Chairman Mao's pictures were everywhere, accompanied by phrases like "Long live Chairman Mao", "Long long live the Communist Party; without the Communist Party there would be no New China", "Never forget the class struggle", and "Serve the people with heart and soul". Some slogans were painted on walls, some were painted on the lids of cups, some were on towels and other places. Everyone could read those few words at that time, I think.

As the children of the Cultural Revolution grew up, the political wheel turned once more, with corresponding changes in public literacy practices. Now, in the 1990s, a wide variety of texts is available, and so are blocks, cards, and other toys designed to teach children to read. The participants described themselves as being eager to buy these things and to spend time with their children playing with them; their practices sound similar to those of the "Townspeople" that Heath (1982) describes, and since there is only one child per family, this means a great deal of attention for each child.

Today's children are not, however, entirely to be envied. Literacy may at first be presented as play, but soon it becomes hard work, and as the children proceed through school the pressure increases. In what has become a generally competitive environment, the competition for university places, and hence for places in good high schools and even elementary schools, is particularly intense; and the mechanism by which the competition is regulated is

examinations. A teacher's primary responsibility is to get as many students as possible through the next major exam, and the effect on teaching methods and on children's own literacy practices can be problematic. These problems were described at length in the essays on "Literacy in school", as in this example by Gu Tie Xia:

> In the classroom children have to read aloud and write what they have learnt again and again no matter whether they like it or not.... Children often spend a lot of time in reviewing the old lessons. It seems that the textbook is not very difficult, but [children] are assigned many exercises from other books that are too difficult for them to do without an adult's help. Children are not often allowed to read other books. My nephew told me that he was unwilling to review the old lessons again and again before the examination.

The changes that have taken place, then, in both home and school literacy practices have been enormous, and it seems clear that there will be more changes as the single-child generation grows up, as the economy develops, and as discontent with the present situation mounts. Yet there are also factors that have remained constant throughout the turmoil—the continuities that interact with the contradictions—and precisely because they have remained constant amid so much change, they may have an even more influential effect on the ways in which Chinese students work with text.

First, the participants reported a remarkable degree of loyalty, even through the Cultural Revolution, to traditional texts, especially to traditional poetry. Zhu Xiao Wen, for example, after describing how her mother, in the late 1960s, would teach her the stories of Lei Feng and other Communist heroes, added:

> But my mother also taught me a few ancient poems because she loved them so much. Like many other Chinese, she never believed deep down in her heart that those literary treasures were historical rubbish. The Chinese simply dared not teach them openly to the next generation.

It seems that many reacted in this way, and now such poems (especially those of the Tang dynasty) are a staple of the elementary school curriculum, while the study of more difficult classical texts is a normal part of high school work. The ancient texts, moreover, still seem to be treated in much the same way as they were a hundred years ago. One participant, Wang Kui, devoted her essay on "Literacy in school" to the practice of reading aloud, or, as she called it, "chanting"; she pointed out that this was a strategy advocated by scholars of the

Qing dynasty and that it is still used by students such as herself as a means of appreciating literary texts.

Second, the very fact that literacy practices have been so affected by political change demonstrates a significant principle that is constant throughout: that literacy is regarded, not as a neutral skill, but as an important means of teaching morality and maintaining authority (cf. Erbaugh 1990). One of the participants, Lu Wanying, put it this way:

> Early literacy in school always involves much ideological teaching.... Before liberation ... people ... were ... taught to recite famous sayings from Confucius' and Mencius' works.... After liberation ... they learn such sentences as "We love our motherland"; "We love the five-starred red flag"; "we love labour"; "study hard"; [and] "We should take good care of public property".... Ideological teaching through school literacy has been kept though its form and content have changed with the times.

Nor has its content entirely changed even in the reaction against the Cultural Revolution. As Lu Wanying pointed out, certain themes have remained constant: unselfishness is one (it is still taught through stories of Lei Feng), and patriotism is another. In addition, social order is promoted not only in the content but also in the methods of teaching: classrooms are arranged in serried ranks, and the teacher dominates all the activity—the ideal is described in the following quotation from an elementary school textbook, which another participant, Qin Hai Hua, cited in her essay on "Literacy in school":

> The classroom is so silent that the sound of a needle falling to the ground can be heard clearly. All the students are looking at their teacher with the eagerness for knowledge ...

In real classrooms, the "eagerness for knowledge" may not always be so great, but the tendency of students to keep quiet was a frequently recurring theme in the programme participants' writings.

Another factor making for continuity is the writing system itself. In mainland China many of the characters have been simplified since 1949, but the basic system, consisting of thousands of characters formed on a combination of morphemic and syllabic principles, remains the same. The system imposes its own discipline, for many hours of work are needed to learn it, and in order to remember the characters it is necessary to be highly analytical. Even with young children in the home environment, where circumstances are most

favourable for "top-down" approaches to text, the characters are taught discretely and in an analytical way, by relating them one to another in terms of the radicals that they share or the words of which they form parts. Consider, for example, Li Xiao Zhong's description of how she taught her son:

> When he was about two and a half years old, I gradually taught him some simple Chinese characters like '人', *ren*, '大', *da*, '上', *shang*, and '下', *xia*, which mean respectively "people", "big", "up", and "down" in English. At first I taught him these characters separately, for he was still young, and too many characters at a time would have confused him. However, I did associate the character with what he was familiar with. For example, when I taught him '太', *tai*, which means "too", I first told him this character is formed by adding a '丶', dot to '大', *da*, "big", and then I explained to him is one of the characters in '太陽', *tai yang*, which means "the sun" in English.

This analytical approach is maintained throughout the school system — though there are more holistic activities too such as reciting poems or listening to stories — and when children are beyond the stage of having to learn the characters of modern Chinese, they then have to study classical Chinese texts and to use an equally analytical approach in order to perform paraphrase tasks or to identify and interpret characters whose pronunciation and/or meaning have changed radically since the texts were written. One of the participants, Wu Lili, gave a full and precise description of such tasks, basing it on her mother's experience in marking exams in classical Chinese at the secondary level.

We can also see elements of both contradiction and continuity in Chinese approaches to English, as described by the participants in their third essay. From the historical point of view, the teaching and learning of English have been as subject to change — or contradiction — as have the materials and practices of Chinese literacy. One participant, Zhu Ming Hui, wrote of English studies as rising and falling like the tide in response to political circumstances:

> Each of the upsurges of English learning appeared when China was in difficulty and needed fresh air and energy. The third [present] upsurge comes under this condition too. It began from 1979.

In the years before 1979, especially between 1966 and 1976, learning English was condemned by those who held political power, and this fact radically

affected those who received most of their schooling during this period. Consider this account, written by He Yue, one of the older participants:

> Just as I went to primary school in 1966, the Cultural Revolution took place. My parents were teachers teaching foreign languages, but they didn't intend to let me and my younger brother learn any foreign language. At that time, many people who knew foreign languages were suspected to have illicit relations with foreign countries and to be inclined to betray our country. In that situation, my parents never taught us any foreign language, not even one word. I myself was also afraid of learning English because my classmates or the other children would call me "little spy" if I knew English or Russian.

The result, for He Yue, was that she did not begin to learn English until she went to university in 1977.

In 1979 official attitudes towards English changed radically, and popular attitudes have changed too. Now, Zhu Ming Hui reported,

> After work, in the evening, people from every direction swarm into classrooms—to learn foreign languages, and most people learn English.

In many cases, including those of the participants in the Nanjing programme, this desire to learn English is inspired by a desire to learn about and communicate with the world outside China. Some of the participants expressed this in strong terms. One, Sun Wenjing, wrote,

> I think to study a foreign language you will escape the world of your own language and people. You will be able to detach yourself and see your own world in perspective.

Qin Hai Hua put it even more strongly:

> With the study of English, I have access to something foreign, something new to me that I've never known before. For example, there are so many interesting foreign customs ... There is so much flavour which I couldn't know if I didn't know English ...

For most people, however, the motive is more instrumental: people learn English now in order to get good jobs. As Zhu Ming Hui explained,

> There are often advertisements in newspapers for managers, secretaries, and skilled workers. These advertisements say those who have both English and other needed knowledge and abilities will be considered first. This urges people, many of whom have already worked for many years, to go to the classroom to learn English again.

Even such instrumental motivation is not always present. For those who are still in school, the purpose of learning English is to pass exams, and the reason for passing exams is that they have been mandated by the government. As Lu Wanying wrote in her essay on "Approaching English",

> Tests are always important to Chinese people because tests can decide people's fate. In China the most important ones are the national tests controlled by the State Education Commission. Such tests usually orient people's learning. English tests, for example, have directly brought about people's craze for English.

Another participant, Yang Hongqi, pointed out that this focus on exams could have negative effects on attitudes towards English, creating a conflict between generations:

> Soon the students get bored, and they feel they are learning English, not for themselves, but for their teachers, because they have to pass the test, and for their parents, who are more concerned about the scores than they are themselves.
>
> It's a strange phenomenon that, after their graduation, most students "step into society" where they realise the importance of knowing English and regret not having learned it well. The social experience makes them sense from the bottom of their hearts that English will be a tool for them to accomplish what they want. Then they will go back to night schools to relearn it.

Thus he made explicit the contradiction between such exam-dominated studies and the practical needs of the workplace.

Amid all the changes and contradictory motives, however, there are constant factors in the ways in which English is taught in China, and these show

continuity also with the traditions of Chinese literacy. First, while the participants made no mention of traditional material in today's English classes—there is no equivalent of Tang poetry—they did clearly show that traditional methods are adhered to, or at least were when they were at school. Such adherence was often a matter of practical necessity because, in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, many of their first English teachers knew little of the language themselves. So they taught through the medium of Chinese, with heavy emphasis on the traditional practices of recitation and memorisation of isolated items. One participant, Rao Zhiren, gave this description of the lessons he received:

> Nearly all the time, I had my English class in Chinese. My teacher didn't speak English at all, neither did I.... I was asked to learn more English words usage and grammar rules by heart. My teacher usually advised us to recite more English words and idioms.

The dominance of exams has reinforced this tendency. This is how Lu Wanying said they were prepared for exams:

> We reviewed the four books of senior high school over and over again. We could even recite most of the texts. It was a kind of rote learning ...

It is a somewhat negative picture; but we have to acknowledge that these methods work—or at least that they did in the case of these learners, who are now university-educated teachers of English.

A second constant factor in the study of English is the way in which it is influenced by ideological considerations, just as Chinese literacy is. One of Li Xiao Zhong's essays is an analysis of the textbooks used in secondary schools for teaching English, and it includes this remark about the books from which she herself was taught:

> English at that time [the mid 1970s] was only another way of giving ideological education. Except its form and pronunciation which were new to us, there was no new information. For example, we had such slogans as "Long live Chairman Mao! Long live the Communist Party!" "In agriculture, learn from Tachai." "In industry, learn from Taching." The texts included in the books were just some English translations of Chinese stories, like Leifeng's stories,

> and stories about Young Pioneers who took Leifeng as an example ...

Since then, she pointed out, the textbooks have changed to reflect changing official attitudes: a new set was introduced in 1979 which provide much more information about the western world—though from a western perspective it hardly seems up-to-date, since the authors mentioned are Mark Twain, Daniel Defoe, and Jonathan Swift—and at the present time yet another set is being introduced which lays more emphasis on colloquial language and conversation practice. Here direct ideological teaching is less obvious, but the fact that the books are centrally controlled and officially approved is as constant a feature of English teaching as it is of Chinese. Similarly, the classroom environment reflects, in English lessons as much as in Chinese ones, the same ideal of central control. The following comment by Yang Hongqi refers to classrooms in the 1980s:

> Teachers got feedback from the students by means of tests, which were aimed to simulate the entrance examinations and tests. It was actually one-way teaching. There was no interaction in class; the teacher did most of the talking. It is still the case in most parts of China, and it can also be called the traditional way of teaching English.

Finally, there is continuity in that the analytical methods of teaching Chinese can also be seen in the methods of teaching English. In their final group of essays, "Making sense of English text", a number of the participants described how "Intensive Reading"—which makes up fifty per cent of the College English curriculum—is taught. According to their descriptions, there is some variation in the extent to which background information is discussed and the stage at which it is considered, but they all agreed that new words must be explained and the structure of difficult sentences must be analysed. One, Luo Ningxia, described the procedure her own teacher used:

> When we were going to learn a new text, ... we were asked to preview [it] according to some questions the teacher gave us. [Then, in class,] we were told to answer those questions.... Secondly, we began to learn new words.... The teacher corrected some words which we read wrongly, and then let us read the new words after her two times. Thirdly, ... the teacher helped us analyse the grammar rules ... This was the most important part which the teacher emphasised in teaching. [She] often read us some examples, which we were required to translate into Chinese or English.... Fourthly, ...

> she would answer questions we were still confused about.... Fifthly, ... the teacher asked us to make up sentences with the phrases and sentence patterns we had learned in the text.... Finally, the teacher asked us some questions about the general ideas of the whole text...

Although Luo described the procedure as being both "top-down" and "bottom-up"—as indeed it was, in that there were questions about "general ideas" as well as discussions of particular words—the emphasis on analysis rather than on integration is marked, and this emphasis characterises all the five descriptions given of such classes.

So what of the participants' own reading strategies? Seventeen of them chose in the essay on "Making sense of English text" to describe their own reading processes, and these descriptions show striking continuity with the teaching methods described above. Just as the texts in the reading lessons are used to teach particular words and grammatical constructions, so in preparing for intensive reading lessons on their own, students tend to focus on lexis and syntax. The following is a description of such preparation—the writer, Zheng Guo Long, was referring to what he used to do as an undergraduate:

> My primary attention was focused on the unfamiliar words in the passage. Firstly, I scanned the passage without paying attention to the [overall] meaning but picking out the new words and phrases which seemed to be important ... Secondly, I would look them up in my dictionary ... My strategy at this point was to find the general meaning ... and to write it down ... together with part of speech, usage, pronunciation and Chinese version.... Thirdly, I would go over the passage slowly, analysing the complicated grammatical relationship.... Fourthly, I would try to translate the passage into Chinese ...

Then, after class, he wrote, he would read the passage aloud to himself and recite the new words in order to memorise them. He went on, in his essay, to condemn these "bottom-up" methods—the words learned, he pointed out, were soon forgotten, and the whole procedure was painfully slow—and he advocated instead using "top-down" strategies to begin with. Other participants described themselves as doing just that, but even so there was a strong feeling that they should end up understanding every word. Gu Tie Xia described how she read one of the recently assigned articles for the course in general linguistics that I also taught them:

> Firstly, I went through the passage trying to get the gist of what was being said and underlined words that were unfamiliar to me, the words I thought I would go back to later. I guessed at the meaning of each of my unfamiliar words at this stage, not only with the help of the context but also of any knowledge stored in my mind.... At the same time, I tried to guess at the long and difficult sentences by analysing their structure.... When I came across a sentence that was too difficult for me to understand, I had to translate each word into Chinese while reading voicelessly to help my understanding. I knew it was not a great way in learning a foreign language, but I couldn't help doing so. And I guessed at the words by thinking about the Chinese meanings.

The doubts expressed about the desirability of focusing on individual words, and especially of translating, arose naturally from the participants' work in the programme; for both my colleague, who taught them methodology, and I advocated a communicative approach to language teaching. Yet it is important to recognise the merits of the behaviour described in these last two quotations: the methods may be slow, but they are thorough, and because the participants went over the text at least twice, they did eventually develop an understanding of the whole and end up knowing the content very well. Moreover, the reluctance to jump to their own conclusions about meaning saves learners such as these from developing such completely erroneous interpretations as have been documented in studies of more holistic readers (see Block 1986; Hill and Anderson 1994; Parry 1987, 1991, 1994).

Nevertheless, there is a problem for learners who wish to become part of an English-speaking academic community, for even in a relatively new field such as TESOL, there is simply too much text to be treated in this way—and most of it does not deserve such treatment. This point became dramatically apparent to the participants when they were given their first reading assignment for the course—a review article by myself entitled "The social construction of reading strategies" (Parry 1993). Zhu Xiaowen described how she did this assignment:

> In order to understand the paper, I spent at least four hours reading the 5000-word article four times.... [At first] I decided to read through the whole paper very quickly, making as many guesses as possible. Even this rough reading took me more than one hour.... The second time ... I found it was even more difficult for I suddenly found there were lots of words ... I didn't know, and there were so many theories and researchers I had never come across. So I had to slow

> down and repeatedly look back and forth, figuring out the meanings (translating English into Chinese occasionally), and looking up in the dictionaries. I tried hard to make sure I could read every sentence... However, when I finished the second reading, I was still not sure how the author formed her theory.... As I was reading through [for the third time], I gradually felt there was something lightening my brain... Eventually, I could see how the article was written and organised. I read the article for the fourth time because I wanted to make sure I was not making too many presumptions which would easily result in misunderstandings.

Zhu maintained that she enjoyed the process, but it clearly was not practicable for all the material that I was assigning them; and so, in the second half of her essay, she described how her strategies changed so that she came to depend much more on "guesses and assumptions" and was prepared to skip over "examples and complex syntactic structures".

Wang Kui described a similar change in her reading. She, too, spent four hours on the original assignment, at the end of which, she said, "I found the material had been marked here and there into a mess and my notes had amounted to five pages." But after reading several such articles, she became aware that they followed a regular pattern, which she could use as an aid to understanding; and she also made good use of some general questions that I gave them to guide their reading of research reports, namely: What did the researchers want to know? How did they look for an answer? What did they find? How did they explain their findings? There was a change in her approach to vocabulary too: she read the first article with "dictionary at hand", but she soon found that she did not have time to look up every new word, and so she became more used to making inferences. "This not only saved me a lot of time," she pointed out, "But also helped me get rid of the habit of reading sentence by sentence without an overall idea of the whole article." Best of all, she reported an affective change:

> Three months have passed since the time that I read the paper by Professor Parry. In these three months, I have read about 33 papers and essays about literacy and linguistics. My attitude toward the academic writings has changed before I know how it happens. I no longer feel nervous when I get new reading assignments, no matter how thick they are; I no longer feel frustrated when I cannot understand some words and sentences. Actually, I begin to enjoy the reading because

I get knowledge in my field and some practical methods of doing research.

Not all the participants were as positive as this—at the end of the term some still found academic articles burdensome to read—but it was clear that they were all developing as readers (and, incidentally, as writers too). Moreover, they were intensely aware of what was happening. In instructing me about literacy and language teaching in China they saw where their own and their students' behaviour was coming from; and in analysing their own changing strategies they were getting a clearer idea of what it was that they needed to teach their students, how they could teach them, and what, in the research projects that they would do the next term, they wanted to find out more about.

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13 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING CHINESE-ENGLISH/ENGLISH- CHINESE TRANSLATION TO TERTIARY STUDENTS: THE USE OF 'FOREIGN TRANSLATION THEORIES' FOR 'DOMESTIC' PURPOSES THROUGH S.E.A.S.

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Introduction

At present, the subject of translation between Chinese and English is not taught to secondary students of Hong Kong. Students who are interested in this area could only pursue the study of this subject after they enrol in tertiary institutions.

The translation courses of tertiary institutions emphasize both the theoretical and practical aspects. The latter involves actual translation practices between Chinese and English, the two languages which Hong Kong students have begun to learn since childhood, covering a wide range of areas such as business, legal documentary, scientific and literary writings. As for the former, apart from embracing views advocated by Chinese translators, it also covers theories and principles propounded by western theorists, the most notable being J.C.Catford E.Nida, P. Newmark. Yet in reading the works of these theorists, Hong Kong students are confronted with one great problem — they are unable to fully understand the examples given, because these often involve the use of English which they do know and other languages which they do not, such as French German, Greek.

Moreover, it must be noted that these theories and principles, chiefly formulated for translation between European languages against their own specific backgrounds, are not geared towards translation between Chinese and English. There are in fact, far more differences between these two languages at different levels. These theories and principles, though useful, are not always relevant when they are applied to translation between Chinese and English Thus in introducing them to tertiary students who are initiated into this subject a special methodology has to be devised and adopted.

In this paper, the applicability of the oft-quoted foreign theories and principles will be critically examined, and a theoretical framework for teaching translation between Chinese and English to tertiary students, S.E.A.S., i.e. selection, elucidation, adaptation, and supplementation, will be put forward.

Selection

In the light of the fact that this is the students' first encounter with the subject of translation, they must be familiarized with the basic concepts so as to lay the foundation for the study of this subject, both in the theoretical and practical aspects. To achieve this purpose, discourse of western theories about basic issues central to the discipline of translation should be carefully selected and explained to the students, eg. translatability and notions of translation.

(1) Translatability

Students often have the misconception that everything is translatable as long as they have bilingual dictionaries in hand. This is grounded in their learning habits of the secondary school days. As language learners, they were always asked to find counterparts for English vocabularies in the Chinese language, and vice versa. They could easily do so with the help of bilingual dictionaries, for this was usually restricted to the level of isolated words. Students therefore come to believe that there is a counterpart for every word and consequently everything is translatable.

However, as students pursue the study of translation in tertiary institutions, and are asked, say for example, to translate the following simple folk rhyme, they would be disillusioned. This is because, due to the phonological, lexical, linguistic and cultural differences between Chinese and English, there are so many features in the original which could not be retained.

好六叔，好六舅，
借我六斗六升好綠豆。
到了秋，收了豆，
再還六叔六舅六斗六升好綠豆。

Phonologically, '六斗' (six *dou*) and '綠豆' (green beans) are homonyms in Chinese. The recurring use of these two sounds,coupled with the repetition of the sound '六' (six)/ '綠' (green), altogether ten times, contribute to a smooth flow in the rhythm of the whole rhyme. Yet in the translation process, it is virtually impossible to find a pair of English homonyms to replace '六斗' and '

綠豆', or an English word which has the same sound as '六' and '綠' at the same time.

Lexically, '六斗' (six *dou*) and '六升' (six *sheng*) are units of dry measure for grain used in China. To find a counterpart for this unique Chinese feature in English is asking for the impossible.

Linguistically, lines 1, 2, 4 and 5 all comprise three words. Such neatness in the structures of the lines, again, contributes to the harmonious quality of the rhyme, and is rather typical of Chinese rhymed verses. Nevertheless, in the translation process, this structural pattern could hardly be retained.

Culturally, '六叔' (sixth paternal uncle) and '六舅' (sixth maternal uncle) are kinship terms, so distinctly and accurately defined by the Chinese in the light of the extended family system that even the seniority of the uncle in the family is spelt out. Westerners, on the other hand, more accustomed to the nucleus family system, are less compartmentalized in the use of such kinship terms. The difference in social culture between the Chinese and westerners, as manifested in this instance in the family system, hence renders translation difficult.

The complexity of the question of translatability and untranslatability is overwhelming to the students. An introduction of how the question has been reflected upon by western theorists would be of tremendous help.

In fact, the issue of translatability has a long history which could be dated back to the Romantic period. It gained prominence in the nineteenth century with discussions centred on text translatability, partial translatability and untranslatability (Wilss 1982:28-9). Bassnett-McGuire has given an account of the views of different people, from Catford, Popovič to Mounin (Bassnett-McGuire 1985:32-7). Van den Broeck is right in pointing out that the question of (un)translatability has constituted a topic of great interest. He has further recorded how the question of (un)translatability has been looked at from different angles by the linguists, philosophers and psychoanalyst (Van den Broeck 1992:115-9). An introduction of these views would undoubtedly help students to understand this issue basic to the discipline of translation.

(2) Notions of translation

Books on translation theories and principles are interspersed with notions pertaining to translation — its nature, types, etc.

First, the notion of what translation is about. This has been defined differently. There are theorists such as Savory who has chosen to see translation as an art, or Jacobsen who has chosen to see it as a craft, while others might take it as science (Bassnett-Mcquire: 1985:4). Newmark has endeavoured to draw the line of distinction between translation as an art and science (Newmark: 1984:136-7). Gutt has observed the contradictory views that on the one hand, translation defies scientific investigation because it is an art; and on the other, due to the poor scientific understanding of translation, it has not been studied in a proper scientific manner (Gutt 1991:2).

Second, in regard to types of translation, it is by and large categorized into word-for-word, literal and free translation. Actually, different kinds of classifications have been made throughout the long period of western translation history. As early as in the days of the Roman Empire, Cicero has distinguished between word for word translation and sense for sense translation.Dryden has divided translation into the three types of metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation. Humphrey has categorized translation into three modes, i.e. literalism, free or licentious adaptation, and the just via media (Steiner 1976:236,253-4,263). In the twentieth century, Catford has classified translation into two types: rank-bound and unbounded (Catford 1965:25). Newmark has made distinction between semantic and communicative translation (Newmark 1984:38-56, 62-9).

It is of immense importance to acquaint students with these as exposure to diversified views of theorists would help students gain insight into the intriguing world of translation.

Elucidation

With the laying of the foundation, interesting and thought- provoking ideas of individual theorists could further be introduced to the students. This requires elucidation. For every idea introduced, care must be taken to explain it adequately so as to ensure a correct and full understanding. Nida's dynamic equivalence and Newmark's semantic and communicative translation are quoted as examples.

(1) Nida's dynamic equivalence

The essence of this theory lies in that the receptors should respond to the message in the receptor language in more or less the same manner as the receptors in the source language do (Nida 1969:24). Nida's theory of equivalence has been highly valued by people who deal with translation

between Chinese and English. There is a whole Chinese volume introducing his theories, mainly adapted and translated from his book *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, and with reference made to his other works as well (Tan 1984) Certainly, Nida is quite right in pointing out the importance of taking into account the receptors' response to the translated message. Yet the equivalence in response he proposes could only be achieved when it is clearly known who the receptors are. For Nida himself, he knows very well who his targeted receptors of the New Testament are, namely, the man in the street as well as the man in the congregation (Nida 1964:170). This naturally enables him to work out a translation which could produce an equivalent response. However, for translation work in general, there are occasions when the receptors of the translated text are not defined. Under such circumstances this theory could not be brought into play. So when this theory is introduced to students, its function has to be correctly and clearly elucidated, and its limitation has to be pointed out. Though Nida himself claims that the scope of his translation theory is all-inclusive (Nida 1964:ix), students have to be warned that they should not think that it can be universally applied to all situations, irrespective of the types of translation involved. Indeed, Delisle is right in suggesting that 'The Theory and Practice of Bible Translation' could more aptly describe Nida's works (Logan & Creery 1980 :39).

(2) Newmark's semantic and communicative translation

Newmark has categorized translation into two types i.e. semantic and communicative translation. Semantic translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original, while communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that on the readers of the original. He has quoted examples to illustrate the use of these two kinds of translation (Newmark 1984:39 & 54). But because the source language of his examples given is often European, Hong Kong students are not able to truly understand the vital differences between these two kinds of translation.

As a result, when Newmark's theory is introduced, it has to be fully elucidated with the help of examples using the Chinese and English language so as to reinforce the students' understanding. Newmark has given the two examples of 'Bissiger Hund' and 'Frisch angestrichen!' and explained that if these are semantically translated into 'Biting dog!' and 'Recently painted!', the target readers would not understand them. Therefore communicative translation should be used to render these into English, hence 'Beware of the dog!' and 'Wet paint!'. The same kind of differentiation must also be made and elucidated clearly to Hong Kong students. Take the two expressions quoted as examples. If they are semantically translated into Chinese as '小心狗隻' and '濕油' respectively, they would sound very odd to target readers, whereas the

communicative translation of '內有惡犬' and '油漆未乾' would be more natural and idiomatic.

Newmark has remarked that communicative translation is applied to the great majority of texts, among which is non-personal correspondence (Newmark 1984:44), but he has not elaborated on this. Since this is also a valid observation when applied to translation between Chinese and English, it must be ensured that examples are quoted to bring this home to the students. The striking difference in the opening and ending of Chinese and English official letters should be highlighted. English letters begin with the standard phrase of 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Mr so-and-so' and end with the standard phrase 'Yours faithfully' or 'Yours sincerely'. These sound very natural to English readers. But if these are semantically translated into '親愛的先生' or '親愛的某先生'and '你最忠誠的' or '你眞摯的' respectively, they would be jarring to the target readers. Obviously semantic translation is definitely out of place here, as the effect it produces on the original and target readers is markedly different.

Consideration should instead be given to how target readers would begin and end their letters. For the opening, they would simply write '某先生' (Mr So-and-so) in a matter-of-fact manner, without any emotive sense as contained in the word '親愛'. As for the ending, they do not have an expression which corresponds to that of 'Yours faithfully' or 'Yours sincerely' in function. And it is this Chinese way of opening and ending a letter which students should take into full account and use in translating English letters, for the sake of producing on the target readers an effect as close as possible to that on the original readers.

Adaptation

There are instances when views of western theorists, though well worth noting, do not have obvious relevance or direct applicability to translation between Chinese and English. Under such circumstances, adaptation could be a useful bridging device to turn what seems irrelevant and pointless to something relevant and enlightening. The following two cases of Finlay's faux amis and Catford's category shifts show how adaptation could be made.

(1) Finlay's faux amis (false friends)

Finlay has cautioned translators to be careful about certain words in the European languages which, despite their resemblance in appearance to words of other languages, have entirely different meanings. This is what is meant by faux amis. He has quoted a series of examples for illustration, for example, the Dutch word 'vertragen' means to slow down while the same word in German

means to endure and bear; the German word 'also' means 'therefore' and by no means shares the meaning of the English word 'also' (Finlay 1971:112-4).

Hong Kong students are in no danger of falling into the traps of the faux amis quoted by Finlay since in the first place they do not know any European languages. Nevertheless, it must be made known to them that such faux amis also exist in the Oriental languages, namely in the Chinese and Japanese languages. The wordings are identical, but the meanings in the two languages greatly differ. For example, the expression '眞面目' means 'the true features, true look' in Chinese, whereas in Japanese it means 'serious' (majime); the expression '丈夫' means 'husband' in Chinese, whereas in Japanese it means 'sturdy, firm' (jōbu); the expression '留守' means 'stay and guard' in Chinese, whereas in Japanese it means 'absence, away from home' (rusu). Students have to be cautioned that whenever they have to tackle a text which contains or refers to expressions as used by the Japanese, they must be particularly on the alert and take extra care to look up the real meanings of the expressions.

Apart from this parallel between the European and Oriental languages with regard to the existence of faux amis, this principle could, moreover, be adapted to serve a new purpose in translation between Chinese and English. Faux amis, basically, refers to the same word which has different meanings in different European languages. In Chinese, the reverse may sometimes hold true. There are cases when the same thing may be expressed in totally different and unrelated wordings according to the use in different places. The main concern here is directed at the use of Chinese in Hong Kong and Mainland China. It is not difficult to substantiate the view that Chinese, as used in Hong Kong, differs from that used in China in the use of certain vocabulary items. There are plenty of examples. For instance, the simple English word 'policeman' has different renditions in Hong Kong and China. The former will call these people '警察', while the latter will address them as '公安'. A similar case could be found in the translation of the English word 'tomato'. In Hong Kong the object is called '番茄' whereas in China it is known as '西紅柿' . What women in Hong Kong call '唇膏' (lipstick) is known as '口紅' in China. These are examples showing how two different expressions in Chinese could actually be referring to the same thing. They could in fact be considered as non-identical twins. Students must be taught to note the existence of such twins in the Chinese language as used in Hong Kong and China. They must also be aware of the problem of the targeted readership, say in Hong Kong or China, because it is only with a precise knowledge of this that they are able to make the correct choice of words in their translated text.

(2) Catford's category shifts

Catford primarily looks at translation from a linguistic point of view. Having established that there are five units on the rank scale in English grammar — sentence, clause, group, word, morpheme, he postulates category shifts in great detail (Catford 1965:8, 75-82).

As the Chinese language has a different syntactic structure, and consequently does not tally with his five units on the rank scale, again adaptation has to be made. For example, the structure of relative clauses, which is one prominent feature of the English language introduced by relative pronouns such as 'who', 'which', 'whom', are absent in the Chinese language. So what Catford advocates could not be adopted wholesale. Still, part of it could be adapted and applied to translation between Chinese and English. The following endeavours to show how the Chinese language copes with situations in which there are no counterparts for the English structures.

Going back to the use of the relative clause in the English language, it is helpful to quote an example.

> The company, which has just signed an agreement with the consortium, is going to set up a number of branch offices.

It is obvious that the 'which' clause here is an adjectival clause. Due to the lack of a similar structure in the Chinese language, most students tend to put the meaning of the 'which' clause before the subject in Chinese, hence the translation reads as '剛跟財團簽訂合約的公司，正要成立多間分行'. But with such a lengthy subject, this sentence sounds clumsy. To maintain smoothness in the translation, the 'which' clause itself could be translated into an independent and complete Chinese sentence and the whole translation would read as: '公司 剛跟財團簽訂合約，正要成立多間分行'.

Another structure which is commonly used in the English language but conspicuously absent in the Chinese language is prepositional phrases, eg.

> With the opening of the clinic by the charity organisation, the medical services in this district have been improved.

The prepositional phrase here has similarly to be turned into a complete sentence, if the translation is to read smoothly. Hence, '慈善機構開設診所後，本區的醫療服務得以改善'.

In short, it is true that structures such as relative clause and prepositional phrase do not exist in the Chinese language, and this defies Catford's classification of the five units. Yet his concept of category shifts could still be adapted and applied in great flexibility to serve a new purpose in translation between Chinese and English.

Supplementation

Where a certain point is concerned, western theories and principles could at times be applied wholly and directly to translation between Chinese and English. But because of the uniqueness of the Chinese language, those theories and principles may not suffice to cover everything essential. In this case, supplementation has to be made. The techniques of transliteration and translation of figures of speech are quoted here as examples. There is still another area which requires supplementation. This refers to cases where a concept or term which has a 'foreign' origin has been borrowed into the Chinese translation circle and bandied about. Supplementary information on how the concept or term has been used in the place of its origin has to be provided to students so that they could have enough data to make well-informed judgement. The concept of equivalence is a case in point here.

(1) Techniques of transliteration and translation of figures of speech

Transliteration

Catford has outlined the processes of transliteration (Catford 1965:66) which could duly be applied to translation between Chinese and English. The name of the former American President, Carter, could be used for illustration. The first step Catford proposes is to replace the SL (source language) letters by SL phonological units. In the case of the name 'Carter', it is represented by the phonetic symbols of 'ka: tə. The second step is to translate the SL phonological units into TL (target language) phonological units. The phonetic symbols of 'ka: tə' here could be matched by the Chinese phonetic alphabets of 'ka te'. The third step, then, is to convert the TL phonological units into TL graphological units. 'ka te' could hence be converted into '卡特' . And this is how Carter is known to people in Mainland China and Hong Kong.

However, attention must be drawn to the fact that despite its relevance, Catford's transliteration system is by no means the one and only method used. People in Mainland China tend to adopt this method. But in Hong Kong, the whole point of transliteration must be looked at from a local point of view.

Instances abound whereby names of expatriate civil servants in Hong Kong are not transliterated in accordance with Catford's system. Instead, their translated names, in ten cases out of ten, do not sound at all like their original English names. Their names are represented by three Chinese characters, usually with auspicious meaning, just like those of most Chinese people. For example, one could not see close phonological resemblance between the original name of the present governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, and his Chinese name '彭定康' (peng ding kang), but one could readily detect the sense of auspiciousness, '定' meaning 'stability' and '康' 'well-being'. Localized cases like these must be highlighted to students as supplementary information when the point of transliteration is dwelt upon, because apart from relevant theories, it is equally important for them to know how this is put into actual practice in Hong Kong where auspiciousness of the characters chosen invariably takes precedence over phonological approximation.

There is, still, one more point which must be stressed to students for supplementation. Students must be cautious of the romanized names of Koreans and Japanese. They would err if they follow either Catford's transliteration system or the practice prevalent in Hong Kong's civil service. They should learn that both Koreans and Japanese use Chinese characters too and every romanized name has corresponding prescribed Chinese characters. For example, the romanized name of Kim Il Sung, the deceased ruler of North Korea, should be correctly presented by the Chinese characters of '金日成', and the name of Murayama Tomiichi, the present Japanese prime minister, should be presented as '村山富市'. To avoid any great mistake, students should be advised to take heed of these and make use of relevant biographical dictionaries.

Translation of figures of speech

Newmark has devoted one whole chapter to discussing the translation of metaphors, a type of figure of speech. He has put forward a number of translation procedures: reproducing the same image in the TL (target language); replacing the image in the SL (source language) with a standard TL image; translation of metaphor by simile; translation of metaphor (or simile) by simile plus sense; conversion of metaphor to sense; deletion; same metaphor combined with sense (Newmark 1984:84-96).

Nida has slightly touched on the translation of figurative expressions. He has propounded three ways with which figurative expressions could be transferred: shifts from figurative to nonfigurative usage; shifts from one type of figurative expression to another figurative expression; nonfigurative expressions changed to figurative ones (Nida 1969:107).

These come in useful for translation between Chinese and English as well since both languages are rich in such expressions. It must, moreover, be underlined that in Chinese, there is an additional type of figures of speech unique to itself, which merits students' attention when this point is tackled. This is the use of 'xiehouyu' (歇後語) .

'Xiehouyu' is composed of two parts. The first part, clearly stated, is descriptive; the second part, mostly unstated, conveys the actual meaning. In fact, it is a common practice that only the first part is stated when 'xiehouyu' is used, as the second part will be understood without ado.

However, difficulty arises when this has to be translated. To use any one of the translation methods proposed by Newmark or Nida as described earlier on is inadequate because this will mean that only the first part is translated or the sense of the first part is tackled. But the key meaning implicit in the second part, which is not stated, will be omitted, and this fails to capture the essence of the 'xiehouyu'. For the benefit of the target language readers, both parts should be translated. For example, when the 'xiehouyu"泥菩薩過江 ' is translated as 'the clay idol fords the river', target readers will not be able to grasp its implicit meaning, so the implicit meaning of '自身難保' i.e. 'hardly able to protect oneself, let alone helping other people' must be included in the translation. Also when another example '啞子吃黃蓮' ('the dumb person tastes the bitter herbs') is translated, the implicit meaning of the second part '有苦自己知' ('unable to give vent to one's bitter feelings') should be rendered as well. Thus in translating 'xiehouyu', extra attention is required to probe into the implicit meaning contained in the second part and convey it in explicit terms in the target language too. This is quite unlike the translation methods proposed by both Newmark or Nida in tackling figures of speech, and should be pointed out to students as supplementation.

(2) Concept of equivalence

This concept, first propounded by western theorists, has constituted the main concern of people dealing with translation between Chinese and English. When Wilss' book *The Science of Translation: Problems and Methods*, was translated into Chinese, only the first seven chapters were included for these are considered to be more important. The last chapter included is on 'Translation Equivalence' (Zhu & Zhou 1989). In the postscript of their book *Explorations in Equal Value Translation* published in 1990, the authors wrote that the representative works of overseas contemporary translation theories include Catford's *A Linguistics Theory of Translation* and Nida's *Towards a Science of Translation* (Wu & Li 1990). In their book which revolves around the topic of equal value and equivalence, they have attempted to discuss translation

between Chinese and English on the basis of the concept of equivalence, which they have borrowed from the western world.

In recent years, the concept of equivalence has been in vogue among Chinese translation theorists. As translation between Chinese and English is practised in Hong Kong, it is worthwhile presenting students with the picture of the translation world of contemporary China. Yet it is equally important to scrutinize how the concept of equivalence, accorded with such great importance by Chinese translators, is treated by their western counterparts. To strike a balanced view, students should be briefed on the updated account of what happens in the west so that they could be in a better position to make comparison and judgement.

In fact, so far as the concept of equivalence is concerned, the western translation world is rife with contradictory views. This concept is actually not a newly evolved issue but one which has a long history of 2000 years, as pointed out by Wilss (Wilss 1982:134). Yet debates over its definition and function are still ongoing.

Svejcer has recognised that equivalence is a key issue in translation theory, but this is an issue with which linguists seem to have agreed to disagree (Svejcer 981:321).

Wilss has remarked that no other concept in translation theory has produced as many contradictory views as the concept of translation equivalence, and led to as many attempts to arrive at a comprehensive definition as this concept. (Wilss 1982:134).

Snell-Hornby has attempted to distinguish between 'equivalence' and 'Gleichwertigkeit', and further stated that equivalence, at most, exists at the level of terminology and nomenclature (Snell-Hornby 1988:17-8,106).

Pöchhacker has summed up the various views put forward by different people and arrived at the conclusion that this concept of equivalence is vague and poorly defined (Pöchhacker 1989:566).

Gutt has summarized the different frames of reference proposed by different people: Kade's approach at the content level, Koller's 'textual effect', Nida and Taber's 'audience response', and Koller's five frames of reference of denotation, connotation, textual norms, pragmatics and form (Gutt 1991:10).

Hewson and Martin have commented that this concept is basically fuzzy which contributes to an unclear understanding of Nida's dynamic and forma equivalences (Hewson & Martin 1991·21).

Baker has divided her book into different chapters, each on a particular type of equivalence — equivalence at word level, equivalence above word leve grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence,pragmatic equivalence, but she has also stated explicitly in the introduction that the term of equivalence is usec for the sake of convenience and it does not have any theoretical status. She is moreover, of the opinion that equivalence could be achieved to a certain exten but it can be influenced by linguistic or cultural factors (Baker 1992:5-6).

Pym has come up with a new interpretation for this concept. He has taken equivalence as an economic term and hence defined it in terms of exchange value. Equivalence is expressed as relationship between texts which will be determined by the translator who is compared to a silent trader (Pym 1992:44,46).

As the above account shows, the definition for equivalence is still now a bone of contention in the western translation world. As a result, this concept is clouded by these highly controversial views. Students should be updated with the latest development of this concept in the west, especially in the light of the fact that this concept is attached with such great significance by contemporary Chinese theorists.

Conclusion

With its long history, western theories and principles serve as an invaluable wealth of materials for study and research. But it must be noted that they are not all directly applicable to translation between Chinese and English. Nor are they comprehensive enough to embrace everything that is essential when translation between Chinese and English is of the main concern. All 'foreign translation theories', if put to 'domestic' use, call for special and meticulously designed treatment. However, the pedagogy of teaching of translation in this area is seriously underresearched. The theoretical framework of S.E.A.S., that is selection, elucidation, adaptation and supplementation, put forward in this paper may serve as an experimental basis for translation teaching and related research.

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14 ORAL MISCUE ANALYSIS OF CHINESE READERS READING IN CHINESE

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Introduction

According to Goodman and Burke (1972), miscue analysis provides both qualitative and quantitative information about reading processes. Unlike an ordinary diagnostic quantitative analysis in which all errors have equal weight, miscue analysis treats deviations as qualitatively cued by the language of the writer and the thought a reader brings to the text to get at meaning. Through miscue analysis, it has been suggested that children learning their first language use their knowledge of the graphophonic, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic components of the language to extract meaning from written material (Goodman & Burke, 1972).

Miscue analysis has been used by many reading researchers in both L1 and L2 reading and has provided insightful information about reading strategies (Barrera, 1981; Clarke, 1979; Connor, 1981; Cziko, 1980; Devine, 1981; Goodman & Burke, 1972; Hudelson, 1981; Miramontes, 1990; Rigg, 1988; Romatowski, 1981; Zhou, 1988). The results of these oral miscue studies support the notion that reading is a psycholinguistic process by which readers engage in sampling linguistic cues.

So far, not many systematic analyses of Chinese reading behavior have been conducted using a process-oriented approach like miscue analysis. The few oral miscue studies that investigated Chinese readers reading Chinese text seemed to support Goodman's psycholinguistic model. Tien (1983) analyzed 10 adult Chinese readers' oral miscues and concluded that: (1) as far as the basic reading process is concerned, no fundamental differences between readers of English and Chinese were found; (2) the miscues produced by Chinese readers with high graphic similarity tend to show high semantic acceptability. This result can be attributed to the characteristics of a logographic writing system. (3) Chinese readers produced a set of miscues which are high in graphic similarity and semantic acceptability but very low in sound similarity. A more recent study by Chang, Hung and Tzeng (1992) found both disabled and normal Chinese elementary school children used various language cues in oral language when reading in Chinese. The same study also found the use of graphic cues to be more prominent than sound cues. These results prove to be

consistent with miscues of English speakers and suggest a universal pattern of reading process.

Other oral miscue studies of Chinese by English speaking subjects have been conducted by Hayes (1987) and Sergent (1990). Sergent's (1990) analysis of miscues made by readers of two different L2 proficiency groups shows that the proportion of omissions declined but the proportion of all the other miscue types increased significantly as readers' proficiency in Chinese developed. The same study also showed that L2 readers of Chinese at both proficiency levels were more prone to use purely graphic constraints than any other constraints. This result is consistent with the finding of Hayes (1987) that L2 readers of Chinese are more likely to rely on visual processing to hold characters in short-term memory.

This predominant use of graphic constraints appears to be characteristic not only of the readers in these two studies, but also in other miscue studies of L2 reading of alphabetic languages (McLeod & McLaughlin, 1986; Miramontes, 1985). Following the same line of thought, this present study examined the miscues produced by Chinese readers in reading Chinese to test if Tien's and Chang et al's findings can be substantiated.

Research Design

A. Participants

Forty-one monolingual Chinese primary school children and 13 adults were recruited from two towns in Taiwan. A questionnaire was used to elicit information about each subject to ensure that his/her knowledge of English was limited enough to be categorized as monolingual.

B. Materials

The school children recruited were asked to read an article from a standard textbook to be used a semester later. A narration of 365 characters (268 words) and an exposition of 523 characters (328 words) were used for Grade 3 and Grade 6 children respectively. The thirteen adults in this study were asked to read an article, taken from a widely-read new magazine, of 486 characters (298 words) about the economic and diplomatic relations between Taiwan and France.

C. Data Collection

Each subject was instructed to read the chosen material aloud and be ready to retell as much as they could of the content of the material. Every effort was

made to keep the retelling process an unaided one. Prompts like "and then what happened" and "anything else" only occurred as a monitoring device when subjects faltered. No probes that might lead subjects beyond their own understanding were given.

D. Miscue Marking and Coding

The miscues collected were marked on the typescript and then coded on a modified coding form similar to Goodman et al.'s (1987) Reading Miscue Inventory Coding sheet. The audiotaped oral reading and summaries were listened to at least twice before being coded on the coding sheets. All the marking and coding were done twice by the researcher on separate occasions with at least a two-week lapse of time.

Only the following were coded as miscues on the coding sheet: substitutions (including reversals), omissions (including uncorrected partials), insertions, and intonation shifts. In the case of Chinese, some changes motivated by the nature of the language include (1) treating uncorrected partials as substitutions at character level for multi-character words or compounds, and (2) replacing intonation shifts with tone shifts, a more prominent feature in Chinese.

The identified miscues were then analyzed according to the following six categories described in RMI (Goodman et al., 1987): (1) syntactic acceptability, (2) semantic acceptability, (3) meaning change, (4) correction, (5) graphic similarity, and (6) sound similarity. Two other categories, meaning construction and grammatical relationships, were also included. Graphic and sound similarities were judged according to Chern's (1993) study.

E. Scoring Retellings

Goodman and Burke's point system, like their RMI guidelines, was again adopted in this study to grade recalled summaries. All the three passages used in this study were analyzed following the retelling guidelines specified in Goodman et al (1987).

Each protocol was read by four native speakers of Chinese. To check inter-rater reliability of the four raters, the SPSS statistical package was used to compute the correlation coefficients between scores given by different raters. Other statistical analyses included t-test, one-way ANOVA and SNK multiple range test to see if results differed significantly between groups.

Results of Analyses

Based on the results of correlation analysis, each child's retelling score was calculated by averaging the scores of the four raters. Individual adult's summary score was calculated by averaging scores given by three of the raters.

The retelling scores, reading speed, and scores related to meaning construction, grammatical, graphic, and sound relations as well as the number of miscues per hundred words (MPHW) collected from the three groups of Chinese readers in this study are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Overall Performance of Oral Reading by the Three Groups of Subjects

Variables	Grade 3(n=19)		Grade 6(n=19)		Adults(n=12)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Retell	46.93	21.93	20.41	6.54	16.57	12.27
ReadSpeed (WPM)[1]	100.57	19.12	93.85	19.91	131.68	12.67
RetelTime (sec.)	82.42	33.41	86.74	36.91	94.50	62.97
MPHW[2]	3.72	2.55	4 77	2.66	1.38	1.31
Meaning Construction %						
No Loss	76.16	17.60	39.00	21.15	61.83	37.21
Part.Loss	16.32	15.45	21.84	16.29	22.83	34.20
Loss	7.53	9.78	39.00	19.35	15.33	23.28
Grammatical relations %						
Strength	71.37	19.12	52.37	17.58	74.42	32.15
Partial	4.79	9.20	17.05	13.58	0.67	2.31
Over-correction	16.63	15.02	8.05	9.04	8.33	19.46
Weakness	7.11	11.34	22.42	14.48	16.58	22.54
Graphic relations %						
High	19.11	16.89	36.16	18.79	62.77	44.72
Some	55.58	17.30	41.05	14.17	10.00	14.47
None	24.84	18.54	22.79	13.71	27.23	38.17
Sound relations %						
High	28.68	23.12	45.26	21.22	62.77	44.72
Some	59.32	20.82	39.53	19.25	10.00	14.47
None	12.00	15.57	15.16	11.41	27.23	38.17

[1] WPM = words per minute
[2] MPHW = miscues per hundred words

Table 1 shows that retelling scores are generally very low for all three groups of readers. Only Grade 3 children received an average of over 40, a minimum score to qualify for "highly to moderately effective reading" according to Goodman and Burke (1972). For Grade 6 children and adults, the retelling scores were discouragingly low (both below 25 points), categorizing them as ineffective users of reading strategies.

Where reading speed is concerned, Grade 3 and Grade 6 children were not significantly different from each other. Adults read significantly faster than both groups of school children, $F(2,47)=17.10$, $p < 0.05$, even though they generally commented that reading aloud was an unnatural practice for them. It appeared that older subjects spent more time on retelling, however, no significant difference was found between any two groups in this respect.

Table 1 also shows that the youngest children had the highest percentage of miscues without meaning loss and the lowest percentage of loss in meaning among the three groups. According to RMI 1972 procedures, readers with highly effective use of strategies should be able to reconstruct meaning with no loss at least 60% of time when they miscue. It is clearly seen from Table 1 that only Grade 3 and adult groups were highly effective users of reading strategies, with the sixth graders in this study being only moderately effective in their use of strategies.

With respect to grammatical relations, both Grade 3 and adult groups were able to keep at least 70% of their miscues completely grammatical, while the sixth graders were only able to do so with about half of their miscues. Also, the youngest children in this study, the third graders, had the highest percentage of miscues that were overcorrected when they read. This seemed to suggest that younger readers attended to word accuracy more than the two groups of older readers.

At lexical levels, both Grade 3 and Grade 6 children produced significantly more miscues that were phonetically related than those that were graphically related. Adult readers, on the other hand, produced miscues that had the same value graphically and phonetically. This observation is further confirmed from the paired t-test results shown in Table 2.

Table 2
t-test Results of Graphic and Sound Relations of Groups

Subject groups	Graphic and Sound Relations					
	High Similarity			No Similarity		
	Graph %	Sound %	p-value	Graph %	Sound %	p-value
Grade3	19.11	28.68	0.031	24.84	12.00	0.006
Grade6	36.16	45.26	0.001	22.79	15.16	0.003
Adults	62.77	62.77	1.000	27.23	27.23	1.000

To explore the reason why adults' miscues have the same phonetic and graphic value, types of miscues made by the 12 adult subjects were checked. It was found that of the total 50 miscues made by these subjects, 28% were insertions and 26% were omissions. Since insertions and omissions involved one absent element in either ER or OR, no graphic or sound relations could be assessed. All of the 23 cases (46%) of substitution miscues were produced at compound word level and OR's shared some identical characters with their corresponding ER's. They were all given the same value phonetically and graphically according to the criteria set up in Chern's 1993. Table 3 summarizes the types of miscues and their frequencies produced by the three groups of subjects in this study.

Table 3
Frequencies and Percentages of Types of Miscues Produced by Groups

Types of miscues	Grade 3	Grade 6	Adults
Omission	61 (32%)	2 (17%)	13 (26%)
Insertion	27 (14%)	22 (7%)	14 (28%)
Substitution	94 (50%)	226 (76%)	23 (46%)
Tone Shift	8 (4%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total Miscues	190	301	50

Of the 226 substitution miscues made by 6th graders, 22 were reversals. No reversed miscues were produced by subjects from Grade 3 and adult groups. Grade 6 children also made 18 miscues that involved the incorrect choice of

sound from a reservoir of two or more possible pronunciations of a single character; however, there was not enough evidence to suggest that these were the idiolects of these speakers. Reversals and the wrong choice of sounds are examples of miscues at compound word level. The fact that these types of miscues only surfaced in 6th graders' miscues will be discussed in the next section.

To get a clearer picture of the performance of the three groups of subjects in meaning construction, grammatical relations, graphic and sound similarity, a three-point scoring system was employed in each of the above four categories. A score of 0 was assigned to miscues that resulted in grammatical weakness, meaning loss or no similarity in graphic and sound; 1 was given to those resulting in partial meaning loss, partial grammatical strength, overcorrection or some graphic and sound similarity; and 2 was assigned to miscues with no meaning loss, grammatical strength or high graphic and sound similarity. Scores accumulated from all miscues produced were calculated for each subject and the mean computed for each group (Table 4).

Table 4
ANOVA of Scores on Meaning Construction/Grammatical Relations/Graphic Relations/Sound Relations Across Groups

Variables	Mean Scores			P-Value
	Grade 3	Grade 6	Adults	
Meaning Construction	1.69	1.00	1.49	0.00
Grammatical Relations	1.64	1.30	1.54	0.02
Graphic Similarity	0.95	1.13	1.21	0.26
Sound Similarity	1.17	1.30	1.24	0.64

Table 4 again shows that Grade 3 children had the highest score on meaning construction and grammatical relations and the lowest score on graphic and sound relations of the three groups. Though the three groups differed significantly in meaning construction and grammatical relations, they were not different in their use of graphic and sound relations. There was however a

slight increase of scores on graphic and sound similarity among older readers in this study.

The observation made earlier that children attended more to phonetic than graphic in their oral reading has been substantiated in the t-test results shown in Table 5.

Table 5
t-test Results of Graphic and Sound Differences Within Groups

Groups	Mean Scores		p-value
	Graphic Relations	Sound Relations	
Grade 3	0.95	1 17	0 01
Grade 6	1.13	1 30	0.00
Adults	1.12	1.24	0 55

The quality of miscues, the percentages of syntactically and semantically acceptable miscues, miscues that caused meaning change and miscues with corrections were tabulated and presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Group Percentages of Syntactically, Semantically
Acceptable Miscues, Miscues Causing Meaning Change andCorrected Miscues

	Grade 3	Grade 6	Adult
Total Miscues	190	301	50
Syntactically acceptable miscues	151 (79%)	186 (62%)	37 (74%)
Semantically acceptable miscues	135 (71%)	125 (42%)	36 (72%)
Miscues with meaning change	11 (6%)	55 (18%)	7 (14%)
Corrected miscues	64 (34%)	66 (22%)	9 (18%)

It is clearly shown from Table 6 that all subjects produced more syntactically acceptable miscues than semantically acceptable ones. Grade 3 children were less likely to produce miscues that caused meaning change than Grade 6 and adult groups. Percentages of corrected miscues decreased among readers as they got older.

The patterns of miscues corrected were further examined by looking at the amount of contextually acceptable and unacceptable miscues that were corrected by each group of subjects. Table 7 shows that both Grade 3 and adult groups produced more miscues that were contextually acceptable, i.e., both syntactically and semantically acceptable, than those that were not.

For all subjects, a major portion of acceptable miscues were not corrected, with younger readers in this study correcting more than the older readers. There is a linear decreasing amount of corrected acceptable miscues from Grade 3, Grade 6 to adults.

Table 7
The Correction Pattern of Contextually Acceptable and Unacceptable Miscues

	Grade 3	Grade 6	Adults
Total miscues	190	301	50
Contextually acceptable miscues	135 (71%)	125 (42%)	36 (72%)
Corrected	35 (26%)	24 (19%)	4 (11%)
Uncorrected	100 (74%)	101 (81%)	32 (89%)
Contextually unacceptable miscues	55 (29%)	176 (58%)	14 (28%)
Corrected	29 (53%)	42 (24%)	5 (36%)
Uncorrected	26 (47%)	134 (76%)	9 (64%)

For contextually unacceptable miscues, only Grade 3 children corrected more than half of this type of error; both Grade 6 and adult subjects left most of the unacceptable miscues uncorrected.

The results from the above statistical analysis can be summarized as follows:

1. Retelling scores were discouragingly low for participants in this study. On average, none of the groups reported over 50% of the content read.
2. The youngest readers in this study, the third graders, were the most effective readers: they had the highest retelling score, the lowest percentage

of miscues that caused meaning loss, and they produced the lowest percentage of miscues that caused grammatical weakness of all three groups. However, they had the highest percentage of miscues that were overcorrected, suggesting more attention to word accuracy by this group of readers.

3. Both third and sixth graders produced more miscues that were phonetically related than those that were graphically related to the printed words.
4. Grade 3 and Grade 6 children miscued about every 20 to 25 words; whereas adults made far fewer miscues (about every 73 words) than children.
5. The number of miscues produced, however, did not correlate with retelling scores.
6. All subjects produced more syntactically acceptable miscues than semantically acceptable ones.

Discussion

Results from the quantitative analysis of this study are further discussed in this section. Oral reading speed of Chinese readers is compared with that of readers of English. The fact that retelling scores were generally low is discussed by looking at the textual factors of the materials selected as well as the sociocultural factors from a Chinese perspective.

With reference to reading speed, most reports are based on silent reading and not much has been documented on native English reader's oral reading speed.

Zhou (1988) studied the oral reading of three Chinese-American monoliterate English readers and found that these three American university students read 153 English words per minute in their oral reading. This finding matches the reading speed as measured by the number of Chinese words read per minute (WPM) by the adult subjects in this study (131.7 words per minute) and suggests that Chinese words, being equivalent to English words, are the units of processing in reading. This finding also justifies the use of words, rather than characters, as the basic unit of analysis in this study.

According to the manual for the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability-Revised, a normal nine-year old child reads aloud between 64 and 74 words per minute and a 12-year old between 97 and 103 words (Neale, 1988). Based on these norms of reading rate from English speaking children, the Chinese third graders in this study, reading 100.57 words per minute, were slightly faster than their English counterparts; and the sixth graders, who read an average of 93.85 words per minute, were similar to the English speaking children in oral reading.

The decreasing retelling scores with age and the higher percentage of miscues with reading loss among older subjects in this study seemed counter-intuitive. However, the fact that no other device was used to assess comprehension disallowed the conclusion that the older the Chinese readers became, the worse they were at getting at the meaning of the text. Other factors like attitude towards the task and practice effect gained from classroom practice need to be taken into consideration.

Oral reading is commonly practiced in Chinese classrooms. A Chinese teacher often calls on a student or the whole group to read aloud. It is believed by Chinese educators that reading aloud in unison or at the children's own pace encourages children to attend to what they read and thus actually aids comprehension (Hudson-Ross & Dong, 1990). This classroom practice effect partially explains why oral reading is generally accurate for all subjects in this study as reflected in the low miscue percentages produced across the board. It, however, does not offer any explanation why comprehension as reflected by retelling is so low, which is contrary to Chinese educators' belief.

That comprehension is hardly reflected in retelling may also have to do with the reserved nature of the Chinese people in general as well as the emphasis in their education. It is especially problematic to equate quantity reported in retelling with that of comprehension for Chinese readers. Traditionally, personal feelings are considered as improper in public settings and Chinese classrooms are therefore very impersonal. Children's personal response to any classroom content is not sought in lessons. As a result, though recitation of poetry and classical work is common, a summary of a story read is rarely elicited by teachers. Consequently, while a practice effect may contribute to the overall accuracy of oral reading, the lack of it may explain the poor performance in retelling.

To look for other explanations for decreasing performance in retelling among older subjects in this study, text complexity is examined. Some aspects of the text that affect readers' recall are (1) passage length, (2) density of information, (3) density of new information, (4) the extent to which the information was presented, i.e., explicit or implicit, and (5) the structure of the text (Johnston, 1983). The grade 6 reading passage used in this study is the longest. Being written in an informative expository format, it also has richer information than the one for third graders, which is a narrative with a story outline. The clear chronological and spatial order of this story also facilitated information processing and subsequent retrieval of story content.

Though both passages for school children in this study are explicit in nature, research has found that when recall of narrative text is contrasted with that of

expository text, elementary students are less successful with expository material (Berkowitz & Taylor, 1981). The greater conceptual density and more unfamiliar information contained in expository texts may have contributed to the difficulty of recall as well as the poor performance in other areas found among Grade 6 children in this study.

The adults' reading passage is also explicitly written. However, the more sophisticated readers in this study inferred a lot, adding their personal touches in their oral summaries. Of the 12 subjects studied, 6 provided mostly their personal opinions when asked to summarize. They were also more selective in choosing what to report and what to omit. Often times, one point was elaborated and the rest ignored in their recall protocols. These readers appeared to interpret retelling as commenting on the passage.

Due to the different system employed in the written language, Chinese children have less opportunity to relate what they already know in the oral language to the written form. One of the common activities in a Chinese language classroom is to show children how to analyze a character by breaking it down into smaller parts to look for meaning and sound components (Hudson-Ross & Dong, 1990). Therefore, like their English counterparts, Chinese children also guess meaning of a character by its meaning component. The sound component in a Chinese character is, however, not so reliable and more often than not leads to mispronunciation. This can be exemplified by the most commonly miscued word in the Grade 6 reading passage used in this study, "lin-lie," meaning "extremely cold." Out of the 11 children who faltered at this word, 8 hesitated and finally pronounced it incorrectly and 3 children skipped it completely in oral reading. However, when asked what the word meant, except for two children who refused to venture any guesses, the rest of the children assigned a correct meaning to it, reporting that they recognized the semantic radical for "cold."

When encountering an unknown word in oral reading, a Chinese reader faces a choice of either assigning a sound to it based on the phonetic component, if any, in the word, or skipping it completely in reading. However, since readers who are fooled by the phonetic compounded are usually humorously referred to as "white-word expert," meaning, "wrong word expert" or "expert who has effort in vain" (Hudson-Ross & Dong, 1990), Chinese children tend to choose not to sound out an unknown word rather than fail and be ridiculed.

While guessing character meaning from its semantic component is encouraged, guessing the sound of it is obviously discouraged. This emphasis on accuracy is reflected in the design of the language textbooks. New characters are learned through context. They are also listed together with their phonetic

symbols, if not already included in the text, at the bottom of the page containing them. For Mandarin Books 1 to 4, the texts for Grades 1 and 2, accuracy of writing is further enhanced by demonstrating the writing sequence of each stroke for all the new words learned in every three lessons. It is obvious that a lot of effort has been made to ensure accuracy of pronunciation and writing characters in Chinese early literacy education.

Conclusion

This study found that Chinese readers, regardless of age, made miscues which reflected their use of graphic as well as sound features in the reading text. The finding that both Grades 3 and 6 children in this study showed higher phonetic than graphic proximity between ER and OR is at odds with other Chinese miscue studies. It is however congruent with findings from other empirical studies, which found that visual processing involved phonetic recoding both in alphabetical and nonalphabetical languages (Mou & Anderson, 1981; Treiman, Baron & Luk, 1981; Tzeng, Hung & Wang, 1977). This result also echoes the claim made by Tzeng et al. (1977) that regardless of the writing system differences, the recoding process is partly governed by the general process of phonological coding in working memory.

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