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The relationship between depth of vocabulary knowledge and Iranian EFL learners’ lexical inferencing strategy use and success*

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Abstract: This study was an attempt to examine the relationship between Iranian EFL (English as Foreign Language) learners’ depth of vocabulary knowledge and their lexical inferencing strategy use and success. The participants in this study were 32 intermediate senior students of Shiraz Azad University majoring in English translation. The Word Associates Test (WAT) (Read, 1993) was used to measure their depth of vocabulary knowledge and lexical inferencing strategy questionnaire which was part of Schmitt (1997), vocabulary learning strategies as well as a reading passage (Haastrup, 1999), cited in Nassaji (2004), were used to determine their lexical inferencing strategy use and success. Results indicate that: (1) Those who have stronger depth of vocabulary knowledge use certain strategies more frequently than those who have weaker depth of vocabulary knowledge; (2) The students with stronger depth of vocabulary knowledge make more effective use of certain types of lexical inferencing strategies. These findings support the importance of depth dimension of vocabulary knowledge and the role it plays in guessing the meaning of unknown words.

Key words: depth; vocabulary; knowledge; breadth; lexical inferencing strategies

1. Introduction

“There is a renewed recognition, since the last two decades, of the importance of vocabulary knowledge for second language learners” (Read, 1988). According to Nation, Richards and Ringbom, cited in Laufer and Goldstein (2004), different researchers have defined lexical knowledge differently, but there is no disagreement that it is the sum of interrelated “sub-knowledges” including knowledge of the spoken and written form, morphological knowledge, knowledge of word meaning, collocational and grammatical knowledge, connotative and associational knowledge, and the knowledge of social or other information to be observed in the use of a word. One type of knowledge source that is strongly related to learners’ ability to read and understand texts is vocabulary knowledge (Nassaji, 2004).

In recent decades, Second Language (L2) vocabulary researchers have proposed various but complementary frameworks in defining what it means to know a word. These researchers no longer view vocabulary knowledge as a single dimension. Instead, they believe that vocabulary knowledge should be regarded as a multi-dimensional

* Words fall short of expressing the authors’ indebtedness and gratitude to Dr. Read, Dr. Schmitt, Dr. Paribakht and Dr. Nassaji for their helpful suggestions and support in this study.

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construct (Qian & Schedl, 2004). Scholars and researchers in the field have attempted to list the aspects of vocabulary knowledge. The first attempt is attributed to Richards (1976), cited in Segler (2001). The main assumptions of his vocabulary knowledge framework are as follows:

1. Frequency: Knowledge about the degree of probability of encountering that word in speech or print;
2. Register: Knowledge on limitations on use according to function and situation;
3. Position: Knowledge about syntactic behavior associated with the word;
4. Form: Knowledge about underlying form and derivatives (morphological processes);
5. Associations: Knowledge about network of associations between that word and other words in the language;
6. Meaning concept: Knowledge about the semantic value of a word;
7. Meaning associations: Knowledge about the different meanings associated with the word.

1.1 The depth of vocabulary knowledge

According to Nation (1990), knowledge of a word can be divided into knowledge concerning its form, its position, its function and its meaning. L1 and L2 learners’ vocabularies may expand both in breadth (the number of words) and in depth (the knowledge concerning the words already known).

Qian (2002), cited in Qian and Schedl (2004), states that vocabulary knowledge includes 4 connected dimensions:

1. Vocabulary size, which refers to the number of words of which a learner has at least some superficial knowledge of meaning;
2. Depth of vocabulary knowledge, which includes all lexical characteristics, such as phonemic, graphemic, morphemic, syntactic, semantic, collocational, phraseological properties as well as frequency and register;
3. Lexical organization, which refers to the storage, connection and representation of words in the mental lexicon of a learner;
4. Automaticity of receptive—productive knowledge, which refers to all the fundamental processes through which access to word knowledge both for receptive and productive purposes is achieved.

According to Qian (2002), cited in Qian and Schedl (2004), there is an “intrinsic” interconnection among these aspects and their interactions contribute to both the use and development of vocabulary.

In research on vocabulary learning, a distinction has often been made between 2 primary dimensions of vocabulary knowledge: depth of knowledge and breadth or size of knowledge. Read (1993), Wesche and Paribakht (1996) and Qian (1999) stated that vocabulary knowledge, at least, should contain 2 dimensions, namely, vocabulary breadth also known as size or quantity of vocabulary knowledge and depth or quality of vocabulary knowledge. Qian (1999; 2004) gives the definition of these 2 primary dimensions of vocabulary knowledge as: Vocabulary breadth refers to the quantity or the number of words of which a learner has at least some superficial knowledge of meaning; the depth dimension is an aspect of word knowledge including spelling, pronunciation, meaning, frequency (how common the word is), register (formal or colloquial word), and morphological, syntactic and collocational properties. In other words, breadth of vocabulary knowledge refers to the number of words learners know, and depth of vocabulary knowledge has to do with how well learners know a word.

1.2 The lexical inferencing strategy

Since vocabulary knowledge is multi-dimensional, it occurs along a continuum of development. Due to this multi-dimensionality and the complexity of vocabulary teaching and learning, teachers must take a more comprehensive approach to vocabulary development for students to reach higher quantity and quality of lexical
knowledge (Waring, 2002). In the process of learning vocabulary, learners employ different strategies of vocabulary learning differently. Schmitt (1997) has developed taxonomy of strategies dealing specifically with vocabulary learning in which there is a new category for lexical inferencing strategies which includes discovery strategies. Discovery strategies are divided into 2 groups: determination strategies and social strategies. Determination strategies include guessing from an L1 cognate, guessing from context, using reference materials and guessing from one’s structural knowledge of language. Learners may discover word’s meaning by recognizing its part of speech. The new word’s affixes and roots may also provide them with helpful hints, but as Nation (1990) maintains mere “affixes” and “roots” are not reliable means of guessing meaning. If the language they are learning is closely related to learners’ first language, cognates can be very helpful for both guessing the meaning of new words and remembering new words. Guessing the meaning of an unknown word from context has been widely used in the last 2 decades, because it has been found to be more in line with teaching language communicatively (Schmitt, 1997). The third way of finding words’ meaning is using bilingual or monolingual dictionaries. Learners generally believe that information available in bilingual dictionaries is inferior to that available in monolingual ones. In general, there is a danger in strong dependence on any kind of dictionaries, bilingual and monolingual. Reliance on dictionaries may bind readers to the sentence level and interfere with global text comprehension (Curtis, 2006).

Another kind of determination strategies is using word lists and flashcards while they are not considered as appropriate ways of lexical inferencing since many teachers believe that words should only be presented in context. The second type of discovery strategies is social strategies of asking new words’ meaning from someone who knows. Teachers are in the first position since students trust them more than their classmates. They can help their learners by giving L1 translation of the word, giving a synonym, giving a definition by paraphrasing it, and using the new word in a sentence or any combination of these.

1.3 The relationship between depth of vocabulary knowledge and lexical inferencing strategy

Multiple knowledge sources and various cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies are involved when learners try to infer the meaning of unknown words in context. Among these knowledge sources, vocabulary knowledge has been found to be closely related to learners’ ability to comprehend texts (Nassaj, 2004). According to Qian (1999), knowing many words can not be helpful if learners’ knowledge of vocabulary is shallow and superficial. Depth of vocabulary knowledge not only has a positive effect on L2 reading comprehension, but also makes a unique contribution to L2 reading comprehension over and above the contribution made by the size of vocabulary knowledge. Laufer and Goldstein (2004) believe that regarding the role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension, while the quantity of words learners know (i.e., size of vocabulary knowledge) positively affects their understanding of texts, their depth of vocabulary knowledge makes a stronger contribution to reading comprehension. According to Nassaj (2004), knowing a word should mean more than knowing its individual meaning in particular context and that there is a significant relationship between depth of vocabulary knowledge and lexical inferencing strategy use and success. Empirical studies support the significance of this type of strategy. Hulstijn (1993) carried out a research on when foreign language readers look up the meaning of unfamiliar words. The researcher found that students with high scores on the inferring and vocabulary tests would consult fewer words in the reading task than students with low scores on these 2 measures. Qian (1999) carried out a research on the role of depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension. He found that scores on depth of vocabulary knowledge can make a unique contribution to the prediction of reading comprehension levels, in addition to the prediction afforded by vocabulary size scores. In a research on 124 1st- and 2nd- year English
students in Japan, Julien (2002) investigated the relationship between depth of processing of unknown target words’ overall reading comprehension and incidental vocabulary acquisition. The researcher found that deep semantic processing is associated with higher retention than processing at a shallower level. Nassaji (2004), in a study on intermediate ESL learners from different language backgrounds in Canada, found the centrality of the role of vocabulary knowledge in lexical inferencing and supported the hypothesis that lexical inferencing is a meaning construction process that depends on the richness of the learners’ semantic and conceptual system. Moreover, he found that the students who were more proficient in terms of depth of vocabulary knowledge made more frequent and effective use of context-based strategies.

In line with the above studies, the present empirical study is among the first studies in Iran that focuses on another primary dimension of vocabulary knowledge, i.e., depth and its effects on EFL learners’ lexical inferencing strategy use and success. The study focuses on depth or the quality of L2 learners’ vocabulary knowledge and its effect on lexical inferencing strategy use of Iranian EFL learners. Although researchers have attributed an important role to lexical inferencing, the nature of this process has not been well understood in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Nassaji, 2004).

2. Method

Participants of the present study were selected randomly from senior students of Shiraz Azad University majoring in English translation. They contain 67 students of both sexes. In order to control the participants’ level of proficiency, intermediate level students were selected. The first test administered was a truncated version of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The index of correlation between the test and another test of TOEFL indicating the criterion-related validity was 0.76. The index of reliability obtained for this test through using KR-21 method of estimating reliability was 0.85.

The second instrument was a test to measure learners’ depth of vocabulary knowledge. The one used in the present study is version 3.1 (form B) of the Word Associates Test (WAT) developed by Read (1993). The test as reported by Read (1993) has high reliability (KR-20=0.92) and has a rather high correlation (0.81) with a word test in which 5 words have to be matched with their meanings. Moreover, as Qian and Schedl (2004) stated, this test only measures the receptive aspect of the test takers’ vocabulary knowledge which is directly relevant to the type of knowledge needed in reading comprehension, and therefore, contributes to the validity of the test in this sense. In scoring, each word correctly chosen was awarded one point. The maximum possible score, therefore, was 200 for 50 items. The time allocated for this test was 30 minutes.

The third instrument was vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire developed by Schmitt (1997) in order to recognize the type and frequency of the strategies used. It was a 58-likert-type item questionnaire with 5 answers ranging from “never” to “always”. From this list, only 24 of the strategies which were lexical inferencing strategies were used in data analysis. In order to investigate the participants’ inferencing ability, a reading passage which contained 374 words, with 10 unknown words underlined, was given to them. The reading passage selected for this study was the one developed by Haastrup (1991), cited in Nassaji (2004), in a study on lexical inferencing with Danish learners of English. This passage was also used by Nassaji (2004) in a study on the relationship between depth of vocabulary knowledge and ESL learners’ lexical inferencing strategy use and success with 21 adult intermediate ESL learners from different language backgrounds in Canada. According to Haastrup (1991), cited in Nassaji (2004), the passage had been “designed” to make the learners use inferencing strategies both
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globally and locally. All responses were rated and judged by 2 independent raters (the researcher and an English teacher), and an inter-rater reliability of 0.98 was established.

There are various ways of assessing size of vocabulary knowledge, but only a few tests have been developed which measure the quality of word knowledge. Read (1993) first developed the depth of word knowledge test based on word associations. The one used in the present study was version 3.1 (form B) of the Word Associates Test (WAT) developed by Read. The test contains 50 target words, each followed by a list of 8 words. The 4 related words have been selected to represent 3 main types of semantic relationship with the target word: paradigmatic relationships (i.e., the word and its associate have similar meanings, such as enable and allow); syntagmatic relationships (i.e., the 2 words collocate and co-occur in similar contexts, such as income and tax); and analytic relationships (i.e., the associate represents the meaning of part of the word, such as team and together) (Nassaji, 2004).

3. Results and discussion

The 32 participants were divided into 2 groups: Lexically Skilled (LS) and Lexically Less Skilled (LLS) students. Grouping was done based on the participants’ percentile rank for scores they obtained on the depth of vocabulary knowledge test. A learner’s percentile rank shows how well he or she performs on a test in comparison to others. Those learners whose scores fell at or below the 50th percentile were classified as Lexically Less Skilled (LLS) readers and those whose scores fell above the 50th percentile were classified as Lexically Skilled (LS) readers. There were 16 students in the LS group and 16 students in the LLS group.

In order to see whether there is any difference between the performance of the 2 groups of LS and LLS on WAT and reading, a t-test was conducted. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the 2 groups and LS readers’ scores were higher than those of LLS readers (see Tables 1 & 2).

| Table 1  Mean of WAT and reading scores |
|-----------------|---------|----------|----------|---------|
| Groups          | No.     | Mean     | S.D.     | Std. error mean |
| WAT scores      |         |          |          |            |
| LS              | 16      | 142.75   | 13.364   | 3.341     |
| LLS             | 16      | 101.75   | 12.130   | 3.032     |
| Reading scores  |         |          |          |            |
| LS              | 16      | 10.13    | 1.586    | 0.397     |
| LLS             | 16      | 5.56     | 1.632    | 0.408     |

| Table 2  T-test for equality of means |
|-----------------|---------|----------|----------|---------|
|                |         |          |          |            |
| T-test for equality of means | t       | df       | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean difference |
| WAT scores      |         |          |            |            |
| Equal variance assumed | 9.087   | 30       | 0.000     | 41.000    |
| Equal variances not assumed | 9.087   | 29.723   | 0.000     | 41.000    |
| Reading scores  |         |          |            |            |
| Equal variances assumed | 8.019   | 30       | 0.000     | 4.563     |
| Equal variances not assumed | 8.019   | 29.976   | 0.000     | 4.563     |

As a second step in the analysis, the degree of success in lexical inferencing was determined using a 3-point scale (0 to 2) representing unsuccessfull, partially successful and successful inferences. Successful inferences were referred to those that were semantically, syntactically and contextually appropriate. If responses were semantically appropriate but syntactically deviant, they were classified as partially successful. In order not to underestimate the learners’ success, if the meaning or the definition provided made sense in the context, but when judged out of
context was not appropriate, the response was still classified as partially successful. When the response could not be classified into these 2 groups, it was considered unsuccessful. The total number of responses to all lexical target items was 320 (10 target words × 32 participants). However, while rating the papers, the number of responses reduced to 294 since the instruction asked the students to specify the words they have learnt before by writing “known” in front of them as well as their definition.

In the next step, the frequencies and percentages of successful, partially successful and unsuccessful inferences were calculated. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LS</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LLS</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 3, a total number of 91 successful inferences, 61 (67.3%) were made by LS learners and only 30 (32.9%) by LLS learners. The total number of unsuccessful inferences (92), a great proportion (76%) was made by LLS learners, and only 24.1% by LS learners. The percentage of partially successful inferences, too, LS learners override LLS learners (50.8% vs. 48.6%).

A chi-square test was conducted on the proportions of unsuccessful, partially successful and successful inferences for the 2 groups of LS and LLS readers. The results indicate that the proportions of successful and unsuccessful inferences were significantly different across the 2 groups which in turn indicate that the degree to which readers were able to infer the meaning of unknown words successfully, was related to their group membership (see Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Partially successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LS</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LLS</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to identify the difference between the 2 groups’ use of strategies, a t-test was run. The results are presented in Table 5. The results indicate that there was a statistically significant difference between the 2 groups in the use of strategies No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 18, 23, 24, 45, 46, 47, 50, 51 and 55.

In order to see the existence and the degree of correlation between WAT scores (depth of vocabulary knowledge) and type of strategy use in the 2 groups of LS and LLS, Pearson correlation was used.
Table 5  Pearson correlation between WAT and strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WAT</td>
<td>0.899*</td>
<td>-0.642*</td>
<td>-0.579*</td>
<td>-0.596*</td>
<td>-0.765**</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>-0.142</td>
<td>-0.635**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.904</td>
<td>0.439</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S9</td>
<td>S10</td>
<td>S11</td>
<td>S12</td>
<td>S13</td>
<td>S14</td>
<td>S18</td>
<td>S23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAT</td>
<td>-0.698*</td>
<td>-0.531**</td>
<td>-0.487**</td>
<td>-0.273</td>
<td>-0.206</td>
<td>-0.760**</td>
<td>0.861**</td>
<td>-0.642**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S24</td>
<td>S43</td>
<td>S45</td>
<td>S46</td>
<td>S47</td>
<td>S50</td>
<td>S51</td>
<td>S55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAT</td>
<td>-0.698**</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>-0.559**</td>
<td>-0.566**</td>
<td>-0.596**</td>
<td>-0.763**</td>
<td>-0.726**</td>
<td>0.757**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.904</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** indicates that the correlation is significant at 0.01 levels.

The results of the data analysis show that there is a significant link between depth of vocabulary knowledge and the type of lexical inferencing strategy use. In particular, the results show that:

1. Those who had stronger depth of vocabulary knowledge used certain types of lexical inferencing strategies more frequently than those who had weaker depth of vocabulary knowledge;

2. The stronger students made more effective use of certain types of lexical inferencing strategies than their weaker counterparts.

These findings confirm the previous research results (Nassaji, 2004; Qian, 1999; Qian & Schedl, 2004) in that they emphasize the importance of depth of word knowledge in lexical inferencing and reading comprehension and support the fact that inferencing is a “meaning construction process” that depends on the quality of the learners’ semantic and conceptual processing. The results also show a difference in the type of strategies used by the LS and LLS students. The students, who were more proficient in terms of depth vocabulary knowledge, use certain types of strategies more than their weak counterparts and these strategies make them more successful in inferring the meaning of unknown words.

Overall, the above findings seem to support approaches to lexical inferencing that emphasize the quality rather than the quantity of vocabulary knowledge and its role in guessing the meaning of unknown words from context.

### 4. Conclusion and implications

Based on the findings of previous studies, L1 readers are different from L2 readers not only in terms of the number of words they know which is referred to as the breadth of vocabulary knowledge, but also in terms of the depth or the quality of their lexical knowledge. According to JIANG (2000), cited in Nassaji (2004), syntactic, semantic and morphological information of L1 learners’ lexical entry are more strongly and highly integrated than those of L2 learners. Therefore, L1 learners can rely on their rich lexical knowledge during inferencing to organize information across and within sentences and to generate syntactically and semantically correct inferences about words they encounter. In order to achieve deep lexical knowledge in L2 learning, learning vocabulary from context and direct vocabulary instruction especially in the early levels of second language learning should be
The relationship between depth of vocabulary knowledge and Iranian EFL learners’ lexical inferencing strategy use and success

integrated into the vocabulary instruction program (Coady, et al., 1993; cited in Nassaji, 2004). Therefore, as Moscovitch and Craik (1976) argue that “deep semantic processing” rather than shallow perceptual processing should be aimed at. Another educational implication of this study relates to teaching and learning strategies. According to Cook (1991), learning strategies instruction to the language learners would lead to their better language performance. Therefore, teachers should teach effective strategies to their students. In the realm of vocabulary teaching as Nation and Na (1985) maintain, using clues from the related contexts to guess the meanings of the words called “incidental vocabulary learning” works more effectively than “learning the words themselves”. The results of this study show that LS readers use “guessing from textual context” more frequently than other strategies.

This study was done in a university context. Studies can be carried out on larger samples at other language institutes, private and state, and on other age groups. Further research is needed to compare the role of size versus depth of vocabulary knowledge in deriving word meaning from context. Do these 2 aspects function differently in contributing to lexical inferencing strategy use and success? In this research, the sexes of the students were not considered as a variable. Other studies can be carried out on this aspect and examine the effect of this factor on lexical inferencing strategy use and success.

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Abstract: Based upon the theoretical studies of learning strategies and listening comprehension, an investigation of listening strategies employed by college students of science and technology is conducted to find out the general features of their choices of listening strategies and to reveal the differences in the use of such strategies between effective listeners and less effective ones. The authors hope that this paper may be helpful for the teaching and learning of listening skills.

Key words: learning strategies; listening; students of science and technology

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, a gradual but significant shift has taken place in second/foreign language education, which results in less emphasis on teachers and teaching but greater stress on learners and learning. Consequently, the study of learning strategies has become a primary concern of applied linguistics. Although researches on learning strategies have covered a wide range of the field of language learning, the study of learning strategies in listening is an overlooked dimension. In traditional listening classes, a large amount of time is invested in getting students to listen and complete tasks, and consequently, “listening classes” turn out to be “listening testing classes”. In addition, most of the college students, especially those of science and technology students ignore the strategies to improve their listening proficiency. This paper aims to conduct a research to find out the general features of listening strategies used by such students as well as to reveal the differences in the use of listening strategies between effective listeners and less effective ones.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Definition and taxonomy of learning strategies

In the study of learning strategies within second/foreign language teaching, some typical definitions of learning strategies have been proposed and they can indicate the tendency of research in this field.

From these definitions (see Table 1), a change over time may be noted that the early definitions focus on the language learners’ linguistic or socio-linguistic competence. However, now there is a greater emphasis on the processes and characteristics of using learning strategies. And recent researchers pay more attention to the following issues: reasons for learners to use learning strategies; types of strategies employed by learners; processes of handling strategies and differences in the use of strategies among individuals.
Table 1  Definition of learning strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bialystok (1978)</td>
<td>Optimal means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarone (1983)</td>
<td>An attempt to develop linguistic and socio-linguistic competence in the target language—to incorporate these into one’s inter-language competence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubin (1987)</td>
<td>Strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Malley and Chamot (1990)</td>
<td>Special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford (1992/1993)</td>
<td>Specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen (1998)</td>
<td>Processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a second or foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall and application of information about that language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cognitive model of learning strategies described by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) is chosen as the theoretical framework of this study. It is assumed that second language acquisition is regarded as a cognitive and mental process of information processing. There are 3 categories of learning strategies: meta-cognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies. Meta-cognitive strategies are higher level executive activities that involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring the learning process and evaluating the learning outcome. Cognitive strategies are the specific skills and techniques to process information and ultimately to facilitate learning. Social/affective strategies involve interaction with other people and self-affection control in the process of learning.

2.2 Listening comprehension and learning strategies

Listening is the process of receiving, attending to, and assigning meaning to aural stimuli. Studies indicate that listening comprehension does not merely involve language information decoding. It is a process of both decoding and meaning reconstruction, and listeners’ active participation is of primary importance. Listeners can make use of various linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge to perceive, parse and utilize aural stimuli. In each phase of listening, listeners can employ specific strategies to enhance comprehension. In order to explain why and how learners use strategies in the listening process, some basic concepts, such as memory, attention, process of listening (top-down, bottom-up and parallel) and schematic knowledge, should be taken into consideration.

2.2.1 Memory

The relationship between memory and listening comprehension is complex. As Rubin (1994, p. 207) states, “Our understanding of this relationship is hindered because our knowledge about the nature of memory is still evolving and because we do not clearly understand how language is processed during listening”. But some investigators (Dunkel, 1991) indicate that there is indeed a relationship, at least a weak one between memory and listening comprehension.

Psychologists divide memory into 3 major levels in terms of information storage: sensory, short-term and long-term memory. Sensory memory is the most immediate and the least permanent one. Transfer from sensory memory to short-term memory is usually called “attention”, and short-term memory involves pattern recognition and information storage for 15 to 60 seconds. Long-term memory stores all of the knowledge a person possesses including both linguistic and non-linguistic information. Therefore, during the active process of listening, listeners might employ some strategies to reduce the load of short-term memory (e.g., ignoring unrelated or less important
information, taking notes to facilitate memorizing, etc.), and to activate the existing knowledge in long-term memory by elaboration and inference.

2.2.2 Attention

Another area that logically affects memory and listening comprehension is attention. O’Malley, et al. (1989, p. 428) provide evidence from their investigation that “effective listeners seemed to be aware when they stopped attending and made an effort to redirect their attention to the task”, while “ineffective listeners reported that when they encountered an unknown word or phrase in a listening text, they usually just stopped listening or failed to be aware of their inattention”. O’Malley, et al. (1989, p. 422) further put forward 2 meta-cognitive strategies under the super-ordinate category “monitoring”—selective attention and directed attention. The former means “focusing on specific information anticipated in the message”, that is, focusing on important parts of the listening message such as keywords, topic sentences, and so on. The latter means “focusing more generally on the task demands and content”; that is, to be aware of one’s attention and avoid external distracters.

2.2.3 Process of listening

According to Rubin (1994, p. 210), process refers to “how listeners interpret input in terms of what they know or identify what they do not know”, and “the way in which listeners use different kinds of signals to interpret what is said”. Researchers usually differentiate listening process into top-down, bottom-up and parallel processing.

A number of studies have been conducted in this aspect, but because of the differences in subjects, analysis methods and measurements, the results are not identical. Wolff (1987) worked with 12 to 18 years old German students of English, and found that students appear to make a harmonious use of bottom-up and top-down processing with an easy text, while using more top-down processing strategies for the more difficult texts. Contrary to Wolff’s conclusions, Bacon (1992a) found that listeners use more top-down strategies with more familiar passages and employ more bottom-up strategies for more difficult input. In addition, some researchers have considered the relationship between processing and proficiency level. Conrad’s (1985) study of university students of English showed that L2 (Second Language) listeners with low proficiency tend to rely more on syntax (bottom-up) rather than on contextual semantic cues (top-down). And also, in their study of secondary school intermediate ESL (English as a Second Language) students, O’Malley, et al. (1989, p. 429) found that “effective listeners seemed to be listening for larger chunks, shifting their attention to individual words only when there was a breakdown in comprehension”.

In spite of the controversies among the conclusions, these studies have indicated that the process of listening comprehension is complex and thus difficult to observe, but it is clear that many factors influence the listeners’ choosing and monitoring of specific processing, such as the difficulty and nature of the listening text, the listeners’ language proficiency, the listeners’ background knowledge, and so on.

2.2.4 Schematic knowledge

World knowledge is thought by cognitive scientists and psycholinguistics to be stored as schemata. Although most work on the role of schemata in comprehension has been done in the field of reading, they play just as an important role in listening (Buck, 1992). The importance of schemata for comprehension and learning has been highlighted, as stated by Farch and Kasper (1986, p. 264), “Comprehension takes place when input and knowledge are matched against each other”.

In listening comprehension, the functions of schemata are obvious. Schemata can affect the way listeners understand and interpret information that they receive. And they can also provide a basis upon which listeners
make sense of the incoming stimuli. Furthermore, schema is a key element in top-down processing; listeners who make effective use of schematic knowledge can be said to execute top-down processing in that they draw on information in memory or text meaning for comprehension (O’Malley, et al., 1989). Listeners can also use schematic strategies to anticipate the incoming information, to predict conclusions and to infer meanings when incomplete understanding occurs.

In conclusion, recent theories of second/foreign language listening suggest that listeners are active processors of information rather than passive receivers of oral stimuli. Listeners construct meanings from the oral input by drawing upon their prior knowledge of the world and that of the target language. They monitor their listening processes by choosing top-down or bottom-up processing; they also generate information in their long-term memory and make their own interpretation of the spoken texts (Murphy, 1985; Mendelsohn, et al., 1995). Since listeners have limited memory capability for target language, they make use of various strategies that are steps taken by listeners to help them acquire, store, retrieve and use information (O’Malley, Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Vandergrift, 1999).

3. Research on learning strategies in listening

3.1 Subjects

In this study, the 156 participants are students of science and technology chosen from University of Shanghai for Science & Technology. Among them, 38 students have passed CET-6; 67 students have got the certificate of CET-4 and 51 students failed in CET-4 (shown in Table 2). These subjects are divided into 2 groups by their listening proficiency for comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English proficiency</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid percent (%)</th>
<th>Cumulative percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CET-6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CET-4</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CET-4 failed</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Data collection

A questionnaire is designed according to the theoretical framework for this study. It consists of 2 parts: the first part involves some background information about the subjects; the second part is the main body with 28 items representing the possible listening strategies, such as preliminary survey, planning, monitoring, managing, attention, input, note-taking, inference, predicting, elaboration, translation, cooperation, self-assurance, persistence, and so on. For the convenience of data collection, the Likert scale is used to ask the subjects to respond to each statement by indicating whether they “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “not sure”, “agree” or “strongly agree”.

3.3 Research results and analysis

All the questionnaires answered by the 156 subjects are collected, and the data are processed by SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Sciences). For the convenience of analysis, factor analysis is conducted and 10 strategies are eventually obtained from the original 28 variables: planned input, self-monitoring, selective attention, persistence, association and prediction, being active, speaker-based guessing, preliminary survey, translating and self-evaluation.
3.3.1 The general tendency of strategy use

The statistics (see Table 3) show that the most frequently used listening strategies by the subjects are prediction and association, self-evaluation and speaker-based guessing; the secondarily employed strategies are selective attention, self-monitoring and translating, while the least used ones are preliminary survey, persistence, being active and planned input.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned input</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.5000</td>
<td>7.0000</td>
<td>3.8952</td>
<td>1.0990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.2500</td>
<td>6.5000</td>
<td>4.6137</td>
<td>1.0093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective attention</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.7500</td>
<td>7.0000</td>
<td>4.6610</td>
<td>1.1438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>7.0000</td>
<td>3.5416</td>
<td>1.2429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction and association</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>7.0000</td>
<td>5.5192</td>
<td>1.2461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being active</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>6.5000</td>
<td>3.9989</td>
<td>1.1764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker-based guessing</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>7.0000</td>
<td>5.0192</td>
<td>1.4254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary survey</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>7.0000</td>
<td>3.3173</td>
<td>1.8769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>7.0000</td>
<td>4.5384</td>
<td>1.6863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>7.0000</td>
<td>5.4134</td>
<td>1.4974</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research results have further confirmed the findings obtained by previous researchers, such as O’Malley and Chamot (1989), and have verified that prediction and association (subsumed as elaboration) are the most frequently employed cognitive strategies in listening. Therefore, the significant role that schematic knowledge plays in listening comprehension is proved. In listening, listeners tend to use elaboration to activate their schematic knowledge (both linguistic knowledge and world knowledge) of the topic they are listening to. Once such knowledge is activated, they can make full use of it to make sense of the incoming information, to anticipate and predict conclusions, and to infer meanings.

Self-evaluation is a meta-cognitive strategy used by listeners. Listeners’ self-evaluation about their listening proficiency level exerts influences on the selection and execution of those cognitive and social/affective strategies. As listening is the most common mode for communication, speaker-based guessing is always used by listeners to get information from the interlocutors as much as possible to facilitate comprehension.

Selective attention and self-monitoring are also frequently used meta-cognitive strategies by the students. According to O’Malley and Chamot (1989, p. 422), “Monitoring consists of maintaining awareness of the task demands and information content”, and it is supported by both selective attention and directed attention. Whereas in this study, selective attention is separated from self-monitoring to be a single category. For most of the students, listening is not a single process and reading is always involved. Therefore, they usually listen with purposes and questions in their minds. They seldom try to understand and memorize every word, instead, they tend to employ the “top-down” processing by catching some key words, topic sentences or even the general meaning of the listening task. Another difference lies in that, in this study, monitoring not only includes process-monitoring and attention-monitoring, but also affection-monitoring as well, since meta-cognitive strategies control both cognitive and social/affective ones.

The statistics also show that most of the students of science and technology tend to use translating in
listening, preliminary survey, planned input, persistence and being active are the rarely used strategies by the students. Among them, preliminary survey is a meta-cognitive strategy; planned input contains both planning (meta-cognitive) and input (cognitive); being active and persistence are social/affective ones. The students of science and technology are non-English majors, and most of them have an instrumental rather than an integrated motivation for learning English. As a result, they are reluctant to be active and persistent in their English learning and particular pay little attention to listening. In addition, without teacher’s guidance, students find that it is hard to choose suitable listening materials and to make any progress in listening, which in turn might frustrate their confidence and enthusiasm.

3.3.2 Comparison between more effective and less effective listeners

In order to find out the differences between “more effective” listeners (G1) and “less effective” listeners (G2), t-test is conducted as shown in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Group statistics</th>
<th>T-test</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned input</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>4.1309</td>
<td>1.13881</td>
<td>4.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>3.4101</td>
<td>0.8308</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>4.8095</td>
<td>0.9685</td>
<td>3.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>4.2107</td>
<td>0.9802</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>5.0178</td>
<td>0.9821</td>
<td>5.977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>3.9264</td>
<td>1.1099</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction and association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>5.6928</td>
<td>1.1442</td>
<td>2.383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>5.1617</td>
<td>1.3773</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being active</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>4.2047</td>
<td>4.2047</td>
<td>3.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>3.5751</td>
<td>3.5751</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker-based guessing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>5.2428</td>
<td>1.3393</td>
<td>2.877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>4.5588</td>
<td>1.4988</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>3.6000</td>
<td>1.8519</td>
<td>2.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>2.7352</td>
<td>1.8092</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>4.3428</td>
<td>1.6012</td>
<td>-2.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>4.9411</td>
<td>1.7990</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>3.6000</td>
<td>1.2923</td>
<td>0.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>3.4215</td>
<td>1.1374</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>5.4571</td>
<td>1.3869</td>
<td>0.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>5.3235</td>
<td>1.7141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statistics indicate that there are significant differences between these 2 groups in 8 strategies (p<0.05)—planned input, self-monitoring, selective attention, prediction and association, being active, speaker-based guessing, preliminary survey and translating. The more “effective” group uses the first 7 strategies more frequently than the “less effective” group does, while the latter group uses “translating” more frequently. No significant differences are found between them in the other 2 strategies: persistence (p=0.382) and self-evaluation (p=0.629).

The difference between the 2 groups in the use of “planned input” is obvious. Most of the more effective listeners have their own plans of improving listening, and they always try to find opportunities to be exposed to English as much as possible. They listen a lot out of classroom, making full use of various listening resources and they can carry out their plans and choose suitable listening materials. On the contrary, most of the less effective listeners seldom make any plan for listening, and even though plans are made, they can hardly keep on with them.
In addition, many less effective listeners cannot check out the effectiveness of their plans, and they cannot assess the difficulty and suitability of the listening materials. Therefore, little progress can be made.

The less effective group is also inferior to the more effective group in self-monitoring. In process-monitoring, the more effective listeners usually employ a “top-down” processing by paying more attention to the general meaning of the listening text, while less effective students tend to focus on the meanings of specific words. More effective listeners also take advantage of attention-monitoring; whereas most of the less effective ones cannot concentrate their attention on listening. As to affection-monitoring, more effective listeners are more self-confident than less effective ones, and less effective listeners always have the sense of apprehension while listening, which influences their performance.

The distinction between these 2 groups in selective attention lies in the fact that more effective listeners are capable of distinguishing important information from unimportant parts; they know what they should listen to. While most of the less effective listeners can not make such a distinction, with their attention being equally shared by every part of the listening text.

It is stated earlier that prediction and association (M=5.5192) and speaker-based guessing (M=5.0192) are the most frequently employed strategies in listening by students of science and technology, which further verifies the significance of listeners’ schematic knowledge. Nevertheless, there is still a significant difference between the 2 groups in the use of schematic knowledge. The more effective the listeners are, the more schematic knowledge is activated. Many less effective listeners are not good at associating listening tasks with their existing knowledge. Listening cannot be considered as a single part of English learning. It is closely related with reading, speaking and writing. The knowledge or information obtained through other channels might be useful to facilitate comprehension in listening.

Although it is a general characteristic of the students of science and technology that they are not active enough in listening classes, the more effective students outperform those who are less effective ones in this aspect. Most of the effective students are willing to cooperate with their classmates and teachers. Consequently, they can obtain not only opportunities of practice, but also evaluations from others, and in turn, their self-assurance will be enhanced.

The statistics reveal a significant difference between the 2 groups in preliminary survey, but in effect, both more effective listeners and less effective listeners seldom conduct such a survey. Most of the students think it is unnecessary due to their motivation for learning English and few listening classes are provided for them.

Translating is the only strategy that is more frequently employed by the less effective listeners. Mental translation in listening is a controversial issue. It is easily understood that in learning English as a second/foreign language, the Chinese students usually inevitably make use of their mother tongue to facilitate memorizing and comprehension. Although using the first language in listening to another language will facilitate comprehension to some extent, it will be a hinder as well. Listening is a real-time process, and the listener’s understanding of a segment of the listening text will be revised in the light of the new coming information; therefore, doing translation while listening might be a burden to the listener’s short-term memory. Less effective listeners are not skillful enough in English, and when they are encountered with unfamiliar or difficult words, they tend to seek for the Chinese counterparts of these words. But because of the limited capacity of their short-term memory, once they engage themselves in translating, their interpretation of the flow of new information will be delayed. Therefore, it is suggested that translating in listening should be avoided to reduce the load of short-term memory.
4. Conclusion

This tentative research indicates that the proper use of listening strategies is an importance factor that affects the students’ listening proficiency level. As studies on listening strategies become increasingly intensive, strategy training or instruction ought to be put on the agenda. How to promote more successful listening comprehension? Can teachers train students to use such listening strategies? What kind of strategies should be taught? It is hoped that all these questions will be discussed in further researches to evaluate the effectiveness of strategy training.

References:

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The application of communicative approaches in language teaching

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Abstract: English is widely taught and used in China. Yet, Traditional Language Teaching (TLT) methods are still used in most classrooms, which hinder the successful language learning. In the paper, communicative approach is introduced. And the authors sincerely hope that effective language learning can be promoted in the language classroom.

Key words: Traditional Language Teaching (TLT); communicative approach; learner-centeredness; error correction; integrated skills

1. Introduction

It is agreed that appropriate teaching methods are important for English learning in the language classroom. The authors have employed Traditional Language Teaching (TLT) methods. And with TLT methods, the students fail to study English effectively. This is because of the following reasons: First, TLT emphasizes that teachers should explain items in great detail. In this way, teachers have to rely on their mother tongue to do the job. As a result, students can receive very limited amount of target language input. However, the theory of second language acquisition tells learners that enough comprehensive input is indispensable for second language acquisition (Krashen, 1981). Second, teachers tend to focus on language form and ignore language function in the TLT classroom. Studies indicate that it is not necessarily the case that students who have learnt the rules of the target language can communicate in real communication. And a large amount of controlled practice can not guarantee students to express themselves correctly and appropriately in real communication (Krashen, 1981). Third, as the TLT language classroom is a teacher-centered one, students can hardly have opportunities to take part in communicative activities except accepting knowledge passively. As a result, students can not be motivated to learn English effectively.

Language is a means of communication. The aim of the English language teaching is to train students to communicate in the target language. And according to Hymes (1972), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aims at developing the “communicative” as opposed to the purely “linguistic” competence of the students. That is, it focuses on the actual use of language in concrete situation. Just as Hymes claims, “There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless” and “competence seen as overall underlying linguistic knowledge and ability, thus, includes concepts of appropriateness and acceptability…” (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979). The authors would try to introduce CLT as an approach in terms of learner-centeredness, error correction, teaching techniques and communicative classroom activities in this paper. And meanwhile, the authors strongly

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recommend the wide use of CLT to motivate the students in the language classroom as “acquisition requires meaningful and communicative use of the target language” (Alatis, et al., 1981).

2. The application of communicative approaches

2.1 Learner-centeredness

In most of the language classrooms, it is teacher-centered while students are regarded as passive recipients and are often required to write down and memorize almost everything that is said by the teacher. But how can their English learning be successful when the classroom atmosphere is so dull and students’ motivation is kept low? And how can students develop their communicative competence if they do not have ample opportunities to practice using the target language in the classroom? As for CLT, it is learner-centered. In other words, students become active participants in the learning process, should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby, learn in interactive way.

The students are encouraged and required to “do” things, while the teacher serves as a helper or a facilitator to give guidance and advice when necessary. This of course will demand a lot from the teacher. Firstly, the teacher must be able to organize the classroom as a setting for communication and communicative activities. The classroom can be a useful context for the introduction of language being used in real life. Here, the teacher works as an organizer. Secondly, he must be able to monitor the class and to facilitate the learning process. Usually, the teacher encourages students to participate or offers suggestions about how students may proceed in an activity when it is necessary or when they are confused about what to do next. Also, he should be able to lead in the debriefing of activity, pointing out alternatives and extensions, and assisting groups in self-correction discussion. Here, the teacher plays the role of a facilitator. Thirdly, the teacher must be able to record the students’ problems for later work. A major part of a teacher’s job is to assess the students’ work, to see how well they are performing or how well they have performed. Here, the teacher functions as an assessor. Fourthly, the teacher can work as a controller when he is completely in charge of the class. He controls not only what the students do, but also when they speak and what language they use. Also, he can help students overcome their language interference. It is apparent that the introduction of new language often involves the teacher in a controlling role, especially at the accurate reproduction stage. Finally, the teacher plays the role of a motivator. He can motivate students to learn better because the students will never learn without motivation.

2.2 Error correction

In the English language teaching, the teacher is used to be very sensitive to the errors and tries to correct them when they occur. Namely, accuracy of linguistic forms is emphasized at all costs. Certainly, this will have a negative effect on the students’ motivation. On the contrary, CLT focuses on fluency. And errors are regarded as normal and necessary, and are viewed as a positive element in the process of learning. In other words, there will be no progress without making errors. Therefore, CLT always focuses on the communication of meaning rather than on linguistic form. If the meaning is conveyed, accuracy is not seen so important. Teachers must be aware that making mistakes is a part of language learning and correcting sensitively is a part of teaching.

2.3 Integrated skills

The 4 language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are all integrated and interacted with each other in real-life communication. It is usually the case that one skill can not be performed without another. Possibly, for instance, a person should listen carefully before he speaks in a conversation, and he usually reads
before he writes. For various reasons, people may use different skills when they deal with the same topic. To give an example, if people read an advertisement for a job in the newspaper, they may discuss it with someone or they may ring up and make inquiries about the job. Then they may write a letter of application for the job, which will in turn lead onto somebody else’s reading the letter and replying to it. In this case, it has a sequence of reading—speaking (+listening)—writing—reading—writing. In short, a whole chain of activities involving the exercise of different language skills has been generated. This important characteristic of real-life communication should always be reflected in the English language teaching classroom. To put it in another way, when students practice reading, teachers can use reading as the basis for practicing other skills, such as speaking and writing. If students are involved in an oral activity, they may be asked to do some reading and writing. In brief, through the contexts provided, the students will listen, speak, read and write as it is in real-life communication. In this context, it can be expected that not only will students’ motivation for carrying out the various tasks and activities be improved, but also their understanding of the communicative functions relating to each activity will increase.

Nevertheless, the integration of the 4 skills does not mean that teachers can never focus on one particular skill in their classroom teaching. On the contrary, teachers may have to concentrate on one particular skill at a certain stage, but the focus should later shift to one or more of the other skills. The integration of the 4 skills can practice and extend the students’ use of a particular language structure or function, and can develop the students’ abilities in 2 or more of the 4 skills within a constant context.

2.4 Communicative classroom activities

Communicative activities are the focus of the classroom work in communicative language teaching. In communicative activities, the production of linguistic forms becomes less important than the communication of meaning. Students are encouraged to use suitable language to express their meaning fluently. The criterion for success is whether the meaning is conveyed effectively. Communicative activities are necessary in classroom teaching because here students can try their best to use the language as individuals, reaching a degree of language autonomy. Communicative activities in the classroom mainly include such activities as information gap activities, games, role-plays, simulations, pair-work and group-work, and task-based approach. These activities can involve students in real communication and fire imagination. In the activities, students are principal actors rather than tongue-tied speakers and bench-bound listeners. Language can be used to carry out meaningful tasks. This arouses students’ interest in learning and the language that is meaningful to the students supports the learning process. Employing these activities can motivate the students in the language classroom.

2.4.1 Information gap activities

The principle of underlying information gap activities is that the teacher structures the situation in order that the students have to overcome an information gap or to solve a problem.

An information gap is an ingredient in real-life communication. The authors can illustrate this with a simple example:

A: Excuse me.
B: Yes?
A: Do you have a watch?
B: Yes… why?
A: I wonder if you could tell me what the time is.
B: Certainly… it is half past ten.
A: Thank you.
A: You are welcome.

In this case, there is an information gap between A and B. B has the information that A does not have (the time) and wants that information. And the conversation helps to close that gap so that both speakers have the same information.

In the classroom, teachers can create the same kind of information gap if they are to encourage real communication: students are given different bits of information and by sharing this separate information, they will complete a task.

2.4.2 Games

In the language classroom, games and game-like activities have an obvious important place in the theory of language learning based on the development of communicative competence. Clearly, all classrooms are unlike the outside real world, so teachers can not expect to replicate real situation in the classroom except through some kind of conjuring trick involving the temporary suspension of disbelief. Compared with other classroom activities, they can provide fun, relaxation and challenge, and students will find their English lesson enjoyable. There are kinds of games and game-like activities which can foster natural, creative, authentic language behavior on the part of learners once the framework of rules and conventions has been firmly established. It can be illustrated with a simple example:

“Tell your name”.

Students sit in circles of about 8 people. One person starts off by giving his name and an invented profession (e.g. I’m LI Yin and I’m a nurse). The next person has to repeat this information (i.e., you are LI Yin and you’re a nurse) and add in himself (e.g., I’m WANG Jun and I’m a doctor). The game proceeds until it comes back to “LI Yin” who has to repeat the whole sequence.

In fact, games themselves are not real in the real world outside the classroom. However, they can provide students with genuine language practice and stimulate them to use the language as in real life. Besides, in games and game-like activities, the learner is free to be himself. He can engage his real personality with those of his peers without the additional burden of trying to be someone else. In addition, students can learn in a relaxing atmosphere and their motivation can be high. So such activities are a vital part of language teaching and facilitate the acquisition of foreign language.

2.4.3 Role-play and simulations

Role-play and simulations are to create the scene of a real-life situation in the classroom. They are useful in the language teaching. Using them, they can increase students’ motivation, reduce the artificiality of the classroom, and provide a reason for talking and allow the learner to talk meaningfully to other learners. In a role-play or simulation activity, the class is usually divided into small groups—often pairs—to which are given situations and roles to act out and explore. This activity demands not only the language, but also imagination on the part of the students. The various groups, therefore, are activated simultaneously in the language classroom. Usually, they are based on real-life situations and can provide useful language practice for students. Here is an example:

“The invitation”.

It is the Spring Festival, during which you are very excited and you are having a party on Saturday. Luckily, you meet your friend CHEN Jian on the campus and would like him to come. The party is informal. Tell him what time to come. Say how glad you are if he is coming.

Cues:

We’re having a party to celebrate the Spring Festival ….
Are you doing anything on Saturday?
It’s very informal ….
Come if you can.
That’s great.
That’ll be lovely.
The role-play card makes it clear that the student is talking to his friend, inviting him to his party. Students are very familiar with the situation and can be actively involved in it.
This kind of practice is easier to organize and more attractive than ordinary discussion. And it is much easier for students to be successful, and their confidence and self-esteem can be built. Besides, it can provide a mask for the shy student. Therefore, it is more stimulating and exciting.

2.4.4 Pair-work and group-work
In the language classroom, teachers can divide the class into discussion groups, and organize pair-work and group-work. Pair-work and group-work lead themselves to game-like activities. They can give students more opportunities to participate in an activity, and create a relaxing and cooperative classroom atmosphere for students, so that they can build the sense of security (especially those who are shy of saying something in front of the whole class) and try out the target language. In this case, students can work together with ease and learn to share language and ideas. Moreover, their dependence on the teacher can be reduced and their motivation can be improved. Thus, their language acquisition can take place in a stress-free environment and they are able to devote full energy to language learning. Furthermore, students can help and learn from each other in the process, and center on meaningful communication. They can listen attentively to the knower and freely provide meanings they wish to express. In this way, students can have the opportunity to engage in genuine communication in the target language.

2.4.5 Task-based approach
Task-based approach is helpful and vital in language classroom. When a group is given a task to perform through interaction, the activity becomes purposeful, and therefore, more interesting. In this way, teachers can set up optimum conditions for students to interact with each other. The authors shall illustrate this with the following example:

“Composing a letter”.
Step 1 Students are divided into 4 groups. A short type-written letter is given to each member of the group.

Dear ZHAO Li,
What am I to do about my 17-year-old son, Xiao Hai? He means so much to me, especially since his father deserted us. I have always tried to give him all I could, and I have given him all my love and attention. But nowadays, he never studies hard. He drinks and smokes heavily, and often goes to bar. He even tells me to mind my own business. I try not to show him how hurt I am by his attitude, but often I just go off and cry. Sometimes I even feel he hates me, while I do my best to show him how much I love him and care about everything he does.
I have given him so much: is this my reward?
Yours ever

Step 2 Students are required to read the letter, have a discussion, and then come up with some ideas to help the hurt mother to solve the problem.

Step 3 From each group, a secretary is chosen by students themselves and he is to write a letter based on the ideas they have agreed on.
Step 4 The letters from each group are read out by the secretary, and students decide which letter is the best one.

Teachers know that this kind of activity can arouse students’ interest and motivate them to use the language they have learned. Designing such entertaining task-based activity, teachers can force the students to delve deeply and carefully into the involved problems. And the discussion helps students’ attention centered on the subject and stimulated ideas, and can provide them with motivation to listen, speak, read and write. In this way, teachers can ensure a smooth, efficient and enjoyable discussion. Therefore, teachers can organize task-based activities to ensure that all the students have a chance to practise the language actively in the language classroom.

3. Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is clear that communicative approach emphasizes the actual use of the target language. In the language classroom, students who are more involved share ideas, learn from each other, feel more secure and less anxious. They can use English in a meaningful and realistic way, and enjoy using English. Therefore, teachers should employ communicative approach to promote effective language learning in their language teaching.

References:

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A call for the reengineering of Iranian ESP textbooks

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Abstract: Having paramount importance in any ESP (English for Special Purpose) classroom, textbooks are known as one of the most visible parts of any ESP teaching program. Enjoying an undeniable position, essentially in the societies where English is used as the second or foreign language, such textbooks should have some features on which the needs and objectives of the ESP teaching program are met. Concerning such an importance, this paper intends to evaluate critically the current status of the Iranian ESP textbooks developed and published by The Organization for Research and Compiling University Textbooks in Humanities (SAMT), as the main governmental organization in studying and compiling ESP university textbooks. Obtaining such an end, it tries: (1) to present the importance of ESP materials development; (2) to provide a clear picture of ESP and ESP materials development in Iran; (3) to introduce the essential drawbacks which such textbooks suffer from; and (4) to present some practical suggestions and solutions to tackle the significant problems and drawbacks of the current ESP textbooks practiced in the Iranian academic setting.

Key words: ESP; textbooks; Iranian academic setting; materials evaluation

1. Introduction

ESP as a trend in the broader framework of ELT (English Language Teaching) aims to meet the needs of particular learners. ESP as a material-led movement (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) has aimed at providing the textbooks to satisfy the learners’ needs and interests as well as the program’s objectives. Undoubtedly, ESP textbooks as the key components in most language programs enjoy an undeniable importance, which determine the major part of classroom teaching and student learning.

The growth of ESP has led to introduce an increasing number of specialized textbooks used internationally or locally in every part of the world and certainly the Iranian context, as the main concern of this study, is not an exception to this rule. Today, in spite of great global breakthroughs in the realm of ESP textbooks development, as one of the most characteristic features of ESP in practice (Mc Donough & Shaw, 2003), it seems that despite the increasingly quantitative growth of in-house ESP textbooks in the Iranian setting, such an important issue has not gained enough attention. Thus, this study aims at highlighting the needs for evaluating and assessing the current ESP textbooks, and emphasizing the need to select, develop and adapt the ones that specially conform to the needs and requirements of the ESP language program in the Iranian academic setting. In addition, it has been tried to

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provide the Iranian ESP textbooks developers with suggestions for modifications of the present ESP textbooks.

2. General considerations on ESP textbooks development

In Bernard and Zemach’s (2003) terms, selecting appropriate language, responding to the needs and wishes of the students and paying attention to effective learning strategies are all the elements which are vitally important when preparing ESP materials. According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), selecting ESP materials involves making choices and decisions and to make good choices, people need to have good criteria on which to base people’s decisions.

ESP textbooks serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that takes place in the classroom. ESP textbooks development as well as their evaluation, especially in societies in which English is taught as a foreign language, should gain much attention. In other words, as Lotfi (2005) asserts, one of the aspects of successful language teaching is providing students with appropriate textbooks and they should be designed in a way that cause a match between what is taught and what is learned. Chosen from authentic texts and materials (Day, 2003), variety in texts in terms, topics and themes, enjoying stimulating and motivating texts and activities (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), having appropriate and meaningful activities and tasks (Bernard & Zemach, 2003), and having an appropriate physical appearance and organization (Riazi, 2005) are only some important ESP textbook features which should be considered and applied in every ESP textbook development.

3. ESP in Iran

In the mid-1980s, the educational authorities established the Organization for Research and Compiling University Textbooks in Humanities (SAMT) to compile and develop textbooks in different fields of study. The establishment of the committee of foreign languages as one of the divisions of SAMT paved the way to develop English textbooks for university students. At the outset, they compiled English specialized textbooks for students of science, engineering, social sciences, medicine, mathematics and agriculture. At that time, at university level, a great need was felt for locally-produced ESP textbooks that would be culturally and socially appropriate for the Iranian context. Afterwards, as Soleimani (2005) writes, many ESP textbooks have been published to satisfy the needs of policy makers, educationalists and curriculum designers. Looking at the available ESP textbooks on the market shows that at least 135 ones have been compiled and published so far. While the purpose behind all of the them has been to enable the Iranian university students to study their specific academic reference materials and textbooks to get familiar with scientific and technological advances in their field of study, studying their current status of them reveals that in spite of their quantitative growth with reference to quality and efficiency, there is much to say. In this regard, while it has been quite a while since the introduction of the current ESP textbooks into Iranian university systems, as Hashemi (2005) believes, such ESP textbooks may hardly ever meet the actual needs of the Iranian special purposes students. As Shokouhi (2005) writes, enough time has elapsed and not much positive experience has been gained. It is now to call for a new reengineering of the texts and materials therein.

Before dealing with their current status, it is worth noting that in the Iranian academic setting, the use of the global ESP textbooks produced by Western publishers and the ones prepared by the ESP teachers is much less than the official textbooks developed by SAMT. Thus, as mentioned, the main focus of this research is on the current status of these official in-house textbooks used in the Iranian undergraduate program of Iranian
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4. Main drawbacks of the Iranian ESP textbooks

Considering the qualitative status of these books shows that they seriously suffer from some significant drawbacks of which the most important ones are introduced and discussed in the following:

(1) Lack of needs analysis;
(2) Mono-skill syllabus;
(3) Inflexible & cliché pattern;
(4) Lack of materials revising & up-to-dating;
(5) Insufficient visual aids.

4.1 Lack of needs analysis

As Johns (1981) writes, one of the greatest contributions of ESP to language teaching has been its emphasis on careful needs analysis for course design. According to Robinson (1991), regarding the diversity and complexity of ESP objectives, it is essential to conduct in-depth needs assessment before planning and implementing an ESP curriculum and materials. In Dudley-Evans and St John’s (1998) words, needs analysis is the cornerstone of ESP and leads to a focused course. According to Robinson (1991, p. 7), “Needs analysis is generally regarded as critical to ESP, although ESP is by no means the only educational enterprise which makes use of it”. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that any language course should be based on needs analysis. Needs analysis is fundamental to an ESP/EAP approach to course design (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 121) also state that “needs analysis is the process of establishing the what and how of a course”.

Findings of Borzabadi Farahani (2004), Nikui Nezhad (2007), Mazdayasna and Tahriarian (2008), Zangani (2009) and Eslami (2010) reveal that the lack of needs analysis in ESP textbooks development in Iran is clearly obvious. According to the research done by Borzabadi Farahani (2004) in the field of ESP needs analysis, Iranian students emphasize on the importance of reading skill as well as speaking, listening and writing in such textbooks. His finding indicates that the Iranian students emphasize greatly on some reading strategies and skills (scanning, skimming, etc.), vocabulary learning strategies and translation skills. In a more precise word, for instance, while Borzabadi Farahani’s finding from the needs analysis of the Iranian university students of engineering majors reveal that their preferences are reading comprehension, vocabulary, speaking, writing, listening and grammar respectively, the findings from the SAMT ESP textbook for the students of engineering show that its focus is limited to only reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar. In other words, other skills have been totally neglected.

Referring to Nikui Nezhad’s (2007) report on needs analysis on 3 majors of Electrical Engineering, Literature and Chemistry shows that 63% of Electrical Engineering students ranked reading textbooks as a very important sub-skill, participating in class discussions was important for 45% of students and writing term papers was considered unimportant by 45%. Students of Literature tended to reading textbook as a very important task (62%), writing term papers as an important task (45%) and reading specialized journal and participating in class discussions as equally unimportant task (33%). Reviewing the ESP textbooks in these 3 majors indicates that in all of them, reading comprehension has been the only dominant skill but no attention has been paid to the students’ needs, interests and preferences.
4.2 Mono-skill syllabus

According to Tayebipour (2005), the ESP syllabus in Iran has been followed a uni-skill model in which only one skill (i.e., reading) has been taken into account. As for other language skills, no mention has been made of them. In fact, other skills, i.e., speaking, writing and listening, have been totally ignored and dealt with as if they have been either quite unnecessary, or as though the ESP students can cope efficiently by themselves with their ever developing ocean of content as well as language of their field of study.

Paying attention to the findings of the available needs analysis accomplished in recent years in Iran including Borzabadi Farahani (2004), Nikui Nezhad (2007), Mazdayasna and Tahriarian (2008), and Zangani (2009) indicates that the Iranian university students are interested in other skills including writing and speaking. While the main focus of the current ESP books in Iran is on reading comprehension skill, the necessity of paying attention to other skills and techniques especially writing and speaking as well as translation is essentially obvious.

4.3 Inflexible and cliché pattern

In Soleimani’s (2005) words, the uniformity of one single pattern of organization in SAMT ESP textbooks in Humanities, Sciences, Medicine, Agriculture, Psychology, Petroleum, Engineering, and so forth means imposing a strict and inflexible structure on learners to follow, no matter what the nature of the subject matter and discipline is and who the learners are. According to Zangani (2009), the majority of exercises or activities in ESP textbooks in Humanities are text-based and structural. Rarely, do these exercises involve students in developing language skills or communicating ideas. None of the exercises are in accordance with new communicative approaches in language teaching and learning. Task-based learning, process oriented learning and cooperative learning are not incorporated into the texts.

Reviewing the Iranian ESP textbooks shows that most of them follow the same cliché pattern involving reading passages, comprehension questions (true-false, multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank), word formation, vocabulary practice and grammatical points.

Using such an inflexible and strict pattern, tracing to the first ESP textbooks, is the most common pattern in the current ESP books. In other words, the diversity of exercises, tasks and activities is one of the missing links in the ESP textbooks development. The most significant features of this inflexible pattern can be introduced as follows:

1. No preparatory activities;
2. Focus on language and what is known;
3. Focus on detail and understand all the sentences and words;
4. Teacher-centered;
5. Grammar and lexis exercises;
6. Comprehension questions.

Highlighting these features indicates that in these ESP textbooks, text is restricted to a linguistic object. In this regard, John and Davies (1983) write, “One of the most contributions to the approach to reading in ESP was the shift from Text as a Linguistic Object (TALO) to Text as a Vehicle of Information (TAVI)”. In their terms, for ESP learners, extracting information accurately and quickly is more significant than language details, understanding the macro-structure comes before language study, and application of the information in the text is of paramount importance.

While, as Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) maintain, the reading component of an ESP course requires a
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balance between skills and language development and the lack of this characteristic is evident in these textbooks. In other words, the absence of skills and strategies like scanning, skimming, guessing meaning from the text, predicting, inferring, reading for main ideas, summarizing, prior or background knowledge, etc. are clearly obvious.

In sum, the application of the traditional features which are practiced throughout these books is mostly due to the Iranian inattention or negligence of the importance and efficiency of the effective strategies and skills used in the ESP textbooks.

As Hutchinson and Waters (1987) insist, the textbook should activate learners’ mind and keep them thinking. In their words, materials should avoid the assembly line approach which makes each unit look the same, with the same type of text, the same kind of illusion, the same type of the number of exercises.

Such an “assembly line approach” comprises the current framework of Iranian ESP textbooks. In support of this claim, the pattern of 6 Iranian ESP textbooks has been studied and its results are as following (see Table 1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESP textbooks</th>
<th>Exercise pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Civil Engineering | (1) Reading comprehension passage;  
|                | (2) Comprehension exercises (true-false, multiple-choice, wh-questions, word formation, fill-in-the-blank);  
|                | (3) Further reading. |
| Medicine | (1) Reading comprehension passage;  
|          | (2) Comprehension exercises (true-false, multiple-choice, wh-questions, word formation, fill-in-the-blank);  
|          | (3) Scrambled paragraph;  
|          | (4) Further reading. |
| Chemical Engineering | (1) Reading comprehension passage;  
|                | (2) Comprehension exercises (true-false, multiple-choice, wh-questions, word formation, fill-in-the-blank);  
|                | (3) Further reading. |
| Nursing | (1) Reading comprehension passage;  
|            | (2) Comprehension exercises (true-false, multiple-choice, wh-questions, word formation, fill-in-the-blank);  
|            | (3) Further reading. |
| Architecture | (1) Vocabulary enrichment;  
|             | (2) Parts of speech;  
|             | (3) Intensive reading;  
|             | (4) Intensive reading activities;  
|             | (5) Extensive reading activities. |
| Biology | (1) Reading comprehension passage;  
|           | (2) Comprehension exercises (true-false, multiple-choice, wh-questions, word formation, fill-in-the-blank);  
|           | (3) Further reading. |

4.4 Lack of materials revising and up-to-dating

Riazi (2005) believes that being up to date is known as one of the most important features of ESP textbooks. Enjoying this feature involves the continuous revision of the texts, exercises, activities as well as skills and strategies. Krug (2002) introduces being up-to-date as an important feature in any ESP textbook development.

Leafing through the books shows these dates of publication, impression and edition (see Table 2).

4.5 Insufficient visual aids

The importance of various kinds of visual features and aids in ELT has been shown in works including Wright (1976; 1989), Bowen (1982), Hill (1990), Wright and Haleem (1991), Harmer (2001), Brand (1997), Cundale (1991) and Porcaro (2001).

In Dudley-Evans and St. John’s (1998) terms, key graphic representations including lists, columns, tables, matrices, tree diagrams, flow charts and mind maps can be very helpful in extracting and reorganizing the
information in ESP textbooks. According to Riazi (2005), for a textbook to be of high quality, both the software, i.e., the content and organization, and hardware, i.e., the physical appearance, should be in order. Krug (2002) also introduces illustrations as well as the physical appearance as important features of any ESP textbook.

Table 2  Information on the publication date and impressions of some Iranian ESP textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title: English for the students of</th>
<th>Date of publication</th>
<th>Impression number</th>
<th>Recent impression</th>
<th>Edition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Sciences</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Engineering</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Engineering</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Medicine</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, Riazi (2005) introduces visual information including graphics, photos, charts, diagrams, etc. as well as clear layout and appropriate typeface as necessary features of ESP textbooks.

Lack of visual features including pictures and photos are evident here. Moreover, their designs (layout, color, cover, binding) are far inferior to the commercially produced ones. Comparing some of the SAMT ESP textbooks with some of the internationally used ESP textbooks published by Cambridge and Oxford University Press provides a good picture of such insufficiency (see Tables 3 & 4):

Table 3  Information on visual features of Iranian ESP textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title: English for the students of</th>
<th>Pictures/Photos</th>
<th>Tables</th>
<th>Charts/Graphs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black &amp; White</td>
<td>Colored</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Sciences</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Medicine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil Engineering</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Chemical Engineering</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Medicine</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Law</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To sum up, the visual appeal of materials is an important element in attracting learners’ attention and maintaining interest. In other words, such an appeal in ESP popular textbooks is used as a functional tool to serve as a stimulus for learners and as a strategy in presenting the information.

5. Conclusions and suggestions

Undoubtedly, any success in the field of ESP especially in ESP textbooks development firstly involves providing a clear picture of their current status, and then recognizing their major problems and drawbacks. To follow this rule, the researchers tried to provide such a picture, then attempted to evaluate some of the widespread ESP textbooks practiced in the Iranian university system.

Findings reveal that there is a serious gap between theory and practice in the realm of ESP materials development in Iranian academic setting. Suffering from some serious flaws, such textbooks have not met the objectives of such courses. To be fair-minded on the issue, in spite of some improvements in developing the latest textbooks and the positive measures which have been taken in a few books, certainly such improvements, although can be introduced as a promising trend, cannot be satisfactory at all.

Because of the real importance of ESP textbooks in Iranian academic setting, some practical suggestions in the light of the authors’ findings and analyses are presented as following:

(1) In the case of needs analysis, a thorough and comprehensive needs analysis in all majors is essential. In other words, paying real attention to the learners’ needs in particular should be the first step in preparing the ESP textbooks;

(2) New current approaches should be used in developing and preparing any new ESP textbooks. As noted, the inadequate approaches have been the basic approaches in the current ESP textbooks, and at the same time, the effective ones leading to enhance the learners’ understanding have been neglected. For instance, using task-based instruction as a realistic and dynamic one can be used as an efficient approach in ESP textbooks development (Erfani, et al., 2010). In this part, a remodeling of the texts, exercises and activities is necessary. Avoiding the task-based and structural exercises which do not give learners a sense of achievement and do not develop language skills seems essential;

(3) A revision of the texts is necessary. In a more precise word, texts with newer concepts and information in each area, certainly, are more authentic than the texts of the available ESP textbooks. In addition, such a revision may enhance and promote the learners’ interests and motivations on the topic;

(4) It is suggested that the physical shape and appearance of ESP textbooks can be revisited. Such a revision might use the important visual features including pictures, charts, graphs, etc. which not only can be eye-catching.
and motivating for the learners and teachers, but also can be informative as well;

(5) Despite the significant position of reading skill in Iranian ESP context, other skills should not be neglected. In other words, all 4 skills as well as translation strategies and study skills including skimming, scanning, looking up words in general and specialized dictionaries should be integrated;

(6) The last but not the least, paying attention to the ESP teachers and instructors’ experiences, observations, needs and expectations is a must. Informing of the real position of ESP in general and ESP textbooks choice and development is needed. In this regard, providing on-going in-service, equipping the instructors with the latest developments in the field of ESP especially in the realm of ESP materials development and changing their attitude on the real meaning of ESP and ESP textbooks features might be a practical and efficient suggestion, too.

References:

(to be continued on Page 34)
A framework of the suggested Meta-cognitive Strategy Training model*

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Abstract: It is of great significance to carry out Meta-cognitive Strategy Training (MST) in current college English teaching context. After analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of some sequences and models for strategy training, the authors suggest the Meta-cognitive Strategy Training model which consists of 6 steps with Strategies-Based Instruction (SBI) employed to conduct the concrete strategy training.

Key words: meta-cognitive strategies; strategy training; college English teaching

1. Introduction

Meta-cognitive strategies and Meta-cognitive Strategy Training are 2 buzz-words in foreign language learning context. Meta-cognitive strategies involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring comprehension or production while it is taking place, and self-evaluating after the learning activities have been completed. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define them as “higher order executive skills that may entail planning for monitoring or evaluating the success of a learning activity”. Many studies (e.g., Vandergrift, 1999; Naiman, et al., 1975; Nisbet & Shuck, 1986) point out the potential role of meta-cognitive strategies for improving language proficiency. The findings of these studies turn out that many poor learners are lack of certain necessary higher order strategies, i.e., meta-cognitive strategies. So, it is of great significance to improve English learners’ language proficiency through Meta-cognitive Strategy Training. However, how to conduct Meta-cognitive Strategy Training in current college English teaching context? It deserves further study and exploration.

2. The sequences and models for strategy training

Although no evidence has yet been provided to determine a single best method for conducting strategy training, some general types of strategy training are reviewed in the paper.

The first model developed by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) for their CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach) lessons is presented as follows:

(1) Preparation: Develop students’ awareness of different strategies;
(2) Presentation: Develop students’ knowledge about strategies;
(3) Practice: Develop students’ skills in using strategies for academic learning;
(4) Evaluation: Develop students’ ability to evaluate own strategies;

* This paper was one of the research findings of the project “Fostering Learner Autonomy for Non-English Majors through Meta-cognitive Strategy Training”—Harbin Engineering University Teaching Reform Projects 2009.
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(5) Expansion: Develop transfer of strategies to new tasks.

Cohen (2000) believes that the model is “especially useful after students have already had practice in applying a broad range of strategies in a variety of contexts”.

In addition, Oxford (1990) constructs an 8-step model for designing strategy training which focuses on language learners’ beliefs, attitudes and motivations. The 8-step model includes:

1. Determine learners’ needs and the resources available for training;
2. Select the strategies to be taught;
3. Consider the benefits of integrated strategy training;
4. Consider motivational issues;
5. Prepare the materials and activities;
6. Conduct explicit strategy training;
7. Evaluate the strategy training;
8. Revise the strategy training.

Another model is Weaver and Cohen’s (1997) SBI (Strategies-Based Instruction): SBI is a learner-centered approach to teaching that extends classroom strategy training to include both implicit and explicit integration of strategies into the course content. Students experience the advantages of systematically applying the strategies to the learning and use of the language they are studying. In addition, they have opportunities to share their preferred strategies with other students and to increase their strategy use in the typical language tasks they are asked to perform.

Teachers may conduct SBI by starting with established course materials and then determining which strategies to insert and where to insert, starting with a set of strategies they wish to focus on and then designing activities around them, or inserting strategies spontaneously into the lessons whenever it seems appropriate.

3. A framework of the suggested Meta-cognitive Strategy Training (MST) model

After analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of the above sequences and models for strategy training, the authors suggest the Meta-cognitive Strategy Training (MST) model which combines the characteristics of these training models. In the MST model, the overall program of Meta-cognitive Strategy Training consists of 6 steps with SBI employed to conduct the concrete strategy training. Weaver and Cohen’s SBI is applied to conduct the concrete strategy training model, because it includes explicit and implicit activities, and focuses on both language and strategies. When strategies are implicitly embedded, the focus of the activities is on the language contents and no explicit reference is made to strategy use. On the other hand, when the activities are designed to have an explicit discussion of the strategies, the focus is on the strategies themselves and the activities are intended to teach a strategy or practice strategies. In this suggested MST program, Weaver and Cohen’s SBI model is adopted for its learner-centered approach and explicit and implicit integration of strategies into the course contents.

3.1 Step 1: Assess learners’ meta-cognitive strategy use

Before designing any strategy training program, it is crucial for teachers to assess the meta-cognitive strategies that learners already use, so that the strategies selected would not be in learners’ repertoire but potentially beneficial to them. Methods of assessing learners’ meta-cognitive strategy use include observation, self-report (introspective), interviews, questionnaires, diaries and journals.
3.2 Step 2: Make the goal of Meta-cognitive Strategy Training clear
Teachers not only need to know clearly the goal of MST, but also make learners be aware of it, in order to help learners make psychological preparation for strategy training. MST is to explicitly teach learners how, when and why meta-cognitive strategies can be used to facilitate their learning. By teaching them how to develop their own strategy systems, MST is intended to encourage them to self-evaluate and self-direct their learning.

3.3 Step 3: Raise learners’ awareness of meta-cognitive strategy
Raising learners’ awareness of meta-cognitive strategy is a vital aspect of strategy training. In the awareness of training, teachers may distinguish cognitive strategies and meta-cognitive strategies by explaining and modeling the differences between the 2 kinds of strategies. Then, teachers need to discuss the importance of meta-cognitive strategies, including the important roles they play in self-regulated learning. Finally, teachers may offer hands-on practice with specific meta-cognitive strategies for various language tasks, and then discuss the effectiveness of those strategies.

3.4 Step 4: Prepare materials and timetable for MST
Before conducting the major body of the suggested training model, teachers are encouraged to choose appropriate materials that can serve better for strategy training. Although the textbooks used in current college English teaching context have been proved effective, there are often some aspects that are not appropriate for the specific strategy training. On occasion, teachers are proposed to use some other course books or design proper materials for MST. Generally, strategy training program consists of long-term training and short-term training. No matter which training is adopted, a practical, detailed and easily-operated timetable must be designed in advance.

3.5 Step 5: Meta-cognitive Strategy-Based Instruction (MSBI) activities
SBI is regarded as a most desirable approach to strategy training because of its learner-centered approach and explicit and implicit integration of strategies into the course contents. According to Cohen (2000), in a typical SBI classroom, in order to individualize strategy training, suggesting language specific strategies and reinforce strategies while presenting the regular course contents, teachers are to do as follows:
(1) Describe model and give examples of potentially useful strategies;
(2) Elicit additional examples from students based on students’ own learning experiences;
(3) Lead small-group and whole-class discussions about strategies;
(4) Encourage students to experiment with a broad range of strategies;
(5) Integrate strategies into everyday class materials, explicitly and implicitly embedding them into the language tasks to provide for contextualized strategy practice.

3.6 Step 6: Evaluate and revise MST
At the end of SBI class or after it, the learners are given time to evaluate their success in using the strategies they were taught. The main purpose is to provide students with opportunities to evaluate their own success in using learning strategies, so that their strategy awareness could be cultivated. As in any training process, the evaluation based on the teacher and the learners may suggest possible revisions for the training design and concrete materials.

4. Conclusion
To sum up, the complete framework of MST is presented as follows:
Step 1: Assess learners’ meta-cognitive strategy use;
A framework of the suggested Meta-cognitive Strategy Training model

Step 2: Make the goal of Meta-cognitive Strategy Training clear;
Step 3: Raise learners’ awareness of meta-cognitive strategy;
Step 4: Prepare materials and timetable for MST;
Step 5: MSBI activities
   (1) Describe useful strategies;
   (2) Elicit additional examples from students;
   (3) Lead discussions about strategies;
   (4) Encourage students to experiment with a broad range of strategies;
   (5) Integrate strategies into everyday class.
Step 6: Evaluate and revise MST.

In order to carry out MST successfully, teachers need to alter their traditional roles. Instead of controllers of classroom, the teachers are suggested to function as diagnosticians, learners’ trainers, coaches, coordinators, language learners and researchers. Only when a teacher has a better understanding of the roles he is assuming, can he take effective measures to conduct Meta-cognitive Strategy Training model.

References:

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(continued from Page 30)


(Edited by Sunny and Chris)
The peculiarities of the newly compiled textbooks for English classrooms in China

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Abstract: Flexible and original thinking is the key to outstanding textbooks design. In order to teach English effectively, this paper discusses the changes, features and the effect of the function of new English textbooks and the strategies of addressing the problems arising between foreign and native English textbooks, and offers a framework for students that is not restrictive but allows them to develop their own individual learning process without the restrictions that teachers encounter so often in prescriptive teaching.

Key words: changes; features; function; strategies; English textbooks; prescriptive teaching

1. Introduction

Having been teaching English for 20 years in a teacher’s university in China, the authors are struck most by the wide variety of English teaching materials following the change of curriculum. The authors have discovered that the basis for change is not only on modern linguistics and teaching theory, but also on modern pedagogy and elementary courses through investigation of English materials for English learners. What kind of changes? What about the features of new materials? What effect will the function of the new materials bring about? How can people address the problems arising between foreign and native teaching materials? This paper will discuss the above questions.

2. The features of the newly complied textbooks

More recent textbooks stress the importance of students working with other students in pairs and groups, sometimes the entire class. Pair and group work give opportunities for more students to participate more actively. However, supervision of pairs and groups is important to make sure everyone participates as equally as possible. Such activities also provide opportunities for peer teaching, where weaker learners can find support from stronger classmates (Holden & Mickey, 1998). The newly complied textbooks have no exception.

2.1 Students’ development and their overall qualities

Please have a close look at the peculiarities of the newly compiled teaching material for English learners in China:

The development of the students’ learning in English is the purpose and incentive for this new English course. All teaching content, structural systems, theory and practice, as well as the design of activities, should be aimed to promote the students’ physiological and psychological development and stimulate their incentive to learn. Most of the teaching materials adopt the same pattern: function, structure, topic and task. Therefore, the general

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The peculiarities of the newly compiled textbooks for English classrooms in China

characteristics can be summarized as follows: cultivation of students’ comprehensive abilities of language use and scientific choice of materials, increase of students’ zeal and knowledge through vivid actions.

The new teaching materials take multiple approaches to develop students’ all-round intelligence, and this is clearly reflected in Primary English. At present, every set of applicable teaching material involves many varied teaching methods. There are audio-visual methods, communication activities, cognitive activities and use of prompts that enrich the classroom environment and promote active interaction between teachers and students. With energetic minds, students learn and grasp new language well. Students no longer depend on mechanical memory and they are able to show their potential and individuality. The new teaching material not only pays attention to the students’ abilities in writing, lingual capacity and logical intelligence, but also to visual and spatial intelligence, music and rhythm, kinesthetic areas, self-examination and self-observation. Thus, instead of traditional education, it focuses on students’ overall development.

2.2 Students as the “main body” and the reform of their study styles

The focus of new teaching is to cultivate an active attitude towards study, rather than overstating teaching of knowledge. Students are guided to learn how to study and how to behave in order to cement their learning process and methods. The new curriculum materials just adopt such a guiding ideology and take a huge step forward in leading students to learn actively and cooperatively.

Students used to be regarded as an “empty container” into which knowledge can be poured mechanically. But now, not only their knowledge and experience, but also their opinions are accepted and respected. This leads them to learn to study on their own. For example, contents of textbooks, such as goals, help students set their own aims and arrange learning plans as well as to develop themselves. This process of learning requires students to complete a summary of what they have learnt by themselves at the end of every unit, whilst putting forward tips and self-assessment suggestions to help them improve.

Some new teaching materials take into account an important basis on which students can build their learning, namely, their experience of study and life. They have also attempted to represent new language material in investigative ways, such as warmers, pre-reading questions, discovery of useful structures, surveys, brainstorming, interviews, experiments, quizzes, discussions, debates, and so on, all of which promote students’ abilities to increase their intellect and general learning. There also has been a breakthrough in the circumstances of investigative study. English teaching materials in middle schools offer space for students to study actively, for instance, students are asked to make stories according to the pictures, to imagine the ending for a story or to resolve difficult problems and riddles, through which students’ sparks of interest in learning can be ignited.

The new curriculum adopts many ways to improve students’ practical abilities via pair-work, group-work, role-play, games, tasks, projects, discussion and debates. Such a cooperative method of study is a good way to strengthen class efficiency and promote communication between students and teachers as well as to increase students’ independent ability to think and resolve questions.

2.3 Stress on the variety in each subject

Language is a carrier of culture and tool for communication. An aim for students to learn a foreign language is to be able to abstract and handle information in language. So it is obvious that foreign language teaching materials should possess range of various subjects. At present, English materials have been covered with many other areas, such as sociology, medicine, geography, population and environment, music, sports, law and meteorology, which widen students’ views, satisfy their zest for English learning and lead them to learn more about the world as well.
2.4 The selectivity, expansion, flexibility and unfolding of teaching material

This excellent English teaching material comprises a teaching kit rather than only one textbook. The kit includes students’ book, teacher’s book, exercise book, readings, tape, video, pictures/flashcards and CD-ROMs, which aim to provide scope for teachers to use teaching material and expand teaching content in a flexible manner. There are also websites through which students can learn by themselves. Some special CD-ROMs are available, and also, a set “radio classroom” show the best available resources for students and teachers.

2.5 Addition of assessment mechanisms

As an important part of the English course, proper evaluation plays an important role in realizing teaching purpose. However, in the long run, teaching is disjointed with assessment while the later teaching is only focused on result rather than study, but fortunately, new materials have been steered towards such a tendency. To embody the students’ active role during the evaluation and help them rethink and control their learning process, certain textbooks and corresponding set of books give examples of how to self-assess, so that students can learn how to self-evaluate and work even more efficiently.

2.6 Obvious progress towards quality of the teaching material design

For many years, it has been clear that the quality and type of used textbooks have been inferior. Paper is rough with unclear print and fuzzy illustrations, which harm students’ eyesight and also disturb their aesthetic sense. Competition from increasingly popular foreign language textbooks has led to great progress in page format and design, so primary school textbooks have in particular been greatly improved.

3. Function of teaching material and the teacher

For a long time, teachers have considered teaching materials as to be the “legal culture”, used to “control” and “normalize” teaching, which is due to the national policy of a single national curriculum and a single set of teaching materials. These centrally compiled teaching materials are viewed as the Bible and nobody would dare to violate these. As a result, teachers have been held back in their initiative spirit and creative ability. They have been unable to teach from relevant examples and have found unsatisfactory teaching effect, while students have often lost their interest in learning. By contrast, the variety in the new teaching material gives learners new opinions, that is, now the teaching material services as viable material and tools. Students should study creatively and teachers may use methods flexibly.

In recent years, teacher-training program is more and more popular all over China. But to choose a suitable textbook is challenging, because a good textbook will help teachers create a free classroom atmosphere. It is impossible and unnecessary for students to buy the whole set of material, but teachers should choose those based on the purpose of enriching knowledge and broadening horizons. However, different teaching materials have different features, and it is difficult for people to ascertain which the best one is. What a huge impact on the course of teaching for the teachers!

4. “Foreign” and “local” features of foreign language teaching material

At the beginning of 1990s, people were debating on the English teaching materials used in middle schools, which were jointly compiled by Chinese and foreign authors. As the 21st century is approaching, the “foreign teaching materials” began to get more attention, adding heated debate to the discussion of 1990s. Surveys showed that the foreign native teaching materials were beginning to take an upper hand. As far as the local teaching
materials are concerned, they are of course compiled by Chinese. Nevertheless, it is not really easy to reach native language, novel teaching thinking and cross-culture consciousness. Although some of the Chinese authors who work together with foreign partners could do better, with the great cost in expenditure, energy and time, while the work is still beyond their abilities.

Since both of the local and co-compiled teaching materials have their own disadvantages, the introduction of foreign countries of course becomes the best way adopted by some departments. Some of them are linked with Chinese teaching, but some courses which are rearranged by Chinese authors are very suitable for Chinese students.

The teaching materials play a special role in forming young people’s outlook on life, the world and values, so it can fall on ideology field. Due to the strong adherence to policy, people should pay high attention to political points when these materials are introduced in the country. Not only should people respect and understand foreign culture, they should also develop their traditional one. It is not uncommon for some students to be dumbfounded about Chinese culture while talking about foreign culture. All in all, people must accept the quintessence while refusing to accept bad or wrong attitudes towards foreign culture.

If teaching materials are designed by foreigners, it is difficult for them to learn Chinese students’ learning features and materials can often be beyond students’ ability. Therefore, the Chinese authors should design the materials with their own guiding thinking and teaching aims to be harmony with local conditions.

5. Conclusion

The reform of the English curriculum for primary and middle schools is totally right. Many flexible teaching methods have been adopted and the assessment system to stimulate students’ zeal has been a positive addition, and to strengthen materials’ selectivity and taste. On the one hand, each teaching department should provide more opportunities to train teachers and disseminate new materials. On the other hand, the new materials should be properly based on different Chinese areas. In order to use the materials flexibly, teachers can help and cooperate with each other.

Nowadays, people are undergoing a large-scale scientific experiment to reform courses and teaching materials. Only when people take a scientific and active approach is the foreign language teaching able to get success on its reform finally.

In summary, the English textbooks bring changes into the English classroom. So English textbooks play an important role in challenging English language teaching and learning situations.

References:

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Vietnamese final stop consonants /p, t, k/ described in terms of formant transition slopes*

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Abstract: It is well known that both bursts and formant transitions serve as separate cues to the place of articulation of initial stop consonants. In Vietnamese, final voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/ are unreleased (i.e., produced without an audible burst). This provides an opportunity to study these final stop consonants and to compare their characteristics with those of the corresponding initial stop consonants. As unreleased final consonants have not been previously studied, this paper analyses the Vowel-Consonant (VC) and Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (CVC) productions in terms of the transition duration, the starting formant transition values and the slopes of the VC transitions. Measurements have shown that in the same preceding vowel contexts, the 3 final stop consonants /p, t, k/ are always clearly differentiated by at least one of the 3 slopes of F1, F2 or F3. In perception tests, synthesized consonant C in the context /a/-C are recognized as /p/, or /t/, or /k/ when the slopes of the /a/-C transition of F2 and F3 are varied. It means that slopes of the VC transition are an important parameter that allows Vietnamese distinguishing the 3 final voiceless stop consonant /p, t, k/ in Vietnamese language. These final stop consonants can also be differentiated in the locus equation space. The study also points out that the effects of the final consonants on either long vowels or short vowels. The results explain why Vietnamese can not pronounce the short vowels in isolation.

Key words: final consonant; voiceless obstruents; Vietnamese

1. Introduction

The problem of perceptual constancy—the invariance problem—of initial stop consonants with the following vowels in a Consonant-Vowel or/and Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (CV/CVC) context was dealt with a long time ago. Some studies (Liberman, et al., 1954; Delattre, et al., 1955) showed that in perception tests of consonants, transitions of the second and third formants are sufficient cues for placing the articulation of the initial stop consonants in which the second formant transition F2 is more important than the third formant one. In 1957, Lisker in researches of perception characteristics of the initial consonants /w, j, r, l/ concluded that the third formant transition F3 is a good parameter to distinguish the 2 initial consonants /r/ and /l/. In 1958, Harris also presented that the third formant transition is a good parameter for discriminating the 2 consonants /d/ and /g/.

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Vietnamese final stop consonants /p, t, k/ described in terms of formant transition slopes

(Harris, et al., 1958). However, Cole (1974, pp. 101-107) suggested that the stop consonants pronounced before different vowels may be recognized thanks to a context in terms of a context independent acoustic cue, namely, the bursts produced at the release of initial stop occlusion. In 1977, Dorman, et al. noted that bursts and transitions complement each other in the sense that when one cue is weak, the other is usually strong. Recently, the notion of the locus defined by Lindblom (1963) was considered as a statistically powerful phonetic descriptor of the place of articulation of the initial stop consonants by many authors. These cues (bursts, formant transitions and locus equations) were studied for initial stop consonants with following vowels in CV/C1VC2 tokens.

In Vietnamese, linguists (Doan, 1977; Nguyen, 2007) have demonstrated the existence of 6 final stop consonants /p, t, k, m, n, ŋ/. However, as opposed to the initial consonants, the 3 final voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/ are produced without final burst. The authors hypothesize that the directions and the rates of the formant transitions at the end of the vowel help to cue the distinction. In this paper, these characteristics are studied in 2 main different vocalic contexts: Vietnamese short vowels and Vietnamese long vowels. Recall that Vietnamese short vowels cannot be produced in isolation, and they are never used alone without a final part in running speech. On the other hand, the results of the authors’ analysis were validated by perception tests and also used to test the locus equation concept for final stop consonants (Lindblom, 1963).

Linguists (Doan, 1977; Nguyen, 2007) have stated that in Vietnamese, a complete syllable consists of 3 parts: initial part, final part and tone. The final part can be divided into 3 smaller components, i.e., medial, nucleus and final. So the full form of a Vietnamese syllable has 5 components: initial part, medial part, nucleus part, ending part and tone (see Table 1). The nucleus part and tone always exist in a syllable, but the others are optional.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Initial part</th>
<th>Final part</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Medial</td>
<td>Nucleus</td>
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The centre of the Vietnamese syllable, the nucleus, is always a vowel or a diphthong. Vietnamese vowels can be classified into 2 groups: 9 long vowels /a, e, i, u, o, ɔ, ɤ, ɯ/ and 3 short vowels /

/ The 3 short vowels present the same static characteristics (formant F1 and F2) as the corresponding long ones (Nguyen, et al., 2008; Castelli, et al., 2005) but with dynamic characteristics (Castelli, et al., 2005) (non monotonous pitch, faster transition rate in CV production) and shorter duration (Nguyen, et al., 2008). Because of the characteristics between long vowel and short vowel differ not only by their static, but also by their dynamic characteristics (transition rate and specially the formant transition slopes in VC production that will be explained in this paper), the authors will refer to long vowels as classical vowels and short vowels as special vowels.

The coda can be one of the 6 final consonants /p, t, k, m, n, ŋ/ or the 2 final semivowels /w, j/. From the point of view of place of articulation, the 3 final voiceless stop consonants can be divided into 3 groups: labial /p/, dental/alveolar /t/ and velar /k/ (Doan, 1977; Nguyen, 2007). In the paper, the authors present the results obtained with the 3 final voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/.

2. Method

In order to study the final voiceless stop consonants, a Vietnamese corpus was built with 4 male native Vietnamese speakers (called M1, M2, M3 and M4) with mean age of 29. All speakers were born and live in the North of Vietnam, and they speak the standard (Hanoi) dialect. Each subject was asked to pronounce a series of
Vietnamese final stop consonants /p, t, k/ described in terms of formant transition slopes

VC2/C1VC2 syllables (5 repetitions each) in a Vietnamese carrier phrase “Nói VC2/C1VC2 êm ru” meaning “Say VC2/C1VC2 softly” where C1 was the initial consonant /b/, C2 was one of the 3 final stop consonants /p, t, k/, and V was one of the twelve Vietnamese vowels /a/, /ă/, /ɣ/, /ɤ̆/, /ɔ/, /ɔ̆/, /ε/, /u/, /i/, /e/, /ɯ/ and /o/. Note that the short vowel /ɔ̆/ is never combined with the 2 voiceless final consonants /p/ and /t/ (these combinations do not exist in Vietnamese). Vietnamese is a tonal language with 6 tones: flat tone (tone A1), falling tone (tone A2), rising tone (tone B1 on sonorant-final syllables and tone D1 on obstruent final syllables), drop tone (tone B2 on sonorant-final syllables and tone D2 on obstruent final syllables), curve tone (tone C1) and broken tone (tone C2) (Nguyen, 2002; Michaud, 2004). In order to reduce the influence of tone, it would have been preferable to study Vietnamese syllables in a flat monotonous tone context (tone A1). However, closed syllables ending with /p/, /t/, and /k/ in Vietnamese may only bear the rising or drop tone (tone D1 or tone D2). As a result, the authors chose the rising tone configuration which is easily pronounced in Vietnamese and maximizes the number of meaningful words. So, the 3 final voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/ were combined with 12 Vietnamese vowels, yielding 1,360 tokens (1 final consonant /k/ × 12 vowels × 2 contexts VC2/C1VC2 × 5 repetitions × 4 speakers, and 2 final consonants /p, t/ × 11 vowels × 2 contexts VC2/C1VC2 × 5 repetitions × 4 speakers). 860 tokens are actual lexical items, and 500 tokens are not.

A previous study (Nguyen, et al., 2008) showed that the final voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/ have no effect on the vowel duration in either context VC2 or C1VC2. So, the authors measured the following parameters: formant transition durations, starting formant transition values and formant transition slopes. All the measurements were obtained using the WinSnoori software program.

3. Results

3.1 Final stop consonants analysis

Figure 1 represents the formant transition duration of the 3 final stop consonants /p, t, k/ in 12 preceding vowel contexts (the mean value is calculated for all productions of the 4 subjects). In the (C1) VC2 context, the vowel /s/ is never combined with the 2 final consonants /p, t/ (these combinations do not exist in Vietnamese). Figure 1 shows that in the same vocalic context, the formant transition durations of the 3 final consonants /p, t, k/ remain constant. Thus, the duration of the formant transition from V to C2 cannot bring any distinctive characteristic to the final voiceless stop consonants.

![Figure 1: Formant transition duration of VC2 in the (C1)VC2 productions (the vowel /s/ is never combined with the 2 final consonants /p, t/)](image)

In the (C1) VC2 context, the starting transition values of F1, F2 and F3 were defined as the first point where

---

each formant begins its transition from the vowel V to the final consonant C2. Figure 2 illustrates the starting formant transition values of the final stop consonant in different preceding vowel contexts (the mean value is calculated for all productions of 4 subjects). Once again, one can observe that in the same context of a preceding vowel, the starting transition values of F1, F2 and F3 of the final stop consonants /p, t, k/ are not distinctive.

Table 2  F1, F2 and F3 formant transition slopes (Hz/ms) (mean value and standard deviation (s.d)) in (C1)VC2 productions (the vowel /ɨ/ is never combined with the 2 final consonants /p, t/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>/p/</th>
<th>/t/</th>
<th>/k/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/a/</td>
<td>-38</td>
<td>-96</td>
<td>-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɤ/</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>-132</td>
<td>-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɤ̆/</td>
<td>-47</td>
<td>-121</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɔ̆/</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>-75</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-123</td>
<td>-223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u/</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ö/</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/œ/</td>
<td>-26</td>
<td>-201</td>
<td>-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/œ/</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>-70</td>
<td>-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/e/</td>
<td>-24</td>
<td>-175</td>
<td>-88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.d</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vietnamese final stop consonants /p, t, k/ described in terms of formant transition slopes

In fact, the places of articulation of these consonants are different and the starting transition values of F1, F2 and F3 are more or less identical, it is therefore necessary that the slopes are different. To test this hypothesis, the authors calculate the formant transition slopes VC2 in the same context of the preceding vowel V.

Table 2 represents the formant transition slopes of each final stop consonant /p/, /t/ and /k/ in the 12 preceding vowel contexts. Figure 3 illustrates an example of the comparison of the 3 final consonants /p, t, k/ in the same context of the 3 preceding vowels /a, i, u/. It is noted that: (1) depending on the vowel context (/a/, /i/ or /u/), the final consonants /p, t, k/ can be distinguished by at least one of the formant transition slopes F1, F2 and/or F3; (2) in the context of 3 preceding vowels /a/, /i/ and /u/, the formant transition slope of F2 is always a good parameter to differentiate the 3 final consonants /p, t, k/. Nevertheless, to verify and estimate if the formant transition slopes VC allow distinguishing the 3 final consonants /p, t, k/, learners need to perform statistical tests.

A statistical test (one-way ANOVA test) of the formant transition slopes comparing the 3 final stop consonants /p, t, k/ in the same context of a preceding vowel is presented in Table 3. In each statistical test (for each preceding vowel and for each formant F1, F2, F3), the formant transition slopes of the 3 final stop consonants /p, t, k/ were compared. The significant thresholds of 0.05, 0.01, 0.005 and 0.001 were also used to compare with the p-value (significance value) of statistical test. If the p-value of one test is smaller than the significant threshold, the hypothesis of the differentiation of these consonants by the corresponding formant in that test is true.

From Table 3, it is noted that: (1) In all preceding vowel contexts, the 3 final stop consonants /p, t, k/ are always distinguished by at least 1 of the 3 slopes of F1, F2, F3 (the p-values is always smaller than one of significant thresholds); and (2) The F2 slope is a strong significant parameter that always makes possible the discrimination of these 3 final stop consonants (the p-value of F2 slope is always smaller than the significant threshold of 0.001). So, from the statistical results, the authors can conclude that the formant transition slopes play
Vietnamese final stop consonants /p, t, k/ described in terms of formant transition slopes

an important role to distinguish the 3 final occlusive consonants /p, t, k/. In other words, these 3 final consonants without bursts articulated with a preceding vowel, changing the end of the vowel. The formant transition slopes VC (F1, F3 and especially F2) are characteristics that could allow Vietnamese listeners to recognize these consonants. Although there are 3 cases (/ɤ/, /ɔ/, /ɯ/ context) where the F3 formant transition slope does not play a significant role, in general, most of the results agree with the results obtained in by Liberman, et al. (1954) on the F2 formant transition, and by Harris, et al. (1958) on the F3 formant transition.

Table 3  ANOVA tests (p-value and F-statistic) of the formant transition slopes in comparing the 3 final consonants /p, t, k/ in the same context of a preceding vowel (the special vowel /ă/ is never combined with the 2 final consonants /p, t/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formants</th>
<th>Preceding vowel context</th>
<th>/a/</th>
<th>/ɤ/</th>
<th>/ɔ/</th>
<th>/ă/</th>
<th>/ɤ̆/</th>
<th>/i/</th>
<th>/u/</th>
<th>/o/</th>
<th>/e/</th>
<th>/ɯ/</th>
<th>/ɛ/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>F-stat</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>13.63</td>
<td>51.67</td>
<td>7.18</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>43.37</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>F-stat</td>
<td>21.49</td>
<td>156.8</td>
<td>29.99</td>
<td>16.92</td>
<td>47.35</td>
<td>78.07</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>313.82</td>
<td>89.14</td>
<td>57.22</td>
<td>20.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>F-stat</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>45.04</td>
<td>8.49</td>
<td>18.53</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *=Test is significant at 0.05; **=Test is significant at 0.01; ***=Test is significant at 0.005; ****=Test is significant at 0.001; and ns=It is not significant.

Figure 4  Comparison of the formant transition slopes of F1, F2 and F3 of the classical/special vowel pair /a-ă/ in the same context of a final consonant: /p/ in (a), /t/ in (b) and /k/ in (c)

Figure 4 presents an example of the comparison of the classical/special vowel pair /a-ă/ in the same context of final stop consonants /p, t, k/. It is interesting to note that depending on the final consonant context (/p/, or /t/, or /k/), the classical special vowel pair /a-ă/ can be distinguished by at least one of the 3 formant transition slopes F1 and/or F2 and/or F3. Nevertheless, in order to validate and estimate if the formant transition slopes VC allows
distinguishing the 3 classical-special vowel pairs /a-ă/, /ɤ-ɤ̆/ and /ɔ-ɔ̆/, learners need to perform statistical tests.

Table 4  ANOVA tests of formant transition slopes in comparison to classical/special vowel pairs in the same context of final stop consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Formants</th>
<th>/p/ context</th>
<th>/t/ context</th>
<th>/k/ context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/a-ă/</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F3</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɤ-ɤ̆/</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>6.54</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>8.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>35.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F3</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɔ-ɔ̆/</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *=Test is significant at 0.05; **=Test is significant at 0.01; ***=Test is significant at 0.005; ****=Test is significant at 0.001; and ns=It is not significant.

Table 4 represents the results of statistical tests (one-way ANOVA test) on formant transition slopes by comparing classical/special vowel pairs in the same context of final stop consonants /p, t, k/. In each statistical test, (for each context of final consonant, and for each formant F1, F2, F3), the formant transition slope of one classical/special vowel pair was compared. The significant thresholds of 0.01 and 0.05 were also used to compare with the p-value of the statistical test. In this case, if the p-value of one test is smaller than the significant threshold, the hypothesis of the differentiation of classical/special vowel pair by the corresponding formant in that test is true.

The results in Table 4 show that: (1) depending on the following consonant, the classical/special vowel pairs, /ɤ-ɤ̆/ and /ɔ-ɔ̆/, can be differentiated by F1 and/or F2 and/or F3 transition slope; (2) in the same context of the final consonant /p, t, k/, the classical/special vowel pair /ɤ-ɤ̆/ can be differentiated by the F1 transition slope; and (3) the classical/special vowel pair /a-ă/ presents more or less closely the formant transition slope in the context of the final stop consonant /t/, and even in the context of /p/ and /k/ (the weak p-values of 0.0432, and 0.0358 in the context of /p/ and /k/ respectively, are very close to the threshold of 0.05). These results show that the dynamic characteristics of special vowels are very important. Without the formants transition parts corresponding to a final stop consonant, the special vowel could not be produced exactly.

### 3.2 Final stop consonant perception

In order to confirm the role of the formant transition slopes F1, F2 and F3 in the discrimination of the final consonants /p, t, k/ in Vietnamese, perception tests were performed. For the perception tests, a VC syllable was synthesized in which V was the vowel /a/ (with duration of 120ms). The VC transition duration was 20ms. The final consonant C was synthesized without burst at the end and with a variation of formant transition slopes as follows: (1) The offset value of the first formant (F1 offset) was held constant (250Hz) (see Figure 5); (2) The offset values of the evolution of the 2 formants F2 and F3 was varied as shown on the formant plan F2/F3 (see the yellow square points in Figure 6): F2 offset value varied from 500Hz to 2,300Hz, and F3 offset varied from 1,500Hz to 3,300Hz. In the perception tests, there are 43 VC syllables synthesized with different formant transition slopes of F2 and F3.
Vietnamese final stop consonants /p, t, k/ described in terms of formant transition slopes

Figure 5  Perception tests of the final stop voiceless consonants /p, t, k/. A Vietnamese syllable /a/ C is synthesized where the final consonant C is synthesized without burst and with a variation of F2, F3 formant transition slope

Figure 6  Distribution of the F2, F3 offset values in the plan of F2/F3 in the perception tests of the 3 final consonants /p, t, k/: The yellow square points are the offset values of the variation of these 2 formants

Table 5  Main results of the perception tests for the F2, F3 formant transition slopes in the VC context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offset value (Hz)</th>
<th>Correct recognition rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F2 offset</td>
<td>F3 offset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>2400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>2700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>2400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>2700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>3300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>2400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>2700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>3000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(to be continued)
Vietnamese final stop consonants /p, t, k/ described in terms of formant transition slopes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F2 on (Hz)</th>
<th>F3 on (Hz)</th>
<th>F2 off (Hz)</th>
<th>F3 off (Hz)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>3300</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3300</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2300</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows the main results of the perception tests. The average correct recognition rates are calculated for the 10 listeners. By varying the F2 and F3 formant transition slopes: (1) listeners can distinguish the 3 final consonants /p, t, k/; the best score of the final consonant /p/, /t/ and /k/ are 88%, 92% and 80% respectively; (2) in the plan of F2/F3, learners can observe 3 distinct regions corresponding to the 3 final consonants /p, t, k/ where each one is well recognized; (3) the 2 final consonants /p/ and /t/ are perceived more accurately than the final consonant /k/ (the average score of the consonant /p/ and /t/ is high and the region of these two consonants in the plan F2/F3 is larger than the one of /k/); and (4) generally, in the VC context (V is the vowel /a/), the final consonant C is recognized with the best score as /p/ if F2 offset=1,100Hz, and F3 offset=1,500Hz; as /t/ if F2 offset=1,700Hz, and F3 offset=3,000Hz; and as /k/ if both values of F2 offset and F3 offset are close, 200Hz and 2,100Hz respectively.

3.3 Locus equations of final stop consonants

The notion of locus that has been known for almost several decades was defined by Lindblom (1963). Locus equation for Consonant-Vowel (CV) production are obtained by fitting a straight regression line to data points obtained by plotting F2 onset frequencies of C (F2 onset) as a function of F2 midpoint frequencies of V (F2v). Lindblom (1963) derived locus equations of the form: F2 onset=a*F2v+b where a and b were slope and y-intercept, respectively. The linear function relating these 2 parameters are themselves a function of the consonant place of articulation. Many authors as Lindblom (1963), Klatt (1979;1987), Nearey and Shammass (1987), Krull (1988), Sussman, et al. (1991; 1993; 1994; 1996), Yeou (1997), Castelli and Hierholtz (2006), and so on were successful in obtaining the locus equations of initial stop consonant in many languages in the world, i.e., American English, Canadian English, Swedish, Thai, Arabic, Urdu and Vietnamese. All the results showed that both the lawfulness of the regression functions and the classificatory power of predictor variables, slope and y-intercept contributed to an interpretation of locus equations as a higher order phonetic index for classifying and representing stop consonant place of articulation.

Taking up again previous literature studies, the authors applied locus equation measurements to 3 Vietnamese final voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/. Hence, the locus equation presents a relationship between the mid-points frequencies of V (F2v) in relation to offset frequencies of F2 transition (F2 off) for (C1 VC2 tokens.

As the previous studies of locus equations mentioned above in several languages in the world were performed with a corpus of men and women, the authors complement their previous record by 4 female native Vietnamese speakers (called F1, F2, F3 and F4) with the same conditions: Four selected female speakers were born and live in Northern of Vietnam, and they speak the standard (Hanoi) dialect; each speaker was asked to pronounce 5 times all the combinations of the 12 Vietnamese vowels /a/, /ă/, /ɤ/, /ɤ̆/, /ɔ/, /ɔ̆/, /ε/, /u/, /i/, /e/, /ɯ/ and /o/ with the 3 final stop consonants /p, t, k/ in the VC2/C1VC2 syllable where C1 was the initial consonant /b/.
Vietnamese final stop consonants /p, t, k/ described in terms of formant transition slopes

Fifteen locus equations were calculated from 2,720 tokens (1 final consonant /k/ × 12 vowel x 2 contexts VC2/C1VC2 × 5 repetitions × 8 speakers, and 2 final consonants /p, t/ × 11 vowels x 2 contexts VC2/C1VC2 × 5 repetitions × 8 speakers) of the 3 Vietnamese final voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/ over all repetitions of each vowel and for each subject (see Table 6).

Table 6  Slope, y-intercept, mean correlation coefficient value (R^2), and Standard Error (SE) of estimates for 8 Vietnamese speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Slope /p/</th>
<th>/t/</th>
<th>/k/</th>
<th>Y-int (Hz) /p/</th>
<th>/t/</th>
<th>/k/</th>
<th>R^2 /p/</th>
<th>/t/</th>
<th>/k/</th>
<th>SE (Hz) /p/</th>
<th>/t/</th>
<th>/k/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>-472</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>M2</td>
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<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>-158</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.81</td>
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<td>M3</td>
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<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>258</td>
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<td>-35</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>M4</td>
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<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.72</td>
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<td>F4</td>
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<td>0.64</td>
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<td>343</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>-191</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.89</td>
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<td>Mean</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>-182</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.82</td>
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<td>S.D.</td>
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<td>91</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
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Indeed, linear relationships between the F2 mid-vowel frequencies (F2v) and the F2 offset frequencies of C2 (F2 off) were observed. The mean Standard Error (SE) of estimates reflecting the goodness of the fit of the regression line to the date points were relatively small: 48Hz for /p/, 45Hz for /t/ and 73Hz for /k/. Those values can be compared with SEs found, for CV, by Sussman for several languages, for example American English (Sussman, et al., 1991), Cairene Arabic, Thai, Urdu (Sussman, et al., 1991), and to SEs found by Castelli, et al. (2006) for Vietnamese (see Table 7). The mean correlation coefficient value (R^2) cross all the regression line was 0.82 that is comparable to the ones of the 3 initial stop consonants /b, d, g/ found by Sussman (1994) (0.86 across 3 languages and 9 subjects), and to that of the 2 initial stop consonants /b, d/ and the initial fricative /ɣ/ found by Castelli, et al. (2006) (0.82 for 8 Vietnamese subjects).

Figure 7 shows the locus equation space (slope vs. y-intercept coordinates) for the 8 Vietnamese subjects. It is noted that the 3 places of the final stop consonants are clearly separated: The dental /t/ differs from the labial /p/ and the velar /k/ by the higher F2 offset values which reflect the greater y-intercept values; the labial /p/ and the velar /k/ are separated by different slopes: The slope of /k/ is steeper than the one of /p/.
Vietnamese final stop consonants /p, t, k/ described in terms of formant transition slopes

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted with the slope and the y-intercept for the 3 final stop consonants /p, t, k/. The MANOVA analysis shows a significant effect instead of the stop consonants (F(2, 42)=105.43, with p-value<0.0001).

The uni-varied analysis of the slope and the y-intercept show a significant effect with p-value very small (F(2, 21)=52.75, with p-value<0.0001) for the slope, and (F(2, 21)=105.53, with p-value<0.0001) for the y-intercept.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The results have shown that, for the 3 final voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/, the static characteristics (formant transition durations and starting formant transition values of F1, F2 and F3) are more or less identical. However, in all (C1) VC2 contexts, the dynamic characteristics (formant transition slopes) reliably the three final voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/. At the statistical level, the analyses confirm that in the same vowel context, the 3 final stops /p, t, k/ are always differentiated by at least one of the 3 slopes F1, F2 or F3; the F2 formant transition slope is a particularly reliable parameter. In the perception tests, the results showed that by varying the formant transition slope of F2 and F3, most Vietnamese listeners can recognize the final consonant C in the sequence synthesized VC as 1 of the 3 stops /p, t, k/, and in the F2/F3 plan, 3 regions corresponding to the 3 final stop consonants /p, t, k/ emerge. Thus, the authors confirm the hypothesis of Dorman, et al. (1977) that the perceptual weight of transitions is very important, the one of transition is very important. For the 3 Vietnamese unreleased final stop consonants /p, t, k/, the formant transition slopes of F2 and F3 are the only discriminating parameter. Moreover, when comparing the 3 sets of vowels /a-ă, /ɤ-ɤ̆/ and /ɔ-ɔ̆/ in the same context of a final stop consonant, the classical vowels /a, ɤ, ɔ/ and the special vowels /ă, ɤ̆, ɔ̆/ respectively, can be differentiated by at least one of the formant transition slopes F1, F2, F3. This result, together with the results in (Nguyen, et al., 2008; Castelli, et al., 2005), allow the authors to conclude that the differences between the 3 classical vowels /a, ɤ, ɔ/ and the 3 special vowels /ă, ɤ̆, ɔ̆/, respectively, are not only the vowel duration (static characteristic), but also transition rate and the formant transition slopes in VC production (dynamic characteristic). Thus, a quick pronunciation of the classical vowels /a, ɤ, ɔ/ (vowel duration is short) in isolation do not allow Vietnamese listeners to recover the corresponding special vowels /ă, ɤ̆, ɔ̆/ because the special vowels always need the formant transition slopes with a final part (that is a final consonant or a semi-vowel) to create themselves. This explains why the Vietnamese special vowels cannot be pronounced in isolation. The results also extend the Lindblom’s (1963) notion of locus equations to the final voiceless stop consonants. In the locus equation space, the 3 Vietnamese final voiceless
obstruents /p, t, k/ occupy 3 separate areas.

On the other hand, Carré (2008) pointed out that in V1V2 production, the transition rates of F1 and F2 are necessary and sufficient to represent V2 at the very beginning of the transition and throughout the transition, there is sufficient information to detect V2. In (C1) VC2 production, the results also show that the formant transition slopes from different preceding vowels to the same final stop consonant are distinguishable. So the formant transition slopes in the identification of the vowel in CV contexts could also be important. Since the formant transition duration remains constant (as in V1V2 production, Carré (2008), and in VC, CV combinations, Kent (1969)), the corresponding formant trajectories in the acoustic space can be described in term of formant transition rates. Therefore, the time domain could play an important role in the identification of vowels. Such a representation leads to new interpretations of co-articulation, normalization, invariance and vowel reduction.

References:


(Edited by Sunny and Chris)
Bertha—Jane Eyre’s darkest and truest double

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Abstract: This paper intends to convince that the madwoman in the attic is the darkest and truest double of Jane Eyre. It begins with a brief introduction to Jane’s life and the content of the book and then demonstrates the rebellious impulse inside Jane Eyre by examining 3 main life-stages of Jane Eyre—at Gateshead, Lowood and Thornfield. Yet living in patriarchal society, Jane cannot expose the rebellious impulse into full play by herself. Bronte creates the madwoman in the attic—Bertha to reflect Jane’s strongest rebellious impulse by acting out Jane’s internal rage to Rochester, John Reed, the veil and Thornfield.

Key words: Jane Eyre; Bertha; rebellion

1. Introduction

Jane Eyre is Charlotte Bronte’s most famous masterpiece, which describes the orphan girl—Jane Eyre struggles all by herself against the unjust social restrictions on her and finally achieves her goal of self-fulfillment. While reading the novel, readers will sense strong rebellious impulse of Jane Eyre. As Matthew Arnold (1853) points out, Bronte’s “mind contains nothing but hunger, rebellion, and rage”. However, this rebellious impulse does not reflect on Jane Eyre, but on the mad woman in the attic. As Gilbert and Gubar (Sandra & Susan, 1979) point out in The Madwoman in the Attic, “Bertha … is Jane’s truest and darkest double”.

2. The rebellious impulse inside Jane Eyre through 3 main life-stages

In the West, women have been inhibited by a patriarchal literary culture that privileges male’s creativity and denigrates or denies the female. Women throughout that culture are constrained by the images men have of them, the “mythic masks male artists have fastened over a woman’s human face both to lessen their dread of ‘inconstancy’ and—by identifying her with the ‘eternal types’ they have themselves invented—to posses her more thoroughly” (Francis, 2002). In the 19th century, the most deathly of these masks were the monster (mad woman) and the “angle in the house”, which means an aesthetic, moral and sexual ideal of Victorian domestic femininity. The angle in the house, which should be passive, obedient, submissive and contributive, is the ideal woman in male’s definition. On the contrary, the woman who refuses to contribute, behaves out of discipline made by male, submits to nothing but her own will, and is called the monster/demon. The women must behave as an angle, otherwise, they will be called demon.

Jane Eyre has no choice but to live within the male-dominated society where she was born. Jane Eyre is oppressed by the British patriarchal system where men are the makers, interpreters and enforcers of the social and political rules. However, as a middle-class woman in patriarchal society, Jane Eyre declares loudly “I am not angle, I will be myself” (Charlotte, 1966). She bravely confronts with the unfair patriarchal society. In order to achieve
her self-fulfillment and individual happiness and then fulfill her goal of “maturity, independence and the true equality in marriage”, she revolts against what she believes to be unfair restrictions at Gateshead, Lowood and Thornfield.

2.1 The first stage of Jane Eyre's life-pilgrimage—Gateshead

At Gateshead, the first stage of her life-pilgrimage, Jane encounters the oppression from John Reed, Mrs. Reed and the family which is not her real family. Jane Eyre is an impoverished orphan girl, whose mother married a poor clergyman against the wishes of her friends, who consider the match beneath her. At Gateshead, Jane is taken in as an orphaned infant by her mother’s brother. Jane is a discord in Gateshead; she is like nobody there; she is nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children, or even her chosen vassalage. She is a useless thing, incapable of serving their interest, or contempt of their judgment (Charlotte, 1966, p. 47). So, at Gateshead, “her family” does not welcome Jane. John Reed, selfish older cousin who tyrannizes over the household like a substitute patriarch. He oppresses Jane Eyre physically as well as spiritually. He has no antipathy to Jane, and buililies and punishes Jane, not 2 or 3 times in the week, not once or twice a day, but continually. What’s more terrible, the servants do not like to offend their young master by taking Jane’s part against him, and Mrs. Reed is blind and deaf on the subject (Charlotte, 1966, p. 42).

Jane rebels against them, for she cannot bear this oppression. “Unjust, unjust”, all her heart is in insurrection. When John Reed abuses her, she utters her rage “wicked and cruel boy, you are like a murderer, you are like a slave-driver, you are like the Roman emperors!” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 43). She refuses to call him “master”. She becomes a “picture of passion” when she retaliates against John Reed’s cruelty by flying at him “like a mad cat”. As a result, she is locked away alone in the red-room where Mr. Reed, the only “father” Jane has ever had, “breathed his last”. Even imprisoned in the red-room, Jane Eyre determines to escape from insupportable oppression through flight, starvation and even more terrifying alternative: escape from madness (Charlotte, 1966, p. 47).

Jane Eyre not only confronts with John Reed, but also with Mrs. Reed, so-called benefactress who is blind and deaf on John Reed’s abuse on Jane. Jane Eyre declares “I do not love you (Mrs. Reed); I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 68). She even says to Mrs. Reed that she will never call her Aunt again. Jane bravely discloses Mrs. Reed’s miserable cruelty, “You (Mrs. Reed) have no pity. I shall remember how you thrust me back—roughly and violently thrust me back—into the red room, and locked me there, to my dying day” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 68).

To sum up, Jane Eyre has a strong rebellious impulse. As Matthew Arnold suspects that Jane Eyre is such a woman who yearns to escape entirely from drawing rooms and patriarchal mansions. She senses the oppression from the patriarchal society where woman is only an inferior to man. And she fiercely revolts against the unfair value of the society.

2.2 The second stage of Jane Eyre’s life-pilgrimage—Lowood

Jane Eyre’s stage of life-pilgrimage shifts to Lowood, where orphan girls are starved and frozen into proper Christian submission. As Wyatt states, “Whenever Jane claims the right to her own identity, the patriarchy inevitably puts her in her place” (Charlotte, 1966). Owned by merciless and hypocritical patriarchal Mr. Brocklehurst, Lowood is enforced by the strict and harsh rules, which almost push the orphan girls to death.

Totally different from the other women who either sincerely enforce the harsh rules for the patriarchal society or silently bear the oppression in Lowood, Jane, with rebellious impulse in nature, bravely revolts against the unjust restriction. The fury of which Helen Burns is incapable has been burning in Jane’s soul all day. She tells
Bertha—Jane Eyre's darkest and truest double

Helen that “If I were in your place, I should dislike her Miss Scatcherd; I should resist her; if she struck me with that rod, I should get it from her hand; I should break it under her nose” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 88). She says that she “could not bear the shame of standing on her natural feet in the middle of the classroom”. “I must resist those who punish me unjustly” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 90). Mr. Brocklehurst’s speech makes an impulse of fury against Reed, Brocklehurst and Co. bounds in her pulses at the conviction (Charlotte, 1966, p. 98). Jane Eyre bravely tells Miss Temple who is the only merciful teacher in Lowood that she has been wrongly accused. She speaks in her own defense and tells the truth that Mr. Brocklehurst’s speech is out of evidence. And at last, Jane completely clears from every imputation and wins respect in Lowood through her own effort.

Though from Miss Temple, Jane has imbibed something of her (Temple) nature and habits, yet because Jane Eyre is an Angrian Cinderella, a Byronic heroine, the “inmate” of her mind can be no more regulated by conventional Christian wisdom than childe Harold’s thoughts (Sandra, et al., 1979). Thus, when Miss Temple leaves Lowood, Jane’s mind has put off what had borrowed from Miss Temple. She tells us “I was left in my natural thoughts; and beginning to feel the stirring of old emotion” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 116). She remembers that the real world is wide and that a varied field of hopes and fears, of sensations and excitement, awaits those who had courage to go forth into its expanse, to seek real knowledge of life amides its perils (Charlotte, 1966, p. 116). She yearns for true liberty, “for liberty I utter a prayer”. Her way of confronting the world is still the Prometheus way of fiery rebellion, not Miss Temple’s way of ladylike repression, not Helen’s way of saintly renunciation (Sandra, et al., 1979).

2.3 Jane Eyre’s strongest rebellious stage of life-pilgrimage—Thornfield

Obviously, Jane Eyre’s rebellious impulse has not been weakened by 8 years patriarchal education. The fury cannot be extinguished, as long as the unjust restrictions exist. Her strongest rebellion against patriarchal society focuses on her next stage of life-pilgrimage—Thornfield.

Jane’s eagerness for liberty brings her to the painful experience that is at the center of her pilgrimage, the experience of Thornfield, where she continues to experience oppression of patriarchy. Jane senses that Rochester regards her as sultan slave, considers her as an angle. “I am not an angle”. She would rather be a thing than an angle. She does not want to be controlled by Rochester, “I am a free human being with an independence will” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 282). She confronts with Rochester who intends to dominate her by money. She declares, “I will not be your English Celine Varens. I shall continue to act as Adele’s governess; by that I shall earn my board and lodging, and thirty pounds a year besides, I shall furnish my own wardrobe out of that money, and you shall give me nothing—” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 298). When Rochester expresses the opinion of sati, Jane bitterly replies, “I had as good a right to die when my time came as he had: but I should die bide that time, and not be hurried away in a suttee” (Charlotte, 1966).

When Jane learns that Rochester has already married Bertha Mason, the madwoman imprisoned in the attic, for status, for money but love and equality, she traps into a dilemma; she loves Rochester by all her heart and soul. But if she stays with him, she will become his “English Celine Varens” and lose all her dignity. Though Rochester bitterly asks Jane to promise “I will be yours, Mr. Rochester”, in order to keep her indignity, she replies, “Mr. Rochester, I will not be yours” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 342). She determines to leave Thornfield, for she’d rather keep her dignity than become a lover of Rocheater. “I must leave Adele and Thornfield, I must part with you (Rochester) for my whole life; I must begin a new existence among strange faces and strange scenes” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 331). Deciding to leave Rochester, Jane takes the crucial step toward independence. She has discovered that there is, after all, something more important to her than pleasing whom she loves, or giving satisfaction to those who love
Bertha—Jane Eyre's darkest and truest double

her. Despite the pain of her conflict, she has acted decisively to preserve her own integrity.

From the above analyzing, it can be found that Jane Eyre is a woman with rebellious impulse. Jane challenges the widespread Victorian concept of woman as the angle of the house. She senses the oppression from the patriarchal society, against which she revolts.

3. Jane focuses the rebellious impulse on Bertha

However, upon closer inspection upon this belief, which is demonstrated by Jane who conforms to this role by the end of the novel—Jane marries Rochester. In the early Victorian age, woman in marriage is not much better than a slave of the master. She takes care of her husband and educates his child. She decides to remove Adele (the “daughter” of Rochester) from the boarding school in order to educate her at home, “I meant to become her governess once more, but I soon found this is impracticable; my tome and cares were now required by another—my husband needed them all” (Charlotte, 1966). She now takes care of Rochester’s needs and truly becomes his angle. She no longer works in care of others, instead, all the time and efforts are spent on her husband, which is the role of the angle in the house.

Totally different from the character of Jane at the beginning of the novel, Jane ends her life-pilgrimage as an angle in the house. It is not because Jane loses the rebellious impulse but because she lives in the patriarchal society. In a patriarchal system, there is inevitably swift and harsh punishment of the individual by the establishment. Men are the ruling gender, both politically and domestically, and patriarchal authority reverses the right—both define female and to punish infractions of it. Accordingly, Jane’s only feasible survival option involves—attaching herself to powerful or economically viable man. It is a socially acceptable way to function within the patriarchal structure.

3.1 Jane focuses the rebellious impulse on Bertha

In order to survive in patriarchal society, Jane cannot behave as a demon externally. However, according to the analyzing in part one, it can be found that there is a demon in internal Jane. As Mr. Brocklehurst points out at Lowood, “you observe she (Jane) possesses the ordinary form of childhood, who would think that the evil one had already found a servant and agent in her? Yes, such, I grieve to say, is the case” (Charlotte, 1966). The evil one—the demon inhabits inside Jane. Living in patriarchal society, Jane cannot expose it into full play by herself; as a result, she focuses the strongest rebellious impulse on the mad woman imprisoned in the attic—Bertha, Rochester’s first wife. As Sandra and Susan (1979) point out, “On a figurative and psychological level it seems suspiciously clear that the specter of Bertha is still another—indeed the most threatening—avatar of Jane”. This is called “doppelganger”. The term “doppelganger” comes from German, literally translated, it means “doublegoer”. A doppelganger is often the ghostly counterpart of a living person. It can also mean a double, alter ego, or even another person who has the same name. In analyzing the doppelganger as a psychic projection caused by unresolved anxieties, Otto Rank described the double as possessing traits both complementary and antithetical to the character involved. Creating a doppelganger is the often-used device in Gothic tradition.

3.2 Bertha suffers oppression from the patriarchal society

On the surface, the 2 female characters are nothing in common. However, it is not these obviously physical, behavioral, class and socio-economic differences that are important when comparing the 2 characters. What important is that they both suffer the severe oppression from the patriarchal society, and they both sense the unjust norms for women. They confront with the male-dominated society, however, Bertha, as the darkest double of Jane,
Bertha—Jane Eyre’s darkest and truest double

takes the extreme measure and revolts more severely.

Bertha, as a madwoman, has no right to tell her own story. Ironically, Rochester, who deathly hates Bertha, will be the speak man for Bertha’s history. So readers learn Bertha all by Rochester’s narration, even so, readers still find it is a history of an oppressed woman. According to Rochester’s narration, in order to keep the family estate together, Rochester’s father decides to give all the property to Rowland, his elder son. So avoiding to be a poor man, Rochester must be provided for by a wealthy marriage. Mr. Mason, Bertha’s father, promises to give her daughter 30,000 pounds, which is sufficient for Rochester. So he marries Bertha, though as he says to Jane latter “I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her” (Charlotte, 1966). Obviously, 30,000 pounds is the true motivation for the marriage. He maybe takes it for granted that wife, as an inferior of the husband, will behave as an angle and conform to husband’s expectations. Unfortunately, Bertha is such an exception in patriarchal society that she does not comply with the husband’s imposed patriarchal expectations and restrictions. She is not an angle in the house. Rochester is “not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature … neither modesty nor benevolence, nor candour, nor refinement in her mind or manners” (Charlotte, 1966). He finds her nature “wholly alien” to his, her tastes “obnoxious” to his, “her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 333).

Rochester continues to attempt to control Bertha’s behavior by imposing patriarchal expectations and restrictions, with ever-increasing insistence on her compliance. Bertha does not comply, however, instead she still rebels against her husband’s dictates. “Under her husband’s consistent oppression, Bertha’s character ripened and developed with frightful rapidity; her vices sprang up fast and rank: they were very strong” (Charlotte, 1966). Rochester describes Bertha as “the true daughter of an infamous mother… an intemperate and unchaste wife” (Charlotte, 1966). This description of Bertha and her behavior is very different from Rochester’s initial impression. When he first meets Bertha, she was “a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram: tall, dark and majestic”, the “boast of Spanish Town for her beauty” who “flattered” him and “lavishly displayed... her charms and accomplishments”, “all the men in her circle seemed to admire her” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 290). It is apparent that Bertha, before her marriage to Rochester, is an impressive and enchanting woman who is fully capable of functioning within polite society.

Rochester is rich enough after his father and brother die. And Bertha’s 30,000 pounds is not something to him. But he is fully aware that he is irrevocably bound to Bertha by marriage. Though he at last “repudiated the contamination of her crimes, and wrenched himself from connexion with her mental defects” (Charlotte, 1966), he cannot “rid himself of marriage by any legal proceedings” (Charlotte, 1966). At this moment, “the doctors discovered that my wife was mad” (Charlotte, 1966), which even Rochester admits is “prematurely”. Rochester speaks of Bertha’s symptoms in purely personal and social terms: she is not “refined” enough for him; she has a “common, low, narrow” cast of mind; she has “vices”. He admits that, even after being locked away for 10 years, “she had lucid intervals of days—sometimes weeks” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 27). It is Rochester’s abhorrence of Bertha that ultimately leads to his decision to confine her. After Rochester transports his wife to Thornfield, he sees that she is “safely lodged in that third-story room, of whose secret inner cabinet she has now for 10 years made a wild beast’s den—a goblin’s cell” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 294). As a member of the patriarchy, Rochester has the unquestioned power and authority to judge and punish Bertha. He imposes a life sentence of imprisonment for her “crimes” of unladylike, aggressive sexuality and refusal to conform to patriarchal expectations of female modesty and self-sacrifice.
3.3 Jane and Bertha are spiritually connected

Through the above analyzing, as people know, like Jane, Bertha, as a woman in the patriarchal society, also suffers a lot from the unjust system. Bertha is a girl sold by 30,000 pounds; she is a wife never loved by her husband: she is a madwoman mad by her husband’s continuous controlling. She is a demon defined by the society who refuses to conform to the patriarchal society. Bertha and Jane both suffer oppression from the patriarchal society and both rebel against it.

The similar experience that the 2 women undergo makes them spiritually connected. During Jane’s first days of stay at Thornfield, Jane often climbs the 3 staircases, raises the trapdoor of the attic where Bertha is imprisoned. Alone at those moments, Jane utters the thought in her mind, “Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their facilities and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in heir more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to play pianos and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex” (Charlotte, 1966). Jane’s longing for liberty and equal right to men is immediately echoed by Bertha’s “low, slow ha! ha!” (Charlotte, 1966). At this moment, their spirit is connected. Bertha’s laughter seems to tell Jane that it is mad to require liberty and equal right in a patriarchal society.

4. Bertha acts out Jane Eyre’s rages

Bertha and Jane Eyre are almost always spiritually connected during Jane’s stay at Thornfield. Bertha does what Jane what to do, as if she were another Jane Eyre. As Sandra and Susan (1979) point out, “Bertha, in the other words, is Jane’s truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret Jane has been trying to repress herself ever since her days at Gateshead”. The 5 appearances of Bertha prove this opinion. Every one of Bertha’s appearances has been associated with an experience (or repression) of anger on Jane’s part (Sandra, et al., 1979).

4.1 Bertha acts out Jane’s internal rage to Rochester

Jane’s feeling to Rochester is double, obviously she loves him. Jane almost falls in love with Rochester at first sight “The new face, too was like a new picture introduced to the gallery of memory, and it was dissimilar to all the others hanging there: firstly, because it was masculine; and secondly, because it was dark, strong, and stern”. Apparently, Rochester makes such a deep impression to her that she infuses him in her memory. And she even thinks “I had it (Rochester’s face) still before me”, though he is already far away. “Most people would have thought him an ugly man” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 147), however, as for Jane “his face was the object I best liked to see” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 178). Jane becomes “so happy, so gratified” with Rochester that she even make her “bodily health improved”. Undoubtedly, Jane has greatly attracted by her master and she has fallen in love with him. Jane spontaneously shows her feeling to Rochester, which is a natural love from her heart. Her passion drives her to Rochester.

On the other hand, Jane hates Rochester because of his ever-increasing dominating behavior. His manner is typical patriarch. At Jane’s first visit to Rochester, “Mr. Rochester must have been aware of the entrance of Mrs. Fairfax and myself (Jane), but it appeared he was not in the mood to notice us, for he never lifted his head, as we approached” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 152). Though he says after a while “Let Miss Eyre be seated”, yet from his
“impatient” tone, Jane senses the implication “what the deuce is it to me whether Miss Eyre be there or not? At this moment, I am not disposed to accost her” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 152). Apart from these, Rochester’s tone in the conversation with Jane is full of command “Go into the library”, “Go, then, into the library; take a candle with you…” (Charlotte, 1966). He tells Jane it is his habit to command others. “Mr. Rochester had such a direct way of giving orders; it seemed a master of course to obey him properly” (Charlotte, 1966). Beyond these, Rochester begins to show his controlling upon Jane: he tells Jane, “I see at intervals the glance of a curious sort of bird through the close-set bars of a cage” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 170). Apparently, Jane is “this curious sort of bird”, however, “the cage” obviously refers to Thornfield. As the owner of “the cage”, Rochester is also the owner of “the bird”, which shows Rochester’s confidence to control Jane, or we’d rather say that Rochester takes it for granted that he can control Jane. Jane who suffers patriarchal oppression too much and is always aware that it soon feels “the vague sense of insecurity” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 169) through conversation with Rochester. In her secret soul, Jane knows all the faults of Rochester, which she could never forget, “for he brought them frequently before me. He was proud, sardonic, harsh to inferiority of every description” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 178). As a member of patriarchal society, Rochester naturally shows his superior and even his controlling over Jane, which is much more severely from the oppression she suffers at Gateshead and Lowood. Jane, with rebellious impulse in nature, cannot bear Rochester’s controlling.

As a result, the rage for Rochester springs from her, who acts out by nobody but the madwoman in the attic—Bertha. It is Jane’s rage as well as Bertha’s rage “darted round the bed (Rochester’s bed): the curtains were on fire. In the midst the blaze and vapour, Mr. Rochester lay stretched motionless in deep sleep” (Charlotte, 1966). At that time, another “Jane” who deeply loves Rochester comes to rescue him. Bertha serves as Jane’s angry aspect and acts out Jane’s rage to Rochester.

Jane’s rescue makes Rochester increase his feeling to Jane, so he does his patriarchal controlling on her. Especially, after Rochester secures Jane’s love, he puts his dominating power into full play. He tried to control her with offering expensive jeweler. “I (Rochester) will myself put the diamond chain around your neck, and the circlet on your forehead … Jane, I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrist, and load fairy—like fingers with rings” (Charlotte, 1966), “I will attire my Jane in satin and lace… I will cover the head I love best with a priceless veil” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 287). As an independent woman, Jane of course cannot bear his controlling with wealth. Jane refuses to discuss this topic “no, no sir! Think of other subjects, and speak of other things” (Charlotte, 1966), but Rochester “pursued his theme, however, without noticing my deprecation” (Charlotte, 1966). Because, to Rochester, this subject is far more important than others, for this subject can fully show his superior. This subject continues, so does his controlling on Jane. Soon Rochester deepens the subject; he calls Jane “a very angle” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 289), which, as people’s know, is the symbol of submissive woman. He has almost reflexively begins to treat her as an inferior, plaything, virginal possession. He considers her as his initiate, his “mustard-seed”, his “little sunny—girl—bride” (Charlotte, 1966), “It is your time now, little tyrant” (Charlotte, 1966), he declares, “but it will be mine presently: and when once I have fairly seized you, to have and to hold, I’ll just—figuratively speaking—attach you to a chain like this” (Charlotte, 1966).

Rochester’s increasing oppression makes Jane uneasy. Her cheek “burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation” when Rochester buys expensive silk dress for her. “The hour spent at Millcote was somewhat hashing one to me” (Charlotte, 1966). In her secret soul, she is really disguised with Rochester’s controlling. He hates his dominating behavior. So though Jane loves Rochester with all her heart and soul, “My future husband was becoming to me my whole world; and more than the world; almost my hope of heaven” (Charlotte, 1966), yet
before the moment of marriage, she shows her contradiction “he, I was now to array myself to meet, the dread, but adored, type of my unknown future day” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 314). Inside of Jane, there is a rage for Rochester’s controlling, which makes her “dread” to marry him.

Bertha, as dark double of Jane, acts out Jane’s rage to Rochester. As soon as Bertha sees Rochester, she “rose up” and utters “a fiercely cry”. She “sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek” (Charlotte, 1966). “She showed virile force in the contest—more than once, she almost throttled him” with the fiercest yells and the most convulsive plunges” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 322). Bertha’s action is motivated by Jane’s rage as well as her own rage to Rochester.

4.2 Bertha acts out Jane’s rage to John Reed

Bertha not only pours out Jane’s rage to Rochester, but also her rage to her cousin—John Reed, a substitute patriarch who severely oppresses Jane at Gateshead. John Reed “ran headlong gat me… grasp my hair and my shoulder … I really saw him a tyrant: a murderer. I felt a drop or two bloods from my head trickle down my neck” (Charlotte, 1966). As a result, Jane is severely punished, and locked into the red-room in which she is almost driven to be mad. John Reed is the person Jane likes worst in the world. She hates her cousin, the substitute patriarch. Bertha, as the dark double of Jane, pours the rage to her cousin. One night, Bertha’s brother—Mason visits her. Though she is “so quiet at first”, yet she “worried him like a tigress” at the moment she sees him. Bertha tears and cuts “the flesh on my (Mason’s) shoulder” and “sucked the blood”, which is almost similar to John Reed’s attack on Jane. That John Reed abuses Jane to bleed makes Bertha “drained my (Mason’s) heart” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 241). What is more, Bertha later literally takes Jane’s advice to Helen, "when we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard; I am sure we should—so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 90). Bertha’s “strike” is so hard that Mason is “impossible to forget” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 242). So Bertha’s attack to Mason not only express her own rage to patriarchal society, but also more importantly expresses Jane’s rage against the “tyrant” substitute patriarch.

4.3 Bertha acts out Jane’s rage to the veil—the symbol of marriage which contains unjust restrictions to women

Jane dislikes the veil which stands for the marriage as well as Rochester’s wealth controlling to Jane. It is not a common veil, rather, it is Rochester’s present “the veil which, in your (Rochester) princely extravagance, you sent for from London: resolved, I suppose, since I would not have jewels, to cheat me into accepting something as costly” (Charlotte, 1966). Rochester enforces Jane to accept something expensive to show his wealth and his superiority. However, Jane refuses. As a result, Rochester presents this expensive veil which focuses all his wealthy superiority. Jane would rather cover with her square of unembroidered blond than this veil with “aristocratic tastes”, through which Jane finds “Fairfax Rochester’s pride” (Charlotte, 1966, pp. 308-309). Beyond this, covering this veil also means becoming Jane Rochester—Fairfax Rochester’s girl-bride, which Jane “could not quite comprehend…. It made me giddy. The feeling the announcement sent through me (Jane) was something stronger than was consistent with joy—something that smote and stunned; it was I think, almost fear” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 287). Obviously, Jane dislikes this veil which will bring her under the control of Rochester and brings her into marriage and become “the very angle” which Jane declares, “I will not be till die” (Charlotte, 1966, p. 288).

Bertha, as dark double of Jane, tears the veil for Jane. “She took my veil from its place: she held it up, gazed at it long, and then, she threw it over her own head, which perhaps brought back vague reminiscences of her own bridal days” (Charlotte, 1966). She turns to the mirror, but Jane sees a “ghastly” face in the mirror. Since Jane refuses to be an angle, she will be a demon with “ghastly” face. It seems to imply that Jane will be another demon
after covering this veil, for Jane refuses to be an angle. Bertha “rent it in two parts, and fling both on the floor, trampled on them” (Charlotte, 1966). Bertha’s behavior expresses Jane’s feeling.

4.4 Bertha acts out Jane’s rage to the Thornfield—the symbol of patriarchal society

Jane’s profound desire to destroy Thornfield, the symbol of Rochester’s mastery and of her own servitude, is acted out by Bertha. Thornfield is a typical “masculine mansion” in which the only male—Rochester dominates the whole mansion. All the women in Thornfield are literally or figuratively trapped. Jane is figuratively trapped in Thornfield, where she suffers Rochester’s ever-going domination on her. Bertha burns down he house and destroys herself in the process as if she were an agent of Jane’s desire as well as her own. What is more, Jane’s disguised hostility to Rochester, summarized in her terrifying prediction to herself that “you shall, yourself, pluck out your right eye; yourself cut of your right hand” (Charlotte, 1966), comes strangely true through the intervention of Bertha, whose melodramatic death causes Rochester to lose both eye and hand.

To sum up, Bertha serves as a manifestation of Jane’s subconscious feelings—specifically, of her rage against oppressive social and gender norms. Jane declares her love for Rochester, but she also secretly fears marriage to him and feels the need to rage against the imprisonment which could come to her. Jane never manifests this fear or anger, but Bertha does. Thus, Bertha tears up the bridal veil, and it is Bertha’s existence that indeed stops the wedding from going forth. And, when Thornfield comes to represent a state of servitude and submission for Jane, Bertha burns it to the ground. Throughout the novel, Jane describes her inner spirit as fiery, her inner landscape as a “ridge of lighted heath” (Charlotte, 1966). Bertha seems to be the outward manifestation of Jane’s interior fire. Bertha expresses the feelings that Jane must keep in check.

5. Conclusion

To summarize, Charlotte Bronte uses the Gothic plot—the madwoman in the attic to express heroine’s strongest rebellion against patriarchal society. With madwoman in the attic, Bronte devises a socially acceptable way to act out woman’s rage to the male-dominated society.

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A multifaceted female image: An analysis of the heroine in

*The Scarlet Letter*

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**Abstract:** This paper deals with the main characteristics of the heroine in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne. She was firm and kind-hearted. She was punished severely for adultery. However, she endured all miseries and insults bravely, and fostered her daughter alone. Meanwhile, she helped others without any resentment or desire for repayment. Being isolated and outlawed, she got more acute than the others, and became contemplative gradually, speculating on some serious and complex problems. The particular circumstances mainly created her from a common woman to be an important one who had multi-tudinous characteristics. In fact, the sin she had committed was not unforgivable. She was punished severely just because she had defied the Puritan, whose society was filled with cruelty and deceit. Furthermore, Hester’s unsatisfaction with the life, Dimmesdale’s weakness and hypocrisy, and the isolation by the society were all the reasons of creating those characteristics. Finally, Hester dominated over her own identity, and thus, became an example for others.

**Key words:** characteristics; Puritan; firm; kind-hearted; contemplative

**1. Introduction**

*The Scarlet Letter* began in the 17th century in Boston, which was a Puritan settlement period. A young woman, Hester Prynne, whose husband was failed to reunite with her, had given birth to a child. Then, she was punished for adultery. But she insisted on refusing to confess who the child’s father was. In the following years, she lived bravely and fostered her daughter—Pearl alone, with the scarlet letter “A” on her breast. Even though she was laughed at and repelled by other people, she fought for happiness firmly. Hester was good at needle work and lived on it. She often donated most of her means in charity. Nevertheless, the people who got her donation frequently insulted her as return. Year by year, she became so contemplative that she discerned many serious and complex problems of the society. Dimmesdale, Hester’s lover, did not have courage to confess his sin. Chillingworth, Hester’s husband, came to know the fact and revenged on Dimmesdale. Hester and Dimmesdale planned to flee, but they failed because of Chillingworth’s prevention. At last, Dimmesdale confessed publicly, exposing a scarlet letter seared into the flesh of his chest. He fell dead. Frustrated in his revenge, Chillingworth died a year later. Hester and Pearl left Boston. But many years later, Hester returned alone, still wearing the scarlet letter. She lived in her old cottage and resumed her charitable works. Finally, the letter “A”, which represented “Adultery” previously, came to stand for “Angel”. Hester Prynne was firm, kind-hearted and contemplative. She was a woman with these multi-tudinous characteristics that were mainly created by the particular circumstances.

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2. Main characteristics of Hester Prynne

2.1 Being firm and brave

Hester was a woman with high enthusiasm. However, her parents had restrained it. When she married, she was so ignorant of the essence of love. Later, she fell into love with Dimmesdale deeply and gave birth to a child. Even she was punished severely, she loved and protected him. After the exposure of her sin, Hester absolutely refused to speak. She suffered all insults and miseries by herself, speaking nothing about the child’s father.

Later, Hester was released and free to leave, while she chose to stay in Boston. In the following years, she fostered her daughter Pearl alone, and fought against the miserable life. In deed, Hester was isolated and alienated. “There was nothing that made her feel as if she belonged to it. Every gesture, every word, and even the silence of those with whom she came in contact, implied, and often expressed, that she was banished, and as much alone as if she inhabited another sphere, or communicated with the common nature by other organs and senses than the rest of human kind” (Hawthorne, 2001, p. 60). Even the children of the townspeople were as cruel as their parents in their treatment of Hester. When she appeared, they pursued her at a distance with shrill cries and the utterance of a word, or scorned her in their hearts, and frequently reviled her with their tongues; sometimes, they flung mud at her. However, she was not self-banished, instead, she lived positively and confronted all insults and difficulties bravely.

2.2 Being kind-hearted and tolerant

Hester was good at needle work and lived on it. She always donated most of her means in charity on the poor. While the poor to whom she gave a hand often insulted her. Hester was such a woman that often helped the others without any resentment or desire for repayment. In comparison with Hester, the other persons were cruel and shameless. Just think a common person who had helped the others wholeheartedly, but got insults rather than repayment. How did he think of it? What did he do? He may feel indignant and defend for himself; even he may stop helping the others. What about Hester? Hester was extremely kind. As for those who got her aid but hurt her, she presented so tolerated that she still gave them a further hand. Even some persons accosted her with gratitude in their hearts, she reacted so modest and humble. She never raised her head to receive or answer their greeting, but just pointed on the scarlet letter and passed on.

Gradually, Hester improved reputation among the townspeople. “… that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able…” (Hawthorne, 2001, p. 186).

2.3 Being contemplative and speculative

Because Hester Prynne, with a mind of native courage and activity, was estranged and outlawed from society for a long time, she had habituated herself to so special latitude of speculation as was altogether foreign to the other townspeople. There was a saying, “The onlookers see the most of the game”. She was more acute than the others so that she can perceive the others’ inner world, beholding the nature of human beings, that is, the hidden sin. Under the cover of outward guise, everyone had evil in his own heart, even the venerable minister or magistrate. The sanctified matron and the pure maiden were not excluded.

Moreover, Hester was put in the position to make acute observations about her community, partially about its treatment of women. Hester had taken an estranged point of view toward human institutions. She began to ponder over the social organization and larger moral questions. Yet, she discerned that it was a hopeless task before her. Though Hester put these questions in her mind instead of putting into practice, she was more intelligent than the other women. Those women were so conservative and ignorant that they had never thought of those profound
problems. They just kept their present situation at ease. Receiving the unfairness that they thought as destined by God, and hid their true feelings with outward guise. So pitiful they were!

In a sense, the maturation in mind made Hester develop an understanding of a sort of natural law, and she suddenly knew the true meaning of her guilt: it was necessary for a society to have some order. Maybe, it needed law, morality or other things. Once somebody defied this kind of order, he would have no alternatives but to be punished severely. As for Hester, she had not made any unforgiving guilt, while she was punished continuously, for she had challenged the certain society and its order. Under such circumstances, she had been able to think for herself. It was her instinctive principles that she, Dimmesdale and Pearl should flee to Europe, living a happy life, which belonged to them.

3. The reasons of creating those characteristics

Before Hester married Chillingworth, she was a passionate girl. Why did she become so contemplative later? Why were there multi-tudinous characteristics in a single woman? There were some reasons as follow.

3.1 The particular circumstances

In the 17th century, Boston was a Puritan settlement. Consequently, the Puritan dominated every aspect of life and work. “The Puritan fled to America out of the desire to live in a place where they would not need to hide their religious affiliations or fear the others’ persecution. But in this new world, they simply seemed to have re-built the old order” (JIA, et al., 2003, p. 135). In fact, there was hypocrisy and hidden evil in Puritan society. All the creeds were formulated to maintain their domination. They built up a world with their orders, and governed it with their creeds. Once someone dared to break the previous order, he would be punished severely. Therefore, in such a religious situation, Hester’s work in the community was in vain. Her punishment was the inevitable result of challenging the Puritan. She was the scapegoat. It reflected the religion’s cruelty and deceit. It was this cruelty and deceit that caused Hester to fall into the abyss.

Being persecuted and alienated, Hester had taken a point of view toward human institutions as a stranger, and thus created her disposition of contemplation. So she could reach the deep layer of thought. Meanwhile, she discerned that “the sin she had committed constituted injury against the social and moral order but not against others directly. Although it led to isolation, it also led to knowledge. It was a violation of the rules for the sake of happiness” (JIA, et al., 2003, p. 129).

3.2 Unsatisfaction with the life

Complying with parents, Hester married Chillingworth, which was the threshold of her misery. Chillingworth was very ugly in outward appearance. He was an old, pale, thin scholar, with eyes dim and bleared by the lamplight that had served them to pore over many ponderous books. He was a bit deformed, with the left shoulder a trifle higher than the right. Moreover, his soul was more deformed, more hideous. He was self-absorbed, cold and deficient in human warmth. It was such a man that got married with Hester, a young, beautiful, gentle and kind-hearted girl. However, Chillingworth loved nobody but himself. He always ignored his wife, yet expected her to make his soul warm with affection when he did condescend to spend time with her.

Later, the couple immigrated to Boston. Chillingworth send Hester ahead, but he was failed to do. People supposed that he had been lost at sea. While waiting for her husband, the enthusiasm in Hester was revived, having an affair with Dimmesdale and giving birth to a child.

In fact, Hester’s sin had resulted partially from Chillingworth. His willingness to manipulate a young and
native girl into marriage, and his indifferent treatment for her had led to the hardness of Hester’s heart. She was not happy in her marriage with Chillingworth. What she had done was nothing but to seek the true love and happiness, which had belonged to her.

3.3 Dimmesdale’s weakness and hypocrisy

Dimmesdale was Hester’s lover, Pearl’s father. Falling into love with Dimmesdale, Hester was reviving and happy. However, it was a rough way, because it had violated the ethic and moralities and it could not be tolerated. It was noticeable that though Dimmesdale was eloquent in his sermons, he was so weak and hypocritical. He could not protect his beloved woman; he did not dare to confess his guilt with Hester; even he had not undertaken the responsibility as Pearl’s father. He was a coward. The most ridiculous and cruel situation was that he advised Hester on the scaffold. A hypocritical man he was! He was the sinner, while it was he that asked Hester to speak up. On one hand, he wanted to rescue his soul; on the other hand, he did not expect Hester to speak up in order to keep his fame. In the following days, he was in dilemma and suffered from mysterious heart trouble.

It was Dimmesdale, the week and hypocritical man that brought permanent misery and pain to Hester. He committed the guilt but did not dare to endure the punishment. If he had ascended the scaffold with Hester, Hester would not have undertaken the misfortune alone for so many years. However, just these misfortunes made Hester more and more mature.

4. Conclusion

Hester Prynne was firm, kind-hearted and contemplative. She was a woman with these multitudinous characteristics. She had courage to defy the unreasonable order of Puritan; she lived so positively no matter how many miseries she had suffered; she always helped the others without any resentment or desire for repayment; and gradually, she became contemplative. Though she was not an extraordinary woman, she was an important one that was created by the particular circumstances.

At last, she returned Boston and lived in the cottage again. She also resumed wearing the scarlet letter. And then, she became a spokeswoman for larger issues. And she fought for women’s rights and took a position in the society similar to that of a minister: she was concerned about the spiritual needs of her fellow human beings. And “the letter A came to stand for Angel” (JIA, et al., 2003, p. 165).

Certainly, “she created a life in which the scarlet letter was a symbol of overcoming hardship and of gaining wisdom rather than a sign of failure or condemnation” (JIA, et al., 2003 p. 165). She dominated over her own identity, and in doing so, she became an example for the others.

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