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Characteristics of the Chinese vocabulary learning process of advanced native English speaking students

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Characteristics of the Chinese Vocabulary Learning Process of Advanced Native English Speaking Students

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Contents

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Abstract

Language learning goes from input to output, and during this process the learners' developing language is referred to as "interlanguage". This thesis investigates this process from a second language teacher's point of view, starting from the learners' output - their "feedback". The method employed is to analyse the results of a survey of word usage errors committed by advanced native English speaking learners of Chinese in writing compositions, and categorise the errors according to type.

Contrastive analysis of the two languages, and interlanguage theory is used to deduce the reasons for these errors and the roles played by the native language and the target language in their learning strategies. The general features of advanced learners' interlanguage in their vocabulary usage are described, the phenomenon of regression, or increased dependency on the mother tongue in particular aspects of the learning process, is noted and reasons for this suggested. It is concluded that there are objective and subjective reasons for these errors, and that improvements to textbooks, learning strategies and teaching methods should help to alleviate the difficulties students presently experience in vocabulary usage at the advanced stage and allow their learning process to progress more smoothly.

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Introduction

If we think of the grammar system as the framework of the language edifice, then vocabulary is the building material of that structure. We cannot master a language without understanding fully its vocabulary system and using it appropriately. Vocabulary learning is an important part of the process of language learning, especially at the advanced stage. This is a general feature of language learning, and particularly true of Chinese, whose vocabulary includes a vast number words accumulated through a long history of development. As one researcher has pointed out: "Current Chinese vocabulary has, through absorbing classical Chinese and modern Chinese words over a long period of time, accumulated a huge corpus." (Zhang Yajun 1990, p.311). The other reason is that problems associated with vocabulary in Chinese are particularly numerous, since problems which are grammar problems in English are often vocabulary problems in Chinese. For example, these include the way of expressing tense and the possessive case. So some Chinese teachers and researchers have emphasised: " In teaching Chinese as a second language, from the first year to fourth year, we should consistently lay emphasis on increasing students' vocabulary." (Li Yang 1990). During the advanced stage, after the basic grammar learning, the task of learning vocabulary becomes even more crucial.

> "In learning Chinese as a second language, after one or two years of basic Chinese grammar training, foreign students have already acquired the skill to communicate in the Chinese language. So, at the advanced stage, vocabulary learning becomes more important. The students should not only have mastered a certain number words, understand their meaning clearly, and be able to create phrases with words, and categorise and analyse their meaning, but also be able to explain the commendatory and derogatory sense of words, their extended meanings, synonyms, near-synonyms and antonyms. They should also be able to cope with idioms and common sayings." (Zhao Yongxin 1996)

It is generally accepted by Chinese teachers and researchers that vocabulary learning is one of the most crucial tasks at the advanced stage, and this thesis will concentrate on this field.

0.1 Recent Research on Chinese Vocabulary Teaching

Following several decades of teaching and research on Chinese as L2, research on the vocabulary itself and on vocabulary teaching is gradually being integrated. Some research has considered general problems of vocabulary teaching, such as how to distinguish the parts of speech of Chinese vocabulary, how to determine different levels of vocabulary in Chinese L2 teaching, the role of vocabulary teaching in Chinese L2 teaching, etc. In "Duìwài Hànyǔ jiàoxué zhōng yǔhuì jiàoxué ruògān wèntí" 对 外 汉 语 教 学 中 语 汇 教 学 若 干 问 题 (Some issues in vocabulary teaching in teaching Chinese as a second language), Hu Mingyang looks at vocabulary teaching, the weak link in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, and points out that if we wish to see improvement in this area, teachers and researchers of Chinese L2 teaching should realise clearly the differences in meaning, usage, collocation, cultural connotation, and nuance between the vocabulary systems of different languages. (Hu Mingyang 1997, p.12-18). Hu's article not only points out the weak points of Chinese vocabulary teaching and the continued unsatisfactory situation in that field, but also analyses the reasons for it, starting from the characteristics of the vocabulary system and the psychology of learners and teachers. In "Lùn duìwài Hànyǔ cíhuì jiàoxué" 论 对 外 汉 语 词 汇 教 学 (On vocabulary teaching in teaching Chinese as a foreign language), He Ping considers an important problem of Chinese vocabulary teaching - how to bring out the different levels of meaning in Chinese vocabulary during the teaching of Chinese as L2. He Ping also suggests some practical ideas concerning the main points and methods (He Ping 1990, p.130-137). Like Hu Mingyang, she also pays attention to the particular characteristics of vocabulary.

Vocabulary has a system, but it is not as systematic as grammar because vocabulary is more sensitive to social developments and subject to quicker change. In teaching vocabulary, especially as a part of second language teaching, the focus of the problems in teaching and learning is its more open system.

The *Hànyǔ shuǐpíng cíhuì yǔ Hànzì děngjí dàgāng* 汉 语 水 平 词 汇 与 汉 字 等 级 大 纲 (Syllabus of Chinese vocabulary and characters levels), compiled by the State Office for Teaching Chinese as a Second Language in 1992 as a standard syllabus for teaching, raises the four essential basic elements of general syllabus design, textbook compilation, classroom teaching and examinations. This syllabus was an important watershed in the development of systematic Chinese vocabulary teaching. After this, some researchers put forward proposals on how to indicate the part of speech and how to select words at each level, in order to improve the teaching curriculum (Peng Lizhen 1996). Sun Dejin comments on the syllabus from the point of view of the choice of vocabulary, the choice of items and the indication of parts of speech, believing that the syllabus can be improved in these three aspects (Sun Dejin 1993). Others have suggested syllabuses for specific stages. Chen Zhuo explains the methodology and theory of a syllabus for an intermediate Chinese course as developed by the Beijing Languages Institute (Chen Zhuo 1996). The compilation of the syllabus showed a more standardised and systematic approach to vocabulary teaching and research, something which is obviously an improvement. These researchers indicate the crucial problems they faced and offer valuable suggestions for this field.

The rules of word usage and vocabulary teaching methodology are important considerations in vocabulary teaching and research; they are also of great concern to teachers and researchers. Liu Ming, in his article "Duìwài Hànyǔ jiàoxué de cíhuì chǔlǐ wèntí" 对 外 汉 语 教 学 的 词 汇 处 理 问 题 (The problem of vocabulary management in teaching Chinese as a foreign language),

discusses the selection of words in vocabulary teaching and how to control their volume. He also suggests practical ways of effecting this in the classroom (Liu Ming 1985, p.275-280). Others, like Li Jinchao, have researched how to organise different vocabulary teaching emphases and methods at different stages of language learning. He pays particular attention to the intermediate and advanced stage when vocabulary is a major part of the learning content (Li Jinchao 1990, p.142-146). Zhu Liyun, in "Duìwài Hànyǔ cíyǔ jiàoxué chūtán" 对 外 汉 语 词 语 教 学 初 探 (Exploring vocabulary teaching in teaching Chinese as a foreign language), has discussed the particular characteristics of learners from different countries and classroom teaching methods (Zhu Liyun 1993, p.360-371). "Duìwài Hànyǔ jìnyìcí jiàoxué màntán" 对 外 汉 语 近 义 词 教 学 漫 谈 (On near-synonym teaching) by Liu Jin includes an analysis of the scope and important points of near-synonym teaching. She points out some of the unavoidable problems in teaching vocabulary at the advanced stage and suggests how to teach near-synonyms, within the specific context of Chinese L2 teaching. A point she makes, based on her teaching experience, is that the conception of near-synonym in the area of teaching of Chinese as a second language should be wider than for L1 teaching. (Liu Jin 1997, p.18-22).

With the introduction of contrastive analysis, error analysis and interlanguage theories and methodologies, a new field has developed in Chinese L2 teaching. More attention has been paid to the study of the content and methodology of vocabulary teaching through the analysis of learners' native language and usage errors. Research in this area includes the differences between the native and target languages, and how these influence the learning process. Some researchers have attempted to discover interlanguage rules in the learning Chinese, in order to find a suitable way to solve the problems in vocabulary teaching and learning. For instance, "Hàn-Yīng cíyǔ wénhuà shàng de búduìyìng" 汉 英 词 语 文 化 上 的 不 对 应 (The cultural discorrespondence between Chinese and English vocabulary) by Zhang Dexin gives a number of examples showing the mismatch

between the vocabulary systems of Chinese and English. He also analyses the cultural factors which lie behind this mismatch (Zhang Dexin 1996, p.438-454). "Hànyǔ yǔ Yīngyǔ duìbǐ fēnxī zài Hànyǔ jiàoxué shàng de gōngnéng" 汉 语 与 英 语 对 比 分 析 在 汉 语 教 学 上 的 功 能 (The function of contrastive analysis between Chinese and English in the teaching of Chinese) by Xu Ling Zhiyun analyses the errors caused by native language influence (Xu Ling Zhiyun 1993, p.63-55). Xu points out some important differences, including both grammar and vocabulary, between these two languages and analyses how these differences cause errors in language usage. Her opinions are based on her teaching experience and are very practical for teaching Chinese to native English speaking students. "Wàiguórén xué Hànyǔ de cíyǔ piānwù fēnxi" 外 国 人 学 汉 语 的 词 语 偏 误 分 析 (Analysis of vocabulary errors of foreigners learning Chinese) by Lu Jianji explores the rules underlying word usage errors and, based on interlanguage theory, makes suggestions for vocabulary teaching methodology (Lu Jianji 1987, p.525-530). These researches have a common characteristic: they look at language learning as a process and try to analyse the factors influencing the process, especially the relationship between the native language and the target language.

Thus, there have been some advances in Chinese L2 vocabulary teaching and research, but considering its importance and complexity, it has been relatively neglected. As one authority has commented:

> "If we look through the collections of papers of several international conferences, we find that the amount of vocabulary research is much less than other fields. Some papers have been included in the vocabulary area, but, in fact, are on the grammar or rhetoric side. All this indicates that lexical research has a lower profile than grammar." (Tian Xiaolin 1993, p.71-79).

For vocabulary teaching, the situation even more serious than for research. For example, in the 1985 First International Conference of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language Collected Papers, the number of papers on vocabulary teaching

was only 3 out of a total 79; by the fourth conference 1993, after 8 years, this had only increased to 4 out of 77. Teaching vocabulary has not been paid the same attention as pronunciation teaching and grammar teaching. There has not been any real breakthrough in the field of vocabulary teaching and research methodology. At a time when people are more and more concerned with research in language acquisition theory and practice, research in vocabulary teaching has remained isolated from developments elsewhere. There has been little research based on the learners' cognitive process. Detailed descriptions of interlanguage in the vocabulary learning of learners from different countries have been even fewer.

For textbook and course design too, the main learning content at the intermediate/advanced stage becomes vocabulary learning rather than grammar learning, as it is at the elementary stage. As pointed out above, the total volume of Chinese vocabulary is huge, and there remain many problems in the selection and explanation of words in L2 Chinese textbooks. The *Vocabulary Syllabus* has given some guidance over the levels of vocabulary, but how to implement this in textbook compilation remains a problem. The new words in some textbooks either exceed or fail to reach the *Syllabus* recommended amounts for the appropriate level (Sun Ruizhen, Chen Tianshun 1996). It has been quite normal for the vocabulary teaching just to be a minor interlude before teaching the text, and for it not to be included as part of the organised lesson plan. In a word, how to deal with the main problems of teaching vocabulary and how to make learners expand more effectively their vocabulary and use it appropriately in practice, is the long term aim of both teachers and learners.

0.2 Origins of this Research

For this research an analysis was carried out of the errors in the compositions of intermediate/advanced learners of Chinese whose native language is English. The purpose is to analyse advanced learners' problems in learning Chinese vocabulary, and try to discover their characteristics, and what path they follow in the process of learning vocabulary. It also explores generally the problems of Chinese vocabulary learning and how to solve these problems in teaching and learning.

The origin of the research, primarily, was the vocabulary course I taught in Department of East Asian Studies in Durham University in England. This course was set up in response to student requests. They were keenly aware of word usage difficulties when they tried to write or speak in Chinese as advanced learners. The textbook they used was *Improve Your Chinese* a topic based, multi-skill textbook compiled by Leeds University. The pattern of dealing with vocabulary in this textbook is that, apart from listing after each item of text some difficult new words which appear in it, there is a general list of vocabulary on the topic of the lesson which comes at the beginning of the lesson. This consists of a substantial list of topic-related vocabulary, most of which does not appear elsewhere in the lesson. (For examples of this, see Chapter 3). The main list of vocabulary consists of items connected with the main topic, and so these are very useful in expressing ideas on the topic in oral and composition classes. However, there is no main text for the lesson from which these vocabulary items are taken, so there is no context to show the usage pattern of these words. Thus, although students could understand the meaning of individual words from the textbook vocabulary list or from a dictionary, because they did not understand the conditions governing their usage, they found it hard to use this vocabulary appropriately. Nevertheless, the students understood the potential usefulness of such words. They pointed that if there were a course to teach them how to use the words, it would be very helpful

in expressing their ideas and opinions during their oral and composition classes. So, the vocabulary class was set up at their request as the first class in a one week integrated course of classes on the same topic. The topics included such current affairs subjects as pollution, fashion, employment, and so on.

In addition to teaching vocabulary, I also participated in the last task of this integrated week - correcting and marking compositions on the week's topic. After undergoing a course of classes (including vocabulary, translation into Chinese, interpreting and spoken Chinese), they had a test which took the form of a composition. For this, they had to write an essay on the week's topic. There were many problems in their written expression, the majority of which were related to word usage (see survey table in Chapter 1).

Teaching this class, whose purpose was purely to explain vocabulary, and correcting the students' compositions, made me concentrate on the problems of word usage and Chinese vocabulary teaching and learning. The students learnt how use the words in these classes and then used them in their compositions. Hence, the week became a cycle from input to output in vocabulary learning (and I, as the teacher, received rapid feedback on the results of teaching.) Owing to the students having a common mother tongue and similar level of Chinese, their areas of difficulty and confusion were particularly obvious. For example, the different meanings of one word, the collocations of words, grasping the different types of meaning of words including the conceptual meaning, the grammatical meaning and 'word colour'- affective - meaning. They would transfer the rules of their mother tongue and apply them to the target language. These general problems or mistakes in their language appear to be a reflection of the characteristics of their interlanguage. By investigating the overall situation of their word usage, using error analysis and interlanguage theory, it seeemed that it may be possible to pinpoint the source of these problems. Hence, I investigated advanced level students' word usage in their Chinese compositions, including some examination paper material. Some lower level English speaking students' written material was

also included for the purpose of comparison. The main aim of the investigation is to discover what the underlying rules governing learners' mistakes are, and to search for possible solutions.

0.3 The Concept of Interlanguage

Learning a second language involves the learner in using their native language to grasp a new language system. During the long learning process, there are differences in the "language" which the learners use at different stages and in different areas (such as grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary). Selinker developed the concept of "interlanguage" to describe the language form used by learners (Selinker 1972, p.209-231). It has been described as follows:

> "Interlanguage is a developing and maturing language system which learners acquire through their innate learning strategy and through some understanding based on the target language input."
> (Sun Dekun 1990, p.58-65, translated from Richards 1984).

It is like neither the learners' mother tongue nor the target language, but a mixture of elements from both of them. It also includes the learner's creative thinking during the learning process. It is a language system which, through the learner's constant efforts, approaches closer and closer to the target language, its ultimate aim.

Although regarding the language of the learner's learning process as a language system is a hypothesis, its existence has been proved in many aspects of the learning process, both from the teaching side and from the learning side. Littlewood has pointed out:

> "If we imagine a continuum between the first language system (which constitutes the learner's initial knowledge) and the second language system (which is his target), we can say that at any given time, the learner speaks an 'interlanguage' (IL) at some point along this continuum." (Littlewood 1984, 1995, p.33)

A number of researchers have searched for the characteristics of interlanguage. Lu Jianji has summarised some characteristics of interlanguage according to those suggested by C. Adjemian (Adjemian 1976): language permeability, fossilisation and regression.

"Permeability means that the interlanguage may be influenced and permeated by rules and forms from the learners' native language or the target language -- foreigners learning Chinese, when the Chinese rules they have mastered are not sufficient to express their meaning, face two choices: using some rules and forms from their mother tongue in their Chinese (interlanguage) , or using inappropriately some Chinese rules they have learnt . These two choices may both be inserted into the learner's interlanguage system." "Fossilisation, on the one hand, implies that interlanguage as a whole cannot not reach exactly the same level as the target language; on the other hand, it suggests that when some learners have reached a certain stage learning particular aspects they will get stuck and not progress any further."

On the question of regression, Lu said:

"In the course of foreign language learning, with the improvement in foreign language ability, interlanguage moves progressively towards the target language. However, this does not mean the process is a straight line one, since there is regression and deviation. This is the nature of interlanguage..." (Lu Jianji 1994, p.146-147)

Through an understanding of these characteristics of interlanguage, researchers can grasp the basic nature of the second language learning process, in order to carry out more advanced research into a particular stage, or a particular language problem. Recently, in the field of teaching Chinese as a second language, more and more attention has been paid to the interlanguage of foreign learners during their L2 learning of Chinese. In addition to some general introductions of interlanguage theory and its relevance to Chinese teaching, some researchers have pointed to practical steps which can be taken. For example, one idea is that research should be carried out into Chinese learners' interlanguage system as a whole, including Chinese pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and discourse etc., and that a start should be made on creating a store of interlanguage material (Lü

Bisong 1994, p.132-140). This is a grand project and also, in theory, an extremely significant one for research into Chinese learning. Its realisation needs basic research into interlanguage in different areas, different stages and students from different countries. Some researchers have researched some problems in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar etc. Examples include: "Zhōngjièyǔ lǐlùn yǔ wàiguórén xuéxí Hànyǔ de yǔyīn piānwù fēnxi" 中 介 语 理 论 与 外 国 人 学 习 汉 语 的 语 音 偏 误 分 析 (Interlanguage theory and error analysis in foreigners' learning of Chinese pronunciation) (Lu Jianji 1984) and "Wàiguórén xué Hànyǔ de cíyǔ piānwù fēnxi" 外 国 人 学 汉 语 的 词 语 偏 误 分 析 (Analysis of vocabulary errors in foreigners' learning of Chinese) (Lu Jianji 1987, p.525-530); "Zhōngjièyǔ hé Hànyǔ xūcí jiàoxué" 中 介 语 和 汉 语 虚 词 教 学 (Interlanguage and the teaching of Chinese function words) by Li Xiaoqi (Li Xiaoqi 1996, p.174-185); "Yīng-Hàn zhōngjièyǔ de hóngguān túxiàng" 英 汉 中 介 语 的 宏 观 图 像 (A macro picture of English-Chinese interlanguage) (Yip Po-Ching 1993, p.128-133); "Hànyǔ shūmiàn cíyǔ de zhōngjiè xíngshì - mǔyǔ wéi Yīngyǔ de xuéshēng zài xuéxí Hànyǔ cíyǔ guòchéng zhōng suǒ chūxiàn de wèntí" 汉 语 书 面 词 语 的 中 介 形 式 - 母 语 为 英 语 的 学 生 在 学 习 汉 语 词 语 过 程 中 所 出 现 的 问 题 (The interlanguage form of Chinese written words - the problems of English native speakers in learning Chinese vocabulary) (Yip Po-Ching 1997). They all try to describe the phenomenon of interlanguage in the Chinese learning process or to explore its rules. Such research is the basis for developing an overview of interlanguage in Chinese learning, and is a necessary and practical step.

With such basic theories of interlanguage as the starting point, supplemented by the inspiration received from researchers who have applied this to the learning of Chinese, in this study I am attempting, in combination with my own practical experience of teaching and research, to explore the Chinese vocabulary learning process of native English speaking students learning Chinese

as L2. The following will explore the main characteristics of interlanguage and explain how this research was influenced by interlanguage theory.

A. *The general process from mother tongue towards the target language*

The main language factors involved in interlanguage, as Selinker pointed out in his first paper introducing the concept of interlanguage, are the learners' mother tongue, the target language and the "interlingual utterances" which are a mixture of these two. The mother tongue is the starting point and the target language is the ideal goal; this is the basic thread running through the learning process. "Successful second language learning, for most learners, is the reorganisation of linguistic material from an IL to identity with a particular TL." (Selinker 1972, p.229). Although this definition is restricted, for example there are other factors influencing the process, including learners' knowledge of other languages and their basic language understanding and thought patterns, it still is very helpful for research into language learning by making the subject more concrete and practical. It is precisely the existence of this schema, this tendency or direction, which confirms the systematic nature of the existence of interlanguage.

Thus, it is these factors which make permeability an important characteristic of interlanguage: i.e. it is permeated by a mixture of mother tongue and target language. With this concept as the starting point, the reasons for learners' errors are analysed in this research. Learners' mistakes are investigated looking for influences from their mother tongue and the target language; at the same time, an attempt is made to explain the problems in their language usage in terms of the characteristics of, and differences between, the learners' mother tongue and the target language. In addition, their learning process and strategy is explored. Learners should effect a transfer during their learning process. In other words, there is a language system existing in their brain already and they will consciously accept or reject a new system. The process is like building a bridge in

their mind. The form of this bridge depends on the distinct characteristics of the two banks being spanned - the learners' mother tongue and the target language. The learner's language form has characteristics of both of these, but it is also different to both of them. This research concentrates on the differences between Chinese and English in order to explore the possible nature of this "bridge". It also investigates the influences of both their mother tongue and the target language during the learning process through the mixed and permeated language form used by learners.

B. *Systematic but unstable, with rules but many variations*

In form, interlanguage is a system with rules which can be traced. "Understanding this fundamental characteristic is the basis of interlanguage research.... Looking at it from the point of view of its internal structure, it is a system which is formed through some internal factors. That is to say it has rules for the system of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar" (Lu Jianji 1994, p.145). Of course, interlanguage is not ultimately a natural language but is the product of the language learning process. It is a changeable and temporary system which is impossible to describe as a fixed entity. It changes according to the process of learning, the learner's mother tongue, the material being learnt and the learner's personal background. In a word: "It is a dynamic system which is revised constantly during the process of learning as the interlanguage approaches closer and closer to the target language." (ibid).

The characteristics of interlanguage are not only the basis of interlanguage research, but also explain the significance of, and motivation for, interlanguage research. We can investigate how the various factors influence learner's interlanguage. We can also try to find out how changes to the input factors are reflected in the interlanguage system and how we can make the system gradually approach the target language. Such research should be beneficial in helping learners and teachers to comprehend the process of learning, and in providing

clearer targets for teaching and learning. In other words, changing one or more of these factors will influence the whole interlanguage system. Hence, when we are concerned with one of the factors of teaching, for example the input materials, interlanguage theory not only offers us insight into their role in the learners' output, but even more significantly, helps us to adjust or to improve the content or form of the input materials in order to improve the learner's interlanguage system, and make the transition towards the target language more smooth. For example, deficiencies in textbook vocabulary presentation cause learners problems which could be avoided by more care in vocabulary selection and explanation (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of this).

C. *Barriers to the learning rate: fossilisation and regression*

The process of interlanguage development is to go towards the target language. The more advanced the learner's level is, and the nearer it approaches to the target language, the harder the process becomes. Fossilisation is a typical feature of this. Researchers of interlanguage have viewed it as one of the core problems.

Selinker has pointed out that 'non-development' in IL is an important research area, something we should try to understand and describe (Selinker 1984, p.335). There is never a smooth rate of learning in any area. It is a general feature common to all human language learning there are certain stages and certain aspects that it is difficult to progress beyond. In practice it varies according to individuals and groups when and where such problems will arise and result in fossilisation. To realise this and to be able to predict it, and hence have the possibility of reducing fossilisation, and to understand the conditions and rules applicable to interlanguage regression will, without doubt, be positive factors in aiding the language learning process.

Imbalance in the developmental process and constant change are important characteristics which is distinguish IL from the natural language. Teachers and researchers of L2 are particularly concerned with these, because they may be said to be some of the problems of most practical significance in L2 teaching and learning. The process of L2 learning is a process of overcoming regression and fossilisation in order to approach closer and closer to the target language. The form that regression and fossilisation take and the stages at which they appear are decided by a lot of factors. When we investigate learners' problems in language learning, we find that the fewer the variables, such as the learners' mother tongue, the syllabus and the stage of learning, the more apparent the system and rules of the learners' interlanguage will be. This also means the form of the regression, the imbalance and the fossilisation will be even more apparent. Starting from this premise, an attempt has been made to limit some factors, like the type of learner, their language level, their mother tongue and the syllabus in order to investigate the problems of interlanguage in the Chinese learning process. Fossilisation and regression are more prevalent at the advanced stage although they may both occur at any stage. "The speed of development of interlanguage is fast, relatively speaking, at first, and then steady. Then later it is slower." (Tong Lequan 1997, p.9). This research concentrates on a particular type of learner - native English speakers, at a particular stage - the advanced stage, with a particular aspect of the syllabus - Chinese vocabulary usage, to try to investigate some characteristics of interlanguage in the process of Chinese language learning. The aim is to look at ways of controlling parts of the teaching and learning process, to limit or solve the regression and fossilisation problems and make the language learning process more effective.

0.4 Stages in this Research

Errors are the main characteristic feature of learners' interlanguage. In this research, firstly, word usage in learners' compositions are investigated. Learners' word usage errors are categorised and analysed. Through this, the main word usage problems of advanced students and their manifestations are shown. The errors are categorised according word usage difference between their interlanguage and the target language in meaning, part of speech and affective feeling, etc. In the course of this investigation, it becomes apparent that there are differences in vocabulary usage rules over the whole field of learners' interlanguage and the Chinese target language.

The purpose in showing the gap between these two "language" vocabulary systems (i.e. the interlanguage and the target language systems) is to analyse it deeply, in order to discover the reason for this. The research starts from the "root" - the learners' mother tongue. In Chapter 2, a contrastive analysis is offered of the Chinese and English vocabulary systems, mainly concentrating on those differences which are prone to cause problems in usage. In this chapter, the differences between the Chinese and English vocabulary systems are pointed out according to different types of meaning: conceptual, grammatical and affective. This is a basic obstacle learners face during their vocabulary learning process. By showing this, it is possible to understand where the learner starts from and how far is the distance s/he needs to travel.

The difference between the learners' mother tongue and the target language, is, in fact, the total distance of the interlanguage road along which learners should travel during whole process of learning. In Chapter 3 the learners' process of Chinese vocabulary learning is investigated, including various subjective and objective interference or limitations. It is pointed out that there are some limitations arising from their learning materials, the main content of their language input. The limitations in textbooks in vocabulary presentation are a

common problem for all language learners. This input limitation is explored with examples of words taken from textbooks used by the learners. Then, in Chapter 4 an attempt is made to describe the approaches and strategies used by learners for bypassing these obstacles and making up for their input limitations when they try to express their meaning. In other words, what learners do when they attempt to output what they have learnt. These approaches or strategies can be divided to two main ones: mother tongue transfer or relying on rules from the target language. On the basis of their language output we conclude that mother tongue transfer is their main method. The examples of word usage also show that the learners' strategies are limited and are only partially able to solve their communication problems. In fact, such approaches or strategies often cause errors and become new obstacles preventing them from reach their goal, i.e. expressing themselves appropriately in the target language.

Through this analysis of the process of learning Chinese vocabulary, it is possible to reach certain conclusions on the basis of learners' errors and their word usage methods or strategies. There is a basic characteristic of the interlanguage form -- reversion to their mother tongue or regression. During the advanced stage, the main content of language learning is vocabulary; the form of their interlanguage does not show progress towards the target language, but relies more on their mother tongue than at the elementary-intermediate stage, when the main learning content is grammar. In other words, it is part of the normal process to experience stasis or even regression. The influence of the mother tongue on their interlanguage is even stronger than before. We try to investigate the reasons for this "turning back" phenomenon, looking at the object of their learning and at the way of learning.

In Chapter 6, we point out some possible solutions to the problems in the vocabulary learning process. We look both at word usage in Chinese vocabulary teaching and at the influence of syllabuses and learning materials, teaching methods and learning approaches, etc.

Chapter 1. Analysis of Data

The target of the survey is English native speakers whose major is Chinese. The data is from advanced stage learners' compositions: examination papers and weekly compositions written by students in Britain. It includes 100 individual compositions. In total these amount to about 70,000 characters. The elementary stage data is from the compositions and examination papers of native English speaking learners based in Beijing.

1.1 Data and Tables

The data analysed here is based on written material, mostly compositions on a choice of set titles on a specified topic. Some were written with access to a dictionary and some without. Those composed for tests and examinations were written with time limitations, but those set for homework were without time limits.

The following considerations influenced our decision to choose written material for analysis. Firstly, written materials give better scope for displaying the rich and complex nature of vocabulary. Hence, it is possible to make a deeper analysis of the learners' word usage competence. Secondly, there is a clear context when words are used in an essay and the students are attempting to choose the words with precision, thus it becomes more apparent whether or not the students are able to express their meaning appropriately and clearly. As Pit Corder points out: "Judgements about superficial well-formedness, of course, do not need to take into account the context of the sentence; judgements about appropriateness, however, clearly do." (Corder 1981). Thirdly, it avoids the problem of forced errors which occur in spoken language because the learner is not able control the speed and language context. Learners' errors in written expression can be regarded as the

result of careful thought, and as being genuinely representative of their knowledge and understanding of the target language.

Table 1: Errors in Compositions of Advanced Learners of Chinese

Error Type	Number	%
All Errors	742	100
Of Which Vocabulary Errors	479	65
Breakdown of Vocabulary Errors by Type		**% of total Vocab errors**
Synonym	157	33
Collocation	72	15
Made up Words	68	14
Part of Speech	53	11
Affective Meaning	31	6
Other	93	19

Note: Table 1 is based on an analysis of the 42 final examination papers of two years' graduating students plus 58 weekly compositions.

Table 2: Errors in second year students' compositions

Error type	Number	%
Total	278	100
Grammar	156	56
Vocabulary	122	44

Note: Table 2 is based on an analysis of 28 compositions totalling approximately 15,000 characters.

1. The data above does not include scribal errors such as wrongly written characters and correctly written characters with the wrong meaning e.g. writing *fēngjǐng* 风景 as 风影, *huáyì* 华裔 as 华移, *tiáojiàn* 条件 as 条间 and *gùshi* 故事 as 古使. Such errors are not insignificant in the compositions of native English speakers. Yip Po-Ching did an investigation into problems in vocabulary learning by English native speakers. His data shows that wrong characters are the biggest category of errors and make up over 20% of the total mistakes. (Yip Po-Ching 1997). However, these are not included here since they are outside the scope of this study, which concentrates on word understanding and usage.

2. Repeat errors in the same composition are only counted once in our data.

3. Some sentences in the compositions made no sense at all and could not be logically analysed and the errors computed, so these have not been included in the data. The errors included here are those errors which can be analysed.

4. The data table shows various categories of errors but there is considerable overlap between categories and some errors could be included in two or more categories. For example *xiángxì de jiǎnchá* 详细的检查 has been treated in the comments as a synonym usage error, with *xiángxì* 详细 used instead of *xìzhì* 细致. On the other hand, the error could also be regarded as a collocation problem because 检查 cannot be modified by 详细, and here should be 细致.

5. The data is from two sources: examination papers and weekly tests. The data as a whole as presented above is used as the basis for the conclusions in the dissertation. The individual data for the two sets of material is as follows:

Table 3: Data from 42 examination papers totalling about 40,000 characters

Error Type	Number	%
All Errors	210	100
Of Which Vocabulary Errors	138	66
Breakdown of Vocabulary Errors by Type		**% of total Vocab errors**
Synonym	45	33
Collocation	25	18
Made up Words	10	7
Part of Speech	28	20
Affective Meaning	15	11
Other	15	11

Table 4: Errors in the 58 Weekly Test Compositions

Error Type	Number	%
All Errors	532	100
Of Which Vocabulary Errors	341	64
Breakdown of Vocabulary Errors by Type		**% of total Vocab errors**
Synonym	112	33
Collocation	47	14
Made up Words	58	18
Part of Speech	25	7
Affective Meaning	16	5
Other	78	25

Comparing these two sets of data, we can find that there is not a great difference between them, except in the case of the part of speech and made up words data. This data agrees with Yip Po-Ching's data from examination material. He pointed that in his investigation that the data from examination papers "shows a very similar situation to normal compositions. The errors in examinations are just more typical and reliable because there was no dictionary or other help." (Yip Po-Ching 1997).

The fact that part of speech errors are fewer in general composition, may be because in examinations learners do not have access to other tools and help, a situation which tends to create rather than reduce errors. The other difference is that the made up word errors in weekly compositions are more numerous than in examinations. This may be because in examinations, learners use words more carefully and try to avoid using words they have not grasped well. Littlewood has pointed out that for learners "the obvious strategy is to try to avoid occasions which will present difficulty." (Littlewood 1984, 1995, p.84). Conversely, in compositions they are more relaxed and like to try using some new words and when they cannot find a word they know in order to express their meaning, they tend to try using their knowledge of both the native and target languages to create a new one.

1.2 Classified Analysis

The overall situation from the results of the survey are, firstly, that of the 742 vocabulary and grammar errors we discovered, there are 479 word usage errors. This is about 65% of the total. This is a considerably larger proportion more than in the elementary-intermediate students - the second year students' compositions. This suggests that, at the advanced stage, vocabulary errors are a more serious problem and are something on which more emphasis should be

placed. Secondly, the errors we listed above include the three different types of word meaning: conceptual, grammatical and affective.

As some researchers have pointed out, learners' errors are just one part of their interlanguage. They do not represent the learners' total linguistic performance. As Selinker says: "More important, a good deal of IL development must occur through the use of strategies where problems (however defined) are not involved and we do not want to lose touch with that." (Selinker 1984, p.339). We agree with this view. We also feel that errors are an important aspect which reflect the characteristics of the language used by learners. These errors may be utilised to attempt to discover the rules of their interlanguage and ways of solving their usage problems. The following classified analysis judges their language performance according to the standard of the target language rules.

1. *Synonym usage errors*

Synonym refers to a collective group. Learners should have a substantial store of vocabulary in their mind, which they can use as a data base from which to make correct choices. In fact, they are limited both in their number of words and in their ability to distinguish the meanings and functions of similar words. They find it difficult to make appropriate choices. According to this data, synonym and near-synonym errors account for 33% of the total, the largest single category.

* 国 家 需 要 创 造 统 一 的 法 律 制 度。

A state needs to create a unified system of law.

Chuàngzào 创 造 should be changed to *jiànlì* 建 立. In English "create" can be used for a "system of law", but in Chinese, this is not acceptable. This error may be the result of transfer of mother tongue rules.

* 新 闻 节 目 可 能 要 经 过 详 细 的 审 查。

News programmes may need to undergo detailed investigation.

Xiángxì 详 细 "detailed" should be changed to *zǐxì* 仔 细 "careful".

* 失 业 问 题 对 社 会 安 静 有 很 大 的 影 响。

The employment problem has a big influence on social stability.

Ānjìng 安 静 should be changed to *āndìng* 安 定. These two words have different nuances: 安 静 emphasises quietness and is often used to describe an environment, while 安 定 emphasises the situation of society.

* 徒 弟 最 多 的 有 三 种 宗 教。

There are three religions with the most followers.

Túdì 徒 弟 means "apprentice"; here it should be *xìntú* 信 徒 which means "follower" "disciple", "believer".

* 如 果 你 进 口 违 禁 品， 将 会 受 到 惩 罚。

You will be punished if you take in contraband goods.

The learner intends to express the idea of someone bringing contraband goods through Customs, hence *jìnkǒu* 进 口 "import" should be changed to *dàijìn* 带 进 "take in".

* 很 多 人 开 始 认 出 饮 食 对 健 康 的 ⑫ 要 性。

A lot of people have begun to realise importance of food to health.

Rènchū 认 出 is used to express recognition of some person or place, here it should be 认 识 到 *rènshìdào* meaning "understand" or "realise".

* 我 收 到 了 他 的 电 话。

I received his phone call.

Shōudào 收 到 is used for letters, receiving a phone call should be *jiēdào* 接 到.

Synonym errors are characteristic errors of this transitional period. On the one hand, these errors normally appear at the intermediate or advanced stage, when learners have a certain Chinese language knowledge and ability. During this period, learners start to develop their understanding of vocabulary and learn more words of similar meaning, an essential precondition for choice. Yet, learners' knowledge of, and capability in using, Chinese vocabulary is still not sufficient to make a correct choice at their language performance level.

One point that should be noted is that the L2 synonym errors are not similar to L1 synonym errors in L1 learning. Their scope is wider. Some errors

would not be likely to appear in an L1 learner who has a good sense of the Chinese language, but L2 learners may find it more difficult to make distinctions between things which are quite distinct to L1 learners. For example, 徒弟 and 信徒, 带进 and 进口. Errors like *pài* 派 – *pàibié* 派别 and *zú* 族 – *mínzú* 民族 are also problems particular to L2 learners.

The reasons for synonym errors are mainly the following:

A. The collocations of words are influenced by native language habits, e.g. 创造法律制度 is probably from the English expression "create a system of law".

There are errors caused by misunderstandings resulting from the influence of learners' mother tongue. For example, the use of 徒弟 for 信徒 may be the result of a misleading entry in a Chinese-English dictionary (see *A Chinese English Dictionary* published by Beijing Foreign Language Institute, p.695) which offers as one translation of the word 徒弟 the English word "disciple", a word more accurately expressed by 信徒. Although 徒弟 may have the meaning "disciple", it mostly is used in the sense of "apprentice" in modern Chinese.

B. Restrictions caused by learners' Chinese level. Firstly, their total quantity of vocabulary is insufficient. This limits their ability to choose. Secondly, they have an insufficiently clear idea of the distinctions between words, especially synonyms. This is illustrated by the example 安静 for 安定, or 详细 for 细致 shown above. Their conceptual meanings are slightly different and the nouns are used with are also different.

2. Part of speech errors

Parts of speech in Chinese are not same as English. The latter has morphological features which help to indicate the part of speech, whereas Chinese lacks any means to indicate this, so learners find the part of speech problem a difficult one. The errors in this area account for about 20 percent. These mistakes typically

occur between the categories of nouns, adjectives and verbs, the main Chinese *shi* 实 'substantive' words.

* 官 僚 主 义 严 重 障 碍 欧 共 体 的 成 功。

Bureaucratism is seriously obstructing the success of the EC.

The noun *zhàng'ài* 障 碍 "obstruction" should be changed to the verb *zǔ'ài* 阻 碍 "to obstruct".

* 我 自 己 没 有 经 验 过 失 业。

I have not experienced unemployment.

The noun *jīngyàn* 经 验 "experience" should be changed to the verb *jīnglì* 经 历 "to go through"[1].

* 英 国 的 问 题 是 很 特 性 的。

The problems of Britain are very particular.

The noun *tèxìng* 特 性 "characteristic" should be changed to the adjective *tèbié* 特 别 "special", "particular" or the verb phrase 有 特 性 "to have particular characteristics".

* 旅 游 事 业 发 展, 地 方 经 济 就 能 利 益。

The local economy will benefit if the tourist industry is developed.

The noun *lìyì* 利 益 "benefit" should be changed to the verb phrase *huòlì* 获 利 "to gain benefit".

* 他 是 一 个 很 活 动 的 人。

He is a very lively person.

The noun *huódòng* 活 动 "activity" should be changed to the adjective *huóyuè* 活 跃 "lively".

* 他 们 问 我 们 很 个 人 的 问 题。

They asked us very personal questions.

Gèrén 个 人 is a pronoun. Although its meaning is similar to "private", it cannot be modified by "很" in this way. Here it should be changed to 问 我 们 个 人 问

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[1] Jīngyàn 经 验 is glossed as both a noun and a verb by some current Chinese dictionaries, e.g. the Xiàndài Hànyǔ cídiǎn 现 代 汉 语 词 典 (商 务 印 书 馆).

题.

For English speakers, the reasons for errors in the parts of speech stem firstly from their mother tongue. In English, the form often shows the parts of speech quite clearly; it is frequently possible to tell the part of speech according to how the word appears in the sentence. Learners are not used to the situation in Chinese where words generally have no indication of form. In addition, the misleading effects of reference books such as dictionaries also has to be taken into account. We can find possible reasons for some of the errors above in some dictionary definitions. One of the words used erroneously above, 经 验 is translated as to "go through" in a standard dictionary commonly used by students (*A Chinese- English Dictionary* published by Beijing Foreign Languages Institute). In practice, 经 验 is mostly used as a noun. 障 碍 is also translated as both the noun "obstruction" and the verb "to obstruct", but, in practice, it is only used as a noun. Learners at the advanced stage normally rely on Chinese-English or English-Chinese dictionaries as one of their main sources of information on vocabulary. Misleading information in dictionaries exerts a negative influence on the learners' language performance. (See Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of this point.)

3. Collocation problems

The usage of words is not only limited by considerations of grammar, but also by the requirements of semantics and the customs of the language concerned. Wrong collocation, broadly speaking, includes all problems involved in the composing of phrases. The errors discussed above as synonym and part of speech errors can also be considered as collocation problems, but here we point out some other problems of collocation concerned with semantics and structure. For example, there is the problem of students failing to master properly which words

or phrases can be used as the objects of which verbs. Some researchers regard some of these cases as grammar problems. This is a reasonable approach, since the dividing line between grammar and word usage is a fine one in Chinese. However, here we are looking at them from the word usage angle, because these problems also reflect the fact that learners have not fully mastered the various meanings of words and do not understand how to use them correctly.

Group A   V - O

   * 他 们 违 反 当 地 人 的 文 化.

They went against the culture of the local people.

文 化 "culture" should be changed to 文 化 习 惯 "cultural customs", then it can be used as the object of 违 反 "disobey".

   * 有 的 人 坚 持 素 菜。

Some people support vegetarianism.

Jiānchí 坚 持 can be followed by an abstract noun as the object, e.g. *zìjǐ de yìjiàn* 自 己 的 见 解 "one's own view" and *qúnzhòng lùxiàn* 群 众 路 线 "the mass line" etc. It also can be followed a verb object as e.g. *duànliàn* 锻 炼 "do exercise" *shàngbān* 上 班 "go to the office". Here the object should be changed to *chīsù* 吃 素 "eating vegetarian food".

   * 我 们 照 相 了 很 多 美 丽 的 风 景.

We photographed many beautiful scenes.

Zhàoxiàng 照 相 "take photos" cannot be followed by an object because it is already a V-O phrase; it should be changed to *shèxià* 摄 下 which can take an object.

   * 谁 都 受 到 很 幸 福 的 感 觉.

Everybody got a very happy feeling.

Shòudào 受 到 "receive", "get" cannot collocate with *gǎnjué* 感 觉. This error might be influenced by the learner's mother tongue, in which "get a happy feeling" may be acceptable.

Group B: S - P

* 旅 游 事 业 能 使 地 方 经 济 返 老 还 童.

The tourist industry can cause local economies to be rejuvenated.

Fǎnlǎo huántóng 返 老 还 童 "renew one's youth" can only be used for a person and not for a thing; here it should be changed to "bring the dying back to life" *qǐsǐ huíshēng* 起 死 回 生.

* 公 共 汽 车 非 常 难 得。

Buses are very hard to come by.

Nándé 难 得 "hard to come by" is normally used to describe an abstract thing and it includes the idea that the object should be a treasured one, e.g. *réncái nándé* 人 才 难 得 "a person of ability is rare", *nándé de jīhuì* 难 得 的 机 会 "a rare chance".

* 我 的 男 朋 友 明 眸 皓 齿.

My boyfriend has bright eyes and white teeth.

Míngmóu hàochǐ 明 眸 皓 齿 "bright eyes and white teeth" is used to describe females.

* 英 国 菜 没 有 什 么 情 趣.

British food does not have any appeal.

Qíngqù 情 趣 "appeal" cannot form a predicate to *Yīngguó cài* 英 国 菜 "English food". Here it should be *wèidao* 味 道.

* 火 车 常 常 迟 到.

Trains often arrive late.

Chídào 迟 到 should be changed to *wùdiǎn* 误 点; 迟 到 can only be used for people, not things, in Chinese.

Group C: Modifier - Modified

　＊信用卡的个子比较小.

The size of a credit card is fairly small.

Gèzi 个 子 can only be used for a person's size, so it is not equivalent to "size" in English.

Errors of collocation include problems of meaning, word usage and custom, among others. They involve different elements in a sentence; examples include V-O in group A, S-P in group B and modifier and modified words in group C. These errors are caused by both the mother tongue and the target language. Firstly, the learners have problems in the comprehension and usage of the Chinese. For example, they have not grasped what are suitable nouns to be subjects of words such as 明 眸 皓 齿 and 返 老 还 童; they have not grasped an important aspect of the meaning of words like 难 得. Some errors stem from a failure to appreciate the grammatical meaning, hence they did not understand what kind of object could be used with *jiānchí* 坚 持 and *wéifǎn* 违 反. Secondly, they have also transferred some rules of collocation from their mother tongue to create the Chinese expressions. For example, "size" in English can be used both for people and things, but in Chinese, the "equivalent" word 个 子 can only be used for persons. The learner obviously did not understand this and used it according to English rules. Another example of this is 迟 到, which, in Chinese can also only be used of persons. The student who used this for a train is influenced by the English word "late" the equivalent word to 迟 到 in the expression "The train is late." In English this can be used of both persons and things.

4. Affective meaning problems

　In semantic analysis, the affective meaning is being given more and more attention by researchers. In a discourse, it is very important to choose a suitable

word with the right affective meaning, e.g. commendatory or derogatory, and with the appropriate style e.g. written language or spoken language. These strongly influence the way things are expressed.

* 欧 共 体 国 家 还 有 很 多 可 乘 之 机。

EC countries still have many opportunities which can be exploited.

Kěchéng zhī jī 可 乘 之 机 "an opportunity that can be exploited to sb.'s advantage" is a derogatory expression; here it should be changed to *kěyǐ lìyòng de jīhuì* 可 以 利 用 的 机 会 "an opportunity which can be utilised", which is a neutral expression.

* 充 满 暴 力 场 面 的 电 视 节 目 鼓 励 他 们 去 犯 罪。

TV programmes full of scenes of violence encourage them to go and commit crimes.

Gǔlì 鼓 励 "encourage" is a commendatory, and is commonly used with words or phrases of positive meaning as its object. Here it should be changed to the derogatory *sǒngyǒng* 怂 恿 "incite".

* 快 要 考 试 了， 我 们 真 是 狗 急 跳 墙。

Our exams are soon, we are really worried.

Gǒu jí tiào qiáng 狗 急 跳 墙 "a cornered dog will do something desperate" is a derogatory phrase; here it should be changed to a neutral expression *xīn jí rú fén* 心 急 如 焚 "terribly anxious".

* 我 们 的 世 界 正 在 向 多 极 化 的 趋 向 走 着。

Our world is moving in the direction of multi-polarity.

Zǒuzhe 走 着 "walking" is used in spoken language, here it should be changed to a literary style word such as *màijìn* 迈 进 "advancing" or *fāzhǎn* 发 展 "developing".

* 对 其 他 宗 教 的 态 度 比 较 窄。

It has a pretty narrow attitude to other religions.

Zhǎi 窄 "narrow" should be changed to *xiá'ài* 狭 隘 which has a similar meaning but is more formal. The error involves the problem of meaning and language style.

* 按照政府的话, 退休的人可以得到足够的退休金.

According to what the government says, retired people can get sufficient pension.

Huà 话 "words" here is not appropriate because it is a spoken style word, here it should be changed to *chéngnuò* 承诺 "promise".

* 失业一定带有许许多多的困难.

Unemployment certainly brings many difficulties.

Spoken language *dàiyǒu* 带有 should be changed to written language *bànsuí* 伴随 "be accompanied by".

Errors in language style or colour do not appear frequently at the elementary stage, but are quite common at the advanced stage. At the advanced stage, learners know more words with particular nuances and different language styles. They try to use them after learning their basic meaning from the textbook or other learning materials, but they use them wrongly due to a lack of Chinese language sense. Because the "colour" and style of words belongs to a deeper semantic level, learners have difficulty appreciating the subtle nuances of the meanings of such words, so they are not able to use them appropriately. They need to develop a keener sense of language in their learning practice then they will be able to grasp them and use them appropriately.

5. Word creation errors

Learners may create non-existent words based on their understanding of the meanings of Chinese characters or the rules for constructing words, both in their mother tongue and in the target language.

* 贵游客, 欢迎你们参加我们旅游团.

Tourists, you are welcome to join our tour group.

The Chinese word *guì* 贵 can be used before a noun to indicate respect, so the learner has put 贵 in front of *yóukè* 游 客 following the pattern of words like *guìxìng* 贵 姓、*guìchǎng* 贵 厂、*guì gōngsī* 贵 公 司. This is an overgeneralisation error.

＊英 国 保 守 党 特 别 恨 国 营 公 司，他 们 觉 得 自 营 好 多 了。

The British Conservative Party specially hates state enterprises, they think that private ones are much better.

Zìyíng 自 营 should be *sīyíng* 私 营 "private enterprise".

＊ 我 们 有 一 个 很 聪 明 的 犯 罪 界。

We have a very intelligent criminal circle.

Jiè 界 "circle" is often used as a suffix in words like *xīnwén jiè* 新 闻 界 "press circles" or *wényì jiè* 文 艺 界 "art circles", so the learner has overgeneralised to produce ＊*fànzuì jiè* 犯 罪 界 "criminal clique".

＊ 我 买 到 一 个 次 机。

I bought a substandard camera.

Cì 次 has the meaning of "second rate" in certain expressions; using ＊*cìjī* 次 机 to describe a poor quality camera follows the pattern of *cìpǐn* 次 品 "substandard product" and *cìděng* 次 等 "second rate".

＊ 我 们 今 天 没 有 空 时。

We have no free time today.

Some Chinese words are formed from two words like *měinǚ* 美 女 from *měilì de nǚrén* 美 丽 的 女 人 "beautiful woman" or 高 见 *gāojiàn* from *gāomíng de jiànjiě* 高 明 的 见 解 "wise idea", and so on. From this it is easy to understand how the learner has created ＊*kōngshí* 空 时 to indicate *kōngyú de shíjiān* 空 余 的 时 间 "free time" or "spare time" according to his/her perception of the rules for creating Chinese words.

＊ 这 是 一 个 少 达 国 家。

This is a less developed country.

Shǎodá 少 达 is used to convey the idea "developing" with country. We can understand the process by which the learner created this "new word" by referring to the English expression "less developed".

Other examples include *mǎlù wǎng 马 路 网 for *gōnglù wǎng* 公 路 网 "road network", *fùdān 付 单 for *zhàngdān* 帐 单 "bill". The creation of words shows learners' perceptions of the target language. For example, the characters *jiè* 界 and *cì* 次 were used to create a new words in the examples shown above. Of course, it also includes transference of some of the rules of the mother tongue, like "less developed" is expressed as *shǎodá 少 达. It is not unreasonable for some teachers and researchers to look on such problems in a positive way. These represent a new step or approach in the learner's ability to use the language except in the case of some completely unreasonable words which they "create". They not only use words they have learnt or seen before, but they try to create words to express their meaning when they run into vocabulary limitations.

6. Other words usage errors

There are other problems in word usage which do not fit in to the above categories.

*当 时 我 非 常 年 轻，只 有 四 岁。

I was extremely young at that time, only 4 years old.

Although *niánqīng* 年 轻 means "young", its use scope is not same as this English word; it cannot be used for a child.

*很 多 人 对 这 个 问 题 很 介 意。

Many people mind about this question.

Jièyì 介 意 "mind" is usually used in a negative sentence. Here 介 意 should be changed to *zàiyì* 在 意.

*儿 童 死 的 水 平 很 高。

The child death level is high.

Sǐ de shuǐpíng 死 的 水 平 "level of death" should be a phrase like *sǐwánglǜ* 死 亡 率 "death rate".

*只 要 把 你 的 申 请 表 给 那 里 的 人 员。

You just need to give your application form to the person there.

Rényuán 人 员 "personnel" cannot be used as a free standing form, it should be used as part of a phrase such as *gōngzuò rényuán* 工 作 人 员 "office worker".

* 如 果 不 加 以 保 护, 名 胜 古 迹 快 快 地 损 坏 了。

If they are not given protection, famous sites will soon be damaged.

Some adjectives can be reduplicated for intensification, but there are some usage limitations applicable to this form. This context is not suitable for the use of reduplication: *kuàikuài* 快 快 should be *hěn kuài* 很 快.

* 有 的 人 在 外 边 大 大 声 声 地 说 话。

Some people are talking loudly outside.

Dàshēng 大 声 cannot be reduplicated.

* 一 到 晚 上, 外 边 漆 黑 黑 的。

As soon as evening came it was pitch black outside.

Qīhēihēi 漆 黑 黑 is an incorrect reduplicated form of *qīhēi* 漆 黑, it should be *hēiqīqī* 黑 漆 漆.

* 他 们 乐 乐 于 于 地 把 钱 退 给 了 我。

They happily gave me the money.

The word *lèyú* 乐 于 "happy to" cannot be reduplicated. The learner is overgeneralising in using this form for intensification.

* 这 样 豪 华 的 车 只 有 少 少 的 人 买 得 起.

Very few people can afford this kind of luxurious car.

As above, *shǎo* 少 is a word which cannot be reduplicated.

This is a broad category of errors and includes a lot of different problems in words usage. Reduplication appears as a major problem because it is a word usage peculiar to Chinese and learners have no sense of how it actually functions in practice. Other word usage problems, as in the cases of *jièyì* 介 意 and *rényuán* 人

员, involve words with particular conditions to their use. These are not problems of meaning, rather the special characteristics of some words, which is why learners have difficulty grasping them, since they do not follow general rules.

The examples above broadly show the main categories of errors. In fact, it is impossible to classify them in a clear cut way since the errors overlap different categories. For example, part of the misuse of synonyms is also a problem of collocation. Errors in the style of words or affective meaning can be seen as a synonym problem, since they often have some connection with the word's meaning. The errors have been classified into the various different categories above for ease of analysis. The errors are indicated based on the standard of the target language, and how they have deviated from what the learners intended to say is noted. An analysis of the factors which caused the errors, suggests that both learners' mother tongue and the target language influence their modes of expression.

Error is inevitable during the learning process. Interlanguage contains errors which are deviations from the form of target language. Since the learning process is a path from the learners' mother tongue to the target language, the two languages' vocabulary systems will be compared, in order to search for the reason for these errors at their source.

Chapter 2. Differences between the English and Chinese vocabulary systems
and their effects

2.1 Conditions and basis for comparison

The following illustrates the relationship between the interlanguage, the mother tongue or other language used by learners, and the target language. It shows the function of interlanguage as a bridge between the starting- point, the mother tongue, and the goal, the target language.

Interlanguage

Language A   Target Language
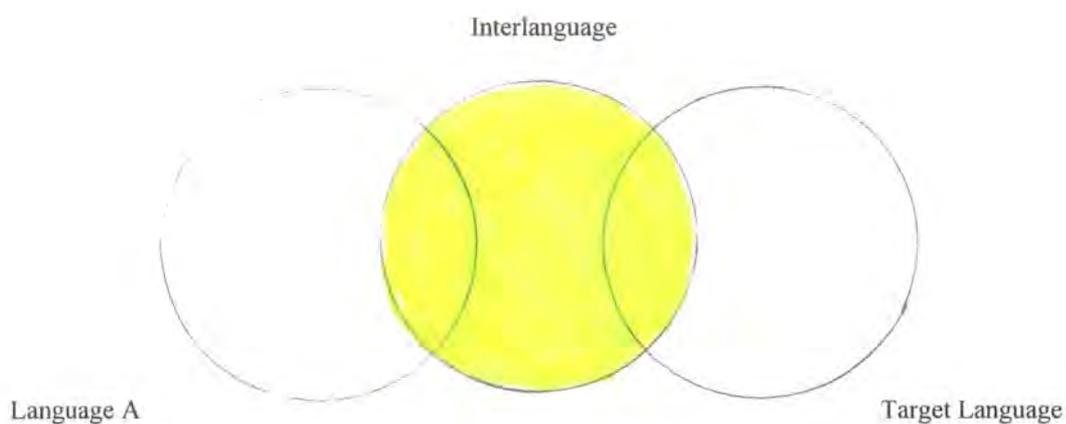
(from Corder 1981
Error Analysis and Interlanguage p.17)

We can understand the influence on the form of the interlanguage which comes from the distance or difference between the learner's mother tongue and the target language. Learners' mother tongue background is an important factor in the process of learning. Learners speaking same the mother tongue often have some similar problems when they learn the same second language, since they share a common starting point. This present chapter attempts a comparison of the differences between the vocabulary systems of English and Chinese, and analyses the influence these may have on learners. This is one of the essential preconditions

for research into the characteristics of the interlanguage. Of course, it is impossible here to do a complete comparison between vocabulary systems of these two languages: the focus point here is on some of the differences between these two languages which become apparent through learners' errors and through difficulties in their learning. These differences are of particular concern because they are the source of frequent errors. The aim of this comparison is to analyse more deeply and widely the learners' learning process .

The meanings of words cover almost all conceptions existing in the world and explain what and how people think. Words have very rich connotations, thus it is very hard to master them perfectly. Geoffrey Leech concluded that there were seven types of meaning, including conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning and thematic meaning. "Conceptual meaning (sometimes called ' denotative' or 'cognitive' meaning) is widely assumed to be the central factor in linguistic communication, and I think it can be shown to be integral to the essential functioning of language in a way that other types of meaning are not". Social and affective meaning are "two aspects communication which have to do with the situation in which an utterance take place. Social meaning is that which a piece of language conveys about the social circumstances of its use", while affective meaning shows the "consideration of how language reflects the personal feeling of the speaker, which includes his attitude to the listener, or his attitude to something he is talking about." (Leech 1990, p.9-23). Leech indicates how wide the field of the semantics of vocabulary is. Apart from the meanings Leech has pointed out, in second language teaching the grammar meaning of words should also be considered. This is a structural category but is a very important factor influencing the meaning and usage of words. "However, the combinatorial characteristics in utterances are constrained not only by their meanings, but also by their grammatical properties. Grammatical constraints may overlap and reinforce semantic ones, but they may also be semantically arbitrary." (Cruse 1991, p.1).

Chinese vocabulary is even richer in grammatical functions than English vocabulary. A Chinese researcher has categorised the three types of meaning of Chinese words as the lexical meaning (also called basic meaning, or in Leech's words the conceptual meaning), the grammar meaning and the affective meaning (Ge Benyi 1985, p.96). The lexical meaning, as we noted above, is the central or basic meaning of a word. The grammar meaning describes the words' functions and their network relationship. The affective meaning indicates the emotions of the speaker and specifically includes areas like the feeling nuance, literary form and style. Together they form the complete meaning of a word and are three aspects of usage. Language learners cannot master the usage of words in Chinese without understanding these three meanings.

It is clear that the differences between the vocabulary systems of two languages, will be reflected in the various types of meaning. They cannot be simplified to differences in basic meaning alone, a point which is generally not appreciated by learners and teachers. These differences or discorrespondences actually exist in conceptual meaning, grammar meaning and affective meaning. The following comparison will be carried out based on these main fields.

The second point concerns correspondence in the comparison of vocabulary. In vocabulary learning, correspondence is normally the basic point where a pair of words in two languages are connected or related. If two words in different languages are totally unrelated, they will not be confused by learners, except in some special situations such as a memory error, and need not be compared. The learner chooses a word from the target language to express the idea or concept in his/her mind because there are some correspondences between them. However, there are always discorrespondences accompanying such correspondence, because there are few words of completely equal meaning in two languages, except some nouns and some specialist terminology. "Similarities between languages may be very general or abstract on the one hand, or superficial

and trivial on the other; they are generally only partial, rarely complete." (Corder 1973, p.231). Therefore, learners face a dilemma when they use words from the target language. They are searching for equivalents between two languages in order to express what they think, so they link together a group/pair of words from mother tongue and target language. The result of such linking always involves discorrespondence in some aspects and produces the errors in their language.

Some researchers and teachers concerned about this problem have pointed out that the place where such errors frequently occur is precisely where correspondences between the two language systems exist. Errors in vocabulary usage normally happen in following situations:

1 There is some overlapping between the meanings of the words of the mother tongue and target language.

2 There are some differences in collocation between the equivalent words in the two languages.

3 There are some differences in usage between the equivalents.

4 There are some differences in affective meaning, style or situation between the words of the two languages. (Lu Jianji 1987, p.525-527).

These four points indicate that there are always discorrespondences in usage between the "corresponding words". In the following comparison we will concentrate on and analyse language phenomena which include some differences in the correspondences.

2.2 Discorrespondence in Conceptual Meaning

Partial conceptual correspondence is a precondition of using a word in target language, yet it is also a precondition for misuse. It is a general principle of semantics that, apart from technical terms, there are few words in different languages with total correspondence in meaning. Frequently there are differences within the similarities: either one word corresponds to many, or there is overlap

between the words. The discorrespondences between English and Chinese words may be summarised as follows:

A. *The concept of the Chinese is bigger than the English, one Chinese word contains several English concepts.*

Examples

yuè 月 – – month, moon

kàn 看 – – look, read, see, visit

yǒu 有 – – exist, have, there is

zhuōzi 桌子 – table, desk

B. *The concept of the English word is bigger than the Chinese, one English word contains several Chinese concepts.*

Examples

make - *zhìzào* 制造, *zuò* 做, *shǐde* 使得, *děngyú* 等于

ask - *qǐng* 请, *wèn* 问;

have - *yǒu* 有, *jùyou* 具有

know - *zhīdao* 知道, *rènshi* 认识

old - *lǎo* 老, *jiù* 旧

change - *huàn* 换, *gǎibiàn* 改变, *biàn* 变

wear - *chuān* 穿 (shoes) *dài* 戴 (a ring) *mǒ* 抹 (perfume) *xì* 系 (a tie)

use - *shǐyòng* 使用, *yùnyòng* 运用, *cǎiyòng* 采用

tool - *gòngjù* 工具, *yòngjù* 用具

information - *xiāoxi* 消息, *tōngzhī* 通知

Some examples of errors caused by discorrespondences in conceptual meaning.

* 我们必须变我们对环境的态度.

We should change our attitude to the environment.

Biàn 变 should be changed to *gǎibiàn* 改变.

* 这个饭店具有很多油炸的菜.

There is a lot of deep fried food in this restaurant.

Jùyǒu 具有 should be changed to *yǒu* 有.

　* 大家都喜欢采用自行车当交通用具.

Many people like to use bicycle as their mode of transport.

Cǎiyòng 采用 should be *yòng* 用; *yòngjù* 用具 should be *gōngjù* 工具.

　* 我们从电视上可以得到重要的社会通知。

We can get a lot of important social information from TV.

This is a clear case of the learner using the "wrong" translation of the word "information", here it should be *xìnxī* 信息.

C. *Partial correspondence between the conceptual meanings of words of the two languages*

This situation is one of the most prone to cause errors, and it is one of the commonest categories. Although there is partial similarity in words in this category, they each have their own areas of extended meaning, e.g. *liúxíng* 流行 has the meaning "popular ", but it may also indicate "epidemic" as in epidemic disease *liúxíngbìng* 流行病; also "a vogue word" *liúxíng zìyǎn* 流行字眼. Conversely, "popular" may have the meaning 流行, but it may also indicate "commonly accepted" *pǔbiàn* 普遍 or "liked by many people" *shòu huānyíng* 受欢迎.

This situation explains errors like

　* 这个电影很普遍.

This film is very popular.

where the learner wants to express the idea of the film being popular. Here the Chinese word should be *shòu huānyíng* 受欢迎.

"Easy" is commonly expressed by *róngyì* 容易, but in some situations it should be *qīngsōng* 轻松. Conversely, 轻松 may not only be translated as "easy", but also "relaxed".

Lǎoshī 老师, *dǎoshī* 导师, *jiàoshī* 教师, *shīzhǎng* 师长, *jiàoyuán* 教员, *xiānshēng* 先生 can all be translated as "teacher" (Zhang Dexin 1996) but, in fact,

these words indicate some differences in concept, although in some situations they may be similar. For example, 老师 may be used as a title, 师长 and 导师 both include a respectful connotation. 导师 is specially used of a teacher of graduate students.

All these examples indicate a general fact or rule: there is overlap rather than exact correspondence in the meanings of words between the two languages, and we cannot think them simply in one for one terms.

D. *There is no equivalent in the other language*

This situation occurs in both the learner's native language and the target language. Some English and Chinese words have no equivalent word in the other language. This problem can only solved by using a phrase or even sentence to explain or convey the same idea. Zhang Dexin has pointed out the cultural discorrespondence of words and given some examples such as the Chinese word *qì* 气. 气 is a very important concept in Chinese traditional culture, but there is no suitable English word which exactly corresponds with it. Conversely, for some English words it is also difficult to find equivalents in Chinese. An example is "humanism". It is a western concept and has been translated as *rénběn zhǔyì* 人本主义, *rénwén zhǔyì* 人文主义, *réndào zhǔyì* 人道主义, etc. Such different translations have caused it to be understood in different and contradictory ways. A further example is "individualism" which is translated as *gèrén zhǔyì* 个人主义. This translation is also misleading. (Zhang Dexin 1996, p.438)

Some researchers of Chinese have pointed out the problem of "difficult to translate words". This is also in fact a phenomenon resulting from discorrespondence between the Chinese and English words. For example, *dàolǐ* 道理 is translated as "principle", "truth", "argument", "reason", "sense", but there are contexts where none of these will produce an acceptable translation. The adverb *jiǎnzhí* 简直 is often translated as "simply", but this is not sufficient to express the

tone of exaggeration. One dictionary notes that it "emphasises the exaggerated way in which some situation or state of affairs is described", but the editor of the dictionary gave up the quest for an English equivalent. These "difficult to translate words" which have no exact equivalent are, typically, words which contain features of the traditional national culture. This may be the reason that these words are very difficult to express in the other language. Another particular point with the Chinese language is that there are many synonyms and synonyms, which are hard to differentiate in a foreign language. (Wang Shaoxin 1990, p.518-526).

2.3 *Discorrespondence in the grammar meaning of words*

A. *Discorrespondence in parts of speech and word function*

The part of speech systems of English and Chinese are similar, but do not totally correspond. Some words are the same in meaning, but belong to a different part of speech or cover different parts of speech in the two languages. For example, in English "violent" is an adjective, and "violence" is the noun. The corresponding word in Chinese just a noun *bàolì* 暴 力; the sense "violent" has to be expressed by the phrase: *chōngmǎn bàolì de* 充 满 暴 力 的. The error *电 视 节 目 很 暴 力 "Television programmes are very violent." is an example of an error caused by part of speech difference.

The Chinese word *jǔsàng* 沮 丧 is a adjective, but in English, the word conveying the same idea of "depressed" can be a transitive verb, as in: "These problems have rather depressed me." In Chinese this cannot be expressed as: *这 个 问 题 沮 丧 我*. We would have to say 这 个 问 题 使 我 很 沮 丧.

Furthermore, there is still the possibility of making mistakes even if learners understand the part of speech of a Chinese word, because the same part of speech may have different functions in English and Chinese. For example, the function of English adjectives is very different from Chinese. In English they can only modify a noun and cannot act as a predicate. By comparison, Chinese adjectives have

much wider functions. Generally speaking, there is a fairly simple or clear correspondence between the part of speech of an English word and its functions. Zhu Dexi uses a table to illustrate this and makes the following comparison with Chinese:

Indo-European language

subject object	predicate	attributive	adverbial
noun	verb	adjective	adverb
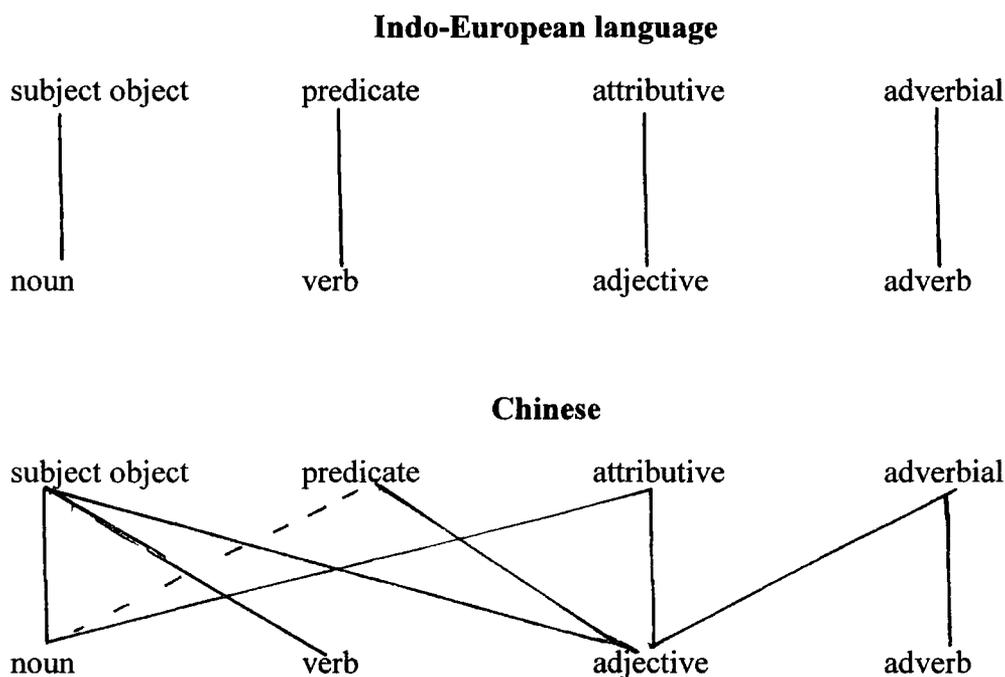
Chinese

(Zhu Dexi 1985, p.4-5)

English speakers are used to English clear cut rules of correspondence, and find it not easy to grasp the idea that Chinese words belonging to a particular part of speech may have several grammar functions.

When a learner utters a sentence like: *那 里 的 交 通 是 方 便 "Transportation there is convenient.", it is not only a problem of part of speech error, but probably also includes some misunderstanding of grammatical functions of parts of speech in the English and Chinese languages. We can also find this problem in errors such as *diànhuà nǐ 电 话 你. In English there are numerous examples of nouns being used as verbs, e.g. "phone you", "date a friend", " iron clothes" but in Modern Chinese these are rare.

B. *Differences in usage*

Although these problems can be seen as problems of conceptual meaning or grammar meaning, we have defined this as a separate category since typically it is a practical problem of word usage.

Firstly, reduplication is a peculiarly Chinese form of word usage, so it is not easy for English speaker learners. They have difficulty grasping the difference in meaning between the replicated and non-reduplicated forms of verbs or adjectives, e.g. the difference between *kàn* 看 and *kànkàn* 看 看 or *zǐxì* 仔 细 and *zǐzǐxìxì* 仔 仔 细 细. They base their usage on knowledge acquired in the classroom, but they lack a sense of language over this and when they use reduplicated forms these tend to be unnatural or wrong.

Secondly, there are differences between transitive and intransitive verbs in English and in Chinese. Some verbs are transitive verbs in English, but intransitive verb in Chinese, and vice versa.

Transitive in Chinese, but intransitive in English:

tīng bàogào 听 报 告 - listen to a report

zhǎo tā 找 他 - look for him

kàn wánjù 看 玩 具 - look at a toy

děng tāmen 等 他 们 - wait for them

zhīdao tā 知 道 他 - know of him

Transitive in English but intransitive in Chinese:

wèi rénmín fúwù 为 人 民 服 务 - serve the people

gēn Wáng xiǎojie jiéhūn 跟 王 小 姐 结 婚 - marry Miss Wang.

The latter situation seems more likely to cause confusion, when a verb in English is transitive and the verb of the same meaning in Chinese is intransitive. The

learner tends to use the Chinese verb as a transitive verb and put the object directly behind it. This is possibly a result of learners trying to use easiest way when they express themselves in the target language. Transfer is easier when it goes from complex to simple during the learning process. When the English word is a transitive verb and Chinese is an intransitive verb, the learner has to make adjustments to their expression. Normally this involves changing the original object to a preposition - object. For example, we can say "A married B" in English, but we should say A *gēn* 跟 B *jiéhūnle* 结婚了 in Chinese. Such a word usage situation easily leads to errors like: *A *jiéhūn* 结婚 B or *Tā guānguāng Zhōngguó* 他观光中国 "He is visiting China", which should be expressed as *Tā zài Zhōngguó guānguāng* 他在中国观光 since *guānguāng* 观光 cannot be used as a transitive verb.

C. Difference in morphology

Morphology is an area of major difference between the English and Chinese languages. This difference in form directly influences choices involving the grammar meaning of vocabulary. There are many different forms of words in English. The native English speaker can distinguish the part of speech by the form. For example, the verb morphology includes:

-ate: isolate, facilitate

-en: deepen, strengthen

-ify: simplify, identify.

The adjective morphology includes:

-ful: careful, beautiful

-ish: childish, foolish.

Such morphology gives words clear indicators of syntactical function. "However, a large number of English words can be readily identified as nouns, verbs or adjectives, on the basis both of their position in the sentence and their general make-up." (Aitchison 1995, p.106). English learners are used to distinguishing

parts of speech and using words according to these morphological characteristics. By contrast, the Chinese language does not have clear morphological features. The part of speech of a Chinese word cannot be ascertained from the form of the word. If we compare for example, *zǔzhī* 组织 and "organise", we can tell whether it is a verb or noun in English from its form - "organisation" for the noun and "organise" for the verb; in the case of *liànxí* 练习 also we can understand "practise" is a verb and "practice" is a noun. But we cannot distinguish it at all in Chinese without context since its form is the same for both noun and verb. Of course there is also some morphology in Chinese, like the noun affixes:

子 *zi*: *dāozi* 刀子 knife, *píngzi* 瓶子 bottle, *pàngzi* 胖子 a plump person;

头 *tou*: *shítou* 石头 stone, *mùtou* 木头 wood, *xīntou* 心头 heart, *kǔtou* 苦头 bitter taste

者 *zhě*: *dúzhě* 读者 reader, *zuòzhě* 作者 author, *qiánzhě* 前者 former, *ruòzhě* 弱者 the weak

and the verb affix 化 *huà*:

měihuà 美化 beautify, *zìdònghuà* 自动化 automate

and so on (Huang Borong, Liao Xudong 1991, p.272) but such cases are much fewer than English.

English learners' errors over parts of speech stem, partly at least, from the absence of a clear morphology for Chinese vocabulary. For example, if the word *lìyì* 利益 was clearly indicated by its morphology to be a noun, students would not say *我们不能只是为自己利益 "We cannot only seek profit for ourselves.", a confusion of the noun *lìyì* 利益 "profit" with *móulì* 牟利 "seek profit", which can be used either as a noun or a verb. Where English learners cannot distinguish the parts of speech of Chinese words, firstly they may try to remember them one by one, or they may associate them with words of appropriate part of speech in their mother tongue. However, more often than not, as the amount of vocabulary they are faced with grows bigger and bigger, they have no time to think about this problem. What is even worse is that they are often under a

misapprehension that the parts of speech in Chinese are not as important as in English and they ignore them, since there is no clear morphology in Chinese vocabulary to show the parts of speech. We find from the data of our survey shown above that part of speech errors in English learners' compositions accounted for a substantial proportion of all their vocabulary errors, especially in a examination papers where they cannot get help from reference books. This situation illustrates the extent to which English learners' vague understanding of the parts of speech of Chinese vocabulary forms a serious obstacle to their correct use of target language vocabulary.

2.4 *Differences in affective meaning between Chinese and English*

"Many words in a language have a perceptual sense in addition to their conceptual meaning or relational significance. This kind of nuance expression is also a part of the meaning of the word. It includes nuances of feeling, attitude, style, type and image, etc." (Liu Shuxin 1984, p.31). Every language has its special words to express affective meaning; thus, in every language there are words whose meaning is similar but whose nuance is different. Of all the levels of meaning of a word, it is the affective meaning which is most closely related to the social life and cultural characteristics of the native speakers. The affective meaning is also very different in different languages.

For example, the words connected with "dog" in Chinese and English indicate the different feelings of native speakers. In Chinese, phrases including dog are overwhelmingly derogatory. For example:

gǒutuǐzi 狗 腿 子 "dog leg" = "henchman"

lángxīn gǒufèi 狼 心 狗 肺 "wolf heart dog lungs" = "cruel and unscrupulous"

gǒuyǎn kàn réndī 狗 眼 看 人 低 "view people with dog's eyes" = "judge people by wealth and power"

rénmú gǒuyàng 人 模 狗 样 "human appearance, dog look" = "pretending to be what one is not"

zǒugǒu 走 狗 "running dog" = "servile follower".

However, in English, although phrases including dog are often derogatory too, others like:

"to work like a dog"

"love me, love my dog"

"top dog"

"every dog has his day"

do not have a negative connotation. Some of them are even commendatory.

A further problem between two language systems is that the affective meaning in one language may not have an equivalent in the other. Thus, we cannot always find a word to indicate the same meaning, including the affective meaning, in the other language. This problem occurs both from English to Chinese and from Chinese to English. The following examples are from word lists of textbooks used by the students surveyed:

我 心 里 没 底 – 'I really don't know' (colloquial)

一 本 正 经 – 'serious; sanctimonious' (including the derogatory sense)

谱 儿 – 'clued up'; often used as negative as 没 谱 儿 'clueless' (colloquial)

吃 醋 – 'jealous' (spoken language and has a humorous connotation)

甩 掉 – 'leave someone' (only used romantic relations)

谈 恋 爱 – 'be in love; have a love affair'

相 见 恨 晚 - 'meet too late' (used of people who love each other)

Hu Mingyang has also pointed out a cultural difference between Chinese and English words : "For historic reasons, there are many terms of respect, self-deprecatory expressions, commendatory terms and derogatory terms in Chinese which do not exist in English. Examples are: *qīngtīng* 倾 听 "lend an attentive ear to", *língtīng* 聆 听 "listen respectfully", *fǔshàng* 府 上 "your home (with respect)", *shèxià* 舍 下 "my home (humble)", *dàzuò* 大 作 "your work (with

respect), *zhuōzhù* 拙 著 "my writing (humble, self-derogatory) etc.". (Hu Mingyang 1997, p.15). The equivalent words in English of such Chinese words and phrases are neutral and require the addition of some words or a change in the way of expression if they are to be translated to English with the same meaning.

Although the words appear in textbooks and dictionaries, but they have not succeeded in indicating the equivalent meaning in the other language, in this case the learners' mother tongue. We can also find a similar situation in reverse going from English to Chinese words:

cynical - *wánshì bùgōng* 玩 世 不 恭

cool - there is not even a suitable word and Chinese often resorts to the transliteration *kù* 酷

individual - *gèbiéde* 个 别 的, *gètǐ* 个 体, *gèxìng* 个 性 (none of which has a positive connotation in Chinese).

Every language vocabulary system has its own words which are rich in nuance of style or feeling. Some of them have an equivalent or near equivalent word in the other language, but many of them have not. Learners not only need an extensive knowledge of the language, they also need to understand the relationship between the social environment and language usage in the target language. As part of the learners' process of learning, they come to understand more and more of the stylistic nuance of words and phrases in the target language. This is one of the indicators of students' progression to the advanced stage. At this stage, the more complex their understanding of the meanings of words becomes, the more complex the relationship between the words of the two languages is. Using such words with complex levels of meaning it is very easy for errors to occur. There are many examples like the following.

* 我 的 冠 (帽 子) 在 哪 儿?

Where is my cap?

Guān 冠 is a classical Chinese word for cap. In modern Chinese we should use *màozi* 帽子.

　*快要考试了，我们都在努力复习，真是"狗急跳墙"。

It will soon be examination time and we are all revising hard. It is really a case of "a dog will leap over a wall in anxiety".

Gǒu jí tiào qiáng 狗急跳墙 "a dog will leap over a wall in anxiety" is a derogatory phrase and cannot be used here.

　*一个没有国际交往的国家不能在这个世界上活。

A country cannot exist in the world without international relations.

Huó 活 and *shéngcūn* 生存 both mean "live", but here it should be 生存 which is written style.

Here we have looked broadly at some discorrespondences between the English and Chinese vocabulary systems. There are differences at every level forming a gulf between the mother tongue and the target language which learners have to cross over. Interlanguage is a tool they use to cross over this gulf. Considering the differences between English and Chinese, it becomes clear how difficult it is to make the transition from the habits of the mother tongue to mastery of the target language.

Chapter 3. From Input to Output - An Objective Factor

The following two chapters will discuss the two ends, the mother tongue and the target language, in the learner's mind and the process of language learning spanning them - input and output. Language learning involves processing the various materials and ideas given in the classroom or elsewhere. All this information forms the learner's input. This becomes part of the learners' knowledge, which they then attempt to use, based on their understanding of the target language. The learner's expression, in written or spoken form, is their output. All the output during the learning process consists of learners' interlanguage.

3.1 The role of textbook explanations of words

"The relationship between the language input learners receive and the knowledge the learners ultimately gain is very important, not only to second language learning theory, but also to the design of the language teaching syllabus and the choice of teaching approaches." (Sun Dekun 1990, p.99, translated from Richards 1984) . Input involves many factors, including the teacher's teaching language used in classroom, the interaction between teachers and learners, and approaches to the feedback from the learning process. Here we concentrate on just one of them - textbooks. We will discuss their role and limitations, and the important part they play in the learning process.

Any input material has a greater or lesser influence on learners' interlanguage. The teaching syllabus has been the focus of interest of some researchers. In formal classroom teaching, it is realised that the textbook is an important tool for achieving the aims of the syllabus. In vocabulary learning and teaching, the textbook word list is the learner's main source of information on new words. Learners often get to know a word's basic or first meaning from a textbook or

dictionary. Compared to other variable input factors, like teachers' teaching language, teaching approaches and so on, the explanations of the words in the textbook is normally the foundation of classroom teaching. The other factors are based on it or around it. From the initial stage to the advanced stage, we could say there are few textbooks without a vocabulary list, and also there are few classroom lessons which are not based on the vocabulary list, regardless of the type of lesson.

Compared to the dictionary, which another important tool for discovering the meaning of a word in the target language (see Chapter 6), the input from the textbook vocabulary list has prescribed limitations both in what items are presented and how they are presented. Its role is to implement the teaching syllabus, so it cannot present words as freely as a dictionary, where words can be chosen according to what learners really want to know or use. This means that learners get a more rigid idea from the textbook, and possibly more influence from it   .

As can be seen from the above points, the explanations of vocabulary follow the pattern of the whole process of learning. Normally words are initially accepted in the learner's mind as passive vocabulary to be included in the learner's word store. As their level improves, learners try to use them, and change their function from passive to active in their mental word store. This transformation is most common at the advanced stage. The words which learners receive from textbooks at the initial stage are more limited and they lack understanding of the different types of meaning. In other words, the distinction between knowledge and usage, between passive and active vocabulary becomes clearer at the advanced stage. The explanations of vocabulary in textbooks should be considered in the light of these problems. How well such problems are resolved depends on the extent to which textbook word lists are practical and give a useful guide to word function.

3.2 Textbook approaches to explaining words

We have seen above in our analysis of the differences between the mother tongue and the target language how many problems learners face when they start studying Chinese. When they try to grasp a complicated system of vocabulary, there are many obstacles in front of them which are difficult to overcome. Learning vocabulary involves learning a network of relationships.

> "One knows a word when one has learned how to use it acceptably semantically, and that means knowing its 'sense', and when one can use it appropriately in a situational context. In a true sense, we do not know the full meaning of any word until we know the meaning of all the words with which it enters into semantic relations." (Corder 1973, p.222-223).

During learners' process of learning words, they should come to understand the meaning, grammar function and usage in appropriate contexts. Faced with such a difficult task, how and where do they begin, and by what processes do they turn the input data into output?

We shall describe the situation with reference to the approaches of textbooks to explaining vocabulary. The examples used are mainly the textbooks which have been used by students studying Chinese at Durham University, except for some advanced textbooks published by Beijing University and Beijing Language Institute. Those textbooks used from the first to fourth years - not including additional material such as newspapers and magazines, Chinese literary works and other original works in Chinese, have included the following:

《初级汉语教程》1－3册语言学院出版社

Modern Chinese Beginner's Course Vols I - III, Beijing Language Institute Press

《初级汉语教程 听力理解》（同上）

Modern Chinese Beginner's Course: Listening Comprehension (as above)

《汉语中级教程》上、下册 北京大学出版社

Intermediate Chinese Course, Vols I & II, Beijing University Press

《汉语高级教程》同上

Advanced Chinese Course (as above)

《初级口语》北京语言学院出版社

Elementary Spoken Chinese, Beijing Language Institute Press

《中级口语》同上

Intermediate Spoken Chinese (as above)

《话说中国》上、下册 华语出版社

About China Vols I-II Beijing: Sinolingua

Communicate in Chinese Vols I & II. Leeds University, Department of East Asian Studies.

Improve Your Chinese Vols I & II Leeds University, Department of East Asian Studies

The approaches used to present new vocabulary in these textbooks are analysed below. These methods are commonly used in many similar Chinese language textbooks.

A. *Translation from Chinese to English*

This gives an English version of a Chinese word or phrase, in a similar way to a Chinese-English dictionary. The difference between the textbook vocabulary list and a dictionary is that it is not as complete as a dictionary, but only offers a translation of the meaning in the context of the current lesson, though some further items maybe included. Normally the part of speech is indicated, except in the case of phrases. Some of them introduce other meanings which the editor considers to be principal meanings of the word. For example:

占用	*zhànyòng*	use
安排	*ānpái*	arrange; plan; fix up
集体	*jítǐ*	collective
选拔	*xuǎnbá*	select; choose

(*Communicate in Chinese* Vol 2, p.5)

道歉	*dàoqiàn*	to express apology
高尚（形）	*gāoshàng*	noble
品格（名）	*pǐngé*	one's character and morals
象征（名，动）	*xiàngzhēng*	symbol , to symbolise
展览（名，动)	*zhǎnlǎn*	exhibition, to exhibit

（《初级汉语课本》）

The two textbooks published in England also give some words and phrases from English to Chinese, to aid learners in selecting a suitable word to create sentences on the relevant topic.

suit and tie	西装领带 *xīzhuāng lǐngdài*
smart (tasteful; exquisite)	讲究 *jiǎngjiū*
boring (lacking flavour)	乏味 *fáwèi*
tell story	讲故事 *jiǎng gùshì*
equality	平等 *píngděng*
discourage (hinder)	阻拦 *zǔlán*, 阻挡 *zǔdǎng*
distort the truth	歪曲事实 *wāiqū shìshí*（真理）(*zhēnlǐ*)

(*Communicate in Chinese* Vol 1, p.50)

safe investment	稳当的投资 *wěndāng de tóuzī*
easy access	随时可以取出 *suíshí kěyǐ qǔchū*
absolutely safe	绝对安全 *juéduì ānquán*
to fall	跌价 *diējià*

(*Improve Your Chinese* Vol 2, p.186)

B. *Explaining the Chinese word's meaning with Chinese words or phrases or sentences*

The main textbooks used by the students in Durham do not, on the whole, use this method. However, since this method has recently started to be increasingly used in intermediate or advanced stage Chinese textbooks, we include

examples of it. One of the reasons for using this approach is that translating words one by one causes some problems in usage. Sometimes learners only get a narrow understanding of a word through the translated list of new words. Furthermore, the word in the target language sometimes does not have a suitable equivalent in the learner's mother tongue. Hence, the writers of textbooks have tried using this way to make learners understand words directly through the target language. Where words are not easy to explain clearly with simple words, they still use the foreign language translation method.

启 示－－ enlighten; inspire

美 感－－ sense of beauty

不 妨－－表 示 可 以 这 样 做， 没 有 什 么 妨 碍． no harm (in doing so)

越 轨－－行 为 超 出 规 章 制 度 所 允 许 的 范 围．

注 视－－注 意 地 看．

掩 饰－－使 用 手 法 掩 盖 (缺 点 错 误 等) cover up; gloss over

空 谷 幽 兰－－ 在 空 无 人 迹 的 山 谷 中 开 放 的 兰 花．

(《汉 语 高 级 教 程》 Volume 2, p.125. Beijing University Press 1989.)

C. *Examples showing word usage*

This way is used to explain some function words in addition to providing a translation of the word. This gives learners the impression that these words with notes are important ones which they should pay particular attention to. For example:

"乘 机" 的 意 思 是 利 用 机 会． 例 如:

1 孙 悟 空 一 走， 白 骨 精 乘 机 把 唐 僧 抓 走 了．

2 当 护 士 不 注 意 时， 他 乘 机 回 了 一 趟 家．

3 学 校 给 了 他 两 个 星 期 的 假， 他 乘 机 回 家 看 了 父 母．

"Take the chance" means utilise an opportunity. For example:

1. As soon as Monkey left, the White Bone Demon took the chance to seize Tripitaka.

2. When the nurse was not watching, he took the chance to return home.

3. When the school gave him two week's holiday, he took the chance to go home and see his parents.

(《汉 语 中 级 教 程》 Volume 2, Beijing University Press, p.250)

差 不 多 (形 容 词)

这 两 个 学 校 学 生 差 不 多.

你 弟 弟 跟 你 长 得 差 不 多.

(副 词)

我 等 了 他 差 不 多 一 个 小 时 了, 我 不 想 等 了.

王 教 授 才45 岁, 可 是 头 发 差 不 多 全 白 了.

(《初 级 汉 语 课 本》 Volume 3, Beijing Languages Institute Press)

chàbuduō 差 不 多 Adj. "Similar"

The students at these two schools are similar.

Your bother is similar to you.

Adv "Almost"

I've waited for him for almost an hour, I'm not waiting any more

Professor Wang is only 45 years old, but her hair is almost completely white.

The *About China*《话 说 中 国》 textbook uses the word list with translation approach but also includes some example sentences to explain further.

建 筑 *jiànzhù* (动, 名) to build, to construct / building; architecture

(1) 这 座 古 城 是 什 么 时 代 建 筑 的?

During which period was that ancient city built?

(2) 北 京 有 许 多 古 代 建 筑.

There are many ancient buildings in Beijing.

相当 *xiāngdāng* (副) considerably; quite

(1) 他爱人相当漂亮.

His wife is quite pretty.

(2) 中国南方的气候冬天相当温和.

In winter the weather in southern China is quite warm.

(《话说中国》 Volume 1, p.80-81)

使用 *shǐyòng* use

我很希望能够到编辑部来工作, 这样可以使用我的中文知识.

I hope I will be able to work in the editing department, that way I will be able to use my knowledge of Chinese.

进行 *jìnxíng*

carry out (on); conduct; be in progress; be underway; go on

今天的面试将用汉语进行.

Today's interview will be conducted in Mandarin.

对安娜进行面试的是编辑部主任以及其他两位编辑.

The chief editor was to conduct Anna's interview, along with two other editors.

考试进行了半个小时.

The exam lasted half an hour.

你觉得他的面试进行得怎么样?

How do you think this interview is going?

collocation

进行罢工 go (be) on strike

进行协商 carry out negotiation

(Communicate in Chinese Vol 2, p.5)

3.3 Limitations of textbook explanations

After showing the approaches to explaining words in textbooks, if we turn back to the word usage errors in learners' language, we can find some connection between such input material and the learners' words usage. Textbooks are a necessary tool for carrying out the learning process, but at the same time, they have some limitations.

A. *Limitations in semantic explanations*

A one to one (or more) translation is a way used to introduce new words in textbooks from the elementary to the advanced stage. In beginners' textbooks, it may be the only practical way to do this in view of the limitations of the learners' language level and the classroom teaching method. Thus, there are objective reasons to make the learners to go through a narrow path when they start to learn new words in the target language.

As a general rule in learning, it is natural to start from a simple thing, both in content and in form. However, in language learning, especially in the vocabulary system, using this as the initial methods means that the complete meaning of a word cannot be reflected in a one to one translation. Furthermore, introducing words in this way may give learners a misleading impression, and since this is the first impression it may be a very deep one. For example, *shàng* 上 is translated as "to go to" (初 级 汉 语 课 本), so we find learners producing sentences such as: *暑 假 我 上 中 国 了 "In the summer vacation I am going to China." *Xuǎnbá* 选 拔 is introduced as meaning "choose", hence we can understand when learners are confused between *xuǎnzé* 选 择 and 选 拔 since they are both given as having the same meaning and are the same part of speech. Another example is an explanation in 《初 级 汉 语 课 本》 where it gives

jīngcǎi 精 彩 as "exciting", leading learners to produce sentences like: *我 们 的 旅 行 很 精 彩 "Our travelling was very exciting".

Misleading meanings not only occur in the one by one translation method. Chinese-Chinese explanations may be felt to be a good way to allow learners to understand a word directly through Chinese. In fact, they can only be used with higher level learners and the explanations of meaning are still not complete, and may still be misleading. Furthermore, a general problem inherent in this method is that the words, phrases or sentences of explanation are sometimes even more difficult to understand than the original word. For example, 空 谷 幽 兰 – – 在 空 无 人 迹 的 山 谷 中 开 放 的 兰 花。 "secluded orchids in an empty valley" - "orchid flowers blooming in a mountain valley without signs of human habitation" typically reflects these limitations. The meaning is not easily understood from the explanatory words, and the basic metaphorical meaning of this idiom - "noble and graceful moral quality" - is not explained.

As the language level increases, the complexity of the way new words are introduced also increases. In the intermediate-advanced stage there are more and more ways used. Newer ways, especially explaining usage with examples, can give learners some context in which to use words. This may partly solve some of the problems of usage, but the explanations are still limited by the language level of the learners and the content of the text. They still cannot provide learners with a complete guide to the usage of the new words. For instance, in the example *xiāngdāng* 相 当 shown above, the usage notes only give one of the meanings. The other meaning of this word could have been given by examples such as: 他 们 的 水 平 相 当 "They are well-matched in their level." or 两 个 队 的 实 力 相 当 "These two teams match each other in strength", but this sense is not included.

Such misleading or limited textbook explanations of words are retained in learners' minds and may be included in their vocabulary store as passive vocabulary. At the advanced stage, such words are called upon as active use

words. If the elementary stage impression is incomplete or involves some misunderstanding, it will influence their language even at the advanced stage.

B. *Word usage limitations*

Learners often use words in their basic meaning but make errors through not understanding how the words are used. Words are learnt through classroom teaching and textbooks, but language tools can only partly solve learners' problems. The biggest limitation of them may be their explanations of usage. This is not only because of limitations in the content that can be included, but also because learning vocabulary is not a simple process which can be explained easily. In essence, explaining meaning is much easier than explaining usage.

Words like *jiānchí* 坚持, *shìyí* 事宜, *péiyǎng* 培养 are not difficult to understand in their meaning from textbook words lists. The problem comes when learners try to go from passive understanding to active use. This causes errors like:

*坚持素菜 "support vegetarianism" (wrong collocation)

*这是一个重要的事宜 "This is an important matter" (wrong style)

*他们要培养老人 "They want to look after old people." (wrong collocation).

There are many similar examples in Chapter 1.

Textbooks try to give guidance over usage, but this is not easy for them because their basic approach is a practical one and they are concerned with explaining the meaning which is relevant to the textbook context. This limitation cannot easily be overcome. The approach of giving some examples to explain the meaning and usage of words is more efficient than others. These words should be chosen with care by textbook designers since it is clear that such words will form part of learners' active vocabulary. There is still a big gap between the words explained in this way and learners' usage requirements, but if the words to be explained in this way are chosen well, learners will be able to grasp quickly how to use actively some important words.

3.4 Influence of textbook limitations on learners' learning process

When we consider the input methods, we can understand that learners have many limitations in this first "link". Yet these limitations are often not a serious problem at the elementary stage because they lie beyond what learners need to express during this stage. Firstly, in the form of the teaching and learning, the learners are able to accept the hypothetical nature of their language environment. They can distinguish real life from their learning environment. They try to use the target language, but meanwhile, they understand, or accept, that this is just part of a learning task. They use simple words or the words whose usage they have grasped well from teachers' explanations and textbooks' guidance to express ideas or communication in some situations, but they are aware of the gap between this classroom drill and the ideas they really want to express. They do not expect to be able to express all ideas they want to, so the limitations of the textbook vocabulary are not apparent at that stage.

However, at the advanced stage learners have learnt the basic grammar, and know a reasonable quantity of target language words and phrases, and their rules of usage. They have a much more realistic possibility of expressing their ideas freely, both from the point of view of their subjective requirements and the objective language capability they possess. Furthermore, at this level the syllabus also requires learners to be able to express their ideas in a discourse or in paragraphs. In this situation, the meanings and usage patterns of words introduced in the textbook often seem too simple. Learners do not have sufficient knowledge and information on vocaulary usage, both those received at the initial stage and those currently gained from advanced textbooks, to express accurately their ideas. In other words, their input from their textbooks, their main source, is unable to match their output requirements. This limitation tends to be concealed until it starts to appear at the advanced stage.

As can be seen from the errors shown above, the learner often uses words on the basis of an incomplete, or even erroneous concept, of their meaning. A particular characteristic of word usage errors at the advanced stage, is that in most cases there is some connection between the wrong word they have used and the correct word they need to use. It can be said that the learner has only a partial grasp of words, and that this is the reason why such errors arise. Going back to the different types of errors, it is clear that in the case of near-synonym errors, the mistakes arise as a result of the similarity. The part of speech errors are also a case of words having different parts of speech, but a similar meaning. In the examples shown: *zhàng'ài* 障 碍 and *zǔ'ài* 阻 碍, *jīngyàn* 经 验 and *jīnglì* 经 历, the similarity of meaning is clear. Errors of style, feeling, nuance, etc. can also be categorised as a particular kind of near-synonym error where the words have a similar basic meaning, as in the cases of: *yǐnyòu* 引 诱 and *yǐndǎo* 引 导 or *téng'ài* 疼 爱 and *nì'ài* 溺 爱. Even in the case of errors caused by word creation, we still find that learners try to make up words based on their knowledge of certain characters. Thus, the wrong usage of words often stems from the connections between the meanings of words in the learner's mind. Textbooks play an important role in creating such connections, being the source from which learners acquire their initial concept of a word. It is the incomplete nature of the textbook explanations which cause the problems in usage.

As a result of the limitations of textbooks, and other sources like classroom teaching and dictionaries not discussed here, learners find it difficult to appreciate the rich meanings and functions of a word. When they use words, they fail to realise the difference between the grammatical functions of *tèbié* 特 别 "particular, special" and *tèdiǎn* 特 点 "characteristic", or the meaning and collocations of *jiànlì* 建 立 "establish" and *chuàngzào* 创 造 "create". They are attempting to paint a beautiful scene using a palette of basic primary colours, so it is impossible to produce a realistic effect. The higher the level they reach, the more complicated the meaning they need to express and the more this involves the

use of words with different levels of meaning, nuance, feeling, style, etc. This is a difficult process, it is necessary to work hard at it, errors and reverses are inevitable. In this process of searching for the apposite word, what methods does the learner rely on, and are they appropriate? What are the characteristics of their vocabulary learning process? The next chapter, explores learners' approaches to word usage and attempts to suggest answers to these questions.

Chapter 4. The Learning Process: Strategies for Word Usage

Learners start learning vocabulary on the basis of limited input, and want to express their ideas in a new language when they reach a certain level, the advanced stage. Output describes the totality of the language they use. Here we concentrate on their approaches to using the target language, that is to say, the process they employ. We consider what ways they use when they try to transfer input to output by using their knowledge of their mother tongue, of the target language and any other language, and their language or other learning ability, etc. As Corder has pointed out:

> "The terms interlanguage and interlingua suggest that the learner's language will show systematic features both of the target language and of other languages he may know, most obviously of his mother tongue. In other words his system is a mixed or intermediate one." (Corder 1981, p.67)

Since learners still have many deficiencies in vocabulary and other aspects of the language, they have to try to utilise everything they do know when they wish to express themselves in the target language. They "use what they already know about language in order to make sense of a new experience." William Littlewood also pointed out that the learner uses his previous knowledge of the second language concerned, or his previous mother-tongue experience, as a means of organising new second language data. These two are the main learning strategies and we shall look at how learners apply these in the area of vocabulary. We shall also consider a number of other communicative strategies pointed out by Littlewood. As he indicates, when learners find difficulty in expressing things, because of gaps in their linguistic repertory, they use strategies like: "avoiding communicating, adjusting the message, using paraphrase, using approximation, creating new words, switching to the native language or even using non-linguistic rescues etc.". (Littlewood 1995, p.83-86). This chapter attempts to follow the

learners' mental processes to discover what strategies they use to express themselves in the target language.

4.1 "Borrowing" from the mother tongue

When learners have difficulty expressing their ideas, they often look to their mother tongue for help. Pit Corder uses the term "borrowing" to describe this role of the mother tongue in the second language learning process. The general situation is that the higher the level the learners reach, the less they need to rely on the mother tongue. However, in fact, the mother tongue still plays an important role in learning and using vocabulary. From our investigation, we find that there are three main ways in which learners get help from their mother tongue.

A. Switch to mother tongue directly in order to express their meaning

Using a word or phrase from mother tongue directly, is a simple choice. Learners use this way most frequently in a situation where they feel there is no real option, like in an examination. Other situations where this occurs is with some learners at a low level in the target language, or where there is a big gap between the level of the content they want to express and their language level. When the topic is not an ordinary one, we may also find some mother tongue vocabulary words in their expressions. For example:

*如果他们中间发生了argument……

If there is a argument between them…

*这样他就lose他的权利.

Therefore he loses his right.

*关于homosexual的问题，人们有不同的看法……

People have different ideas on the homosexual question.

*太阳的radiation很强.

The solar radiation is very strong.

*我现在还记得那本小说中的人物和plot.

I still remember the characters and plot of that novel.

B. Use target language words selected from their textbook vocabulary list or from a dictionary when they want to express a concept taken from their mother tongue but do not know the appropriate words to use in the target language.

The second way of borrowing from their mother tongue means that the learner finds an equivalent using the mother tongue, then searches through language tools like English - Chinese dictionaries and textbook vocabulary lists. We carried out a survey of advanced level learners using a questionnaire, which included the following question:

When you are writing a composition, if you do not know a word in Chinese which method do you tend to use first?

a. look it up in a dictionary

b. use a word you do know with a similar meaning

c. create a word based on your knowledge of Chinese characters

d. other

20 learners completed this questionnaire and of these, 11 chose a. (55%); 6 chose b. (30%); 2 chose c. (10 %) and 1 chose d., explaining that she liked to use a phrase or sentence to express the meaning of a Chinese word she did not know.

It can be seen that the mother tongue plays an important role in their vocabulary learning process. The words need to be grasped individually. When learners cannot find the required word in their mental store of target language words, the direct method they can use is to look it up in a English-Chinese dictionary. In fact, it is difficult to find words which are completely equivalent in the other language. "The equivalent words in two languages have different collocations, a different scope of usage, different degrees of extension and different extended meanings." (Xu Yulong, 1992). The differences between the English and Chinese vocabulary systems have already been discussed. Even if learners can resolve their vocabulary deficiencies by using a dictionary, because a number of alternative possible words is commonly given they frequently still have

problems in selecting the correct word. The following are examples of the learner being misled by the dictionary, or rather misusing the dictionary.

*这个电影好像很普遍，有很多人排队买票.

This film seems very popular, a lot of people are queuing up for tickets.

The meaning in the dictionary of "popular" includes *pǔbiàn* 普遍 and *shòu huānyíng* 受欢迎, the meaning the learner intends is 受欢迎 not 普遍. This error is caused by choosing the wrong meaning for a word in the dictionary.

*这不是一个使世界和平的解决.

This is not a solution for bringing about world peace.

"Solution" is a noun, but in Chinese, a word which we may find as equivalent to "solution" is *jiějué* 解决, but this is normally used as a verb. The learner wants to express "solution", and looks this up in a dictionary, but the answer it provides is misleading. It needs changing to a noun phrase after the verb, e.g. 这不是一个解决世界和平问题的方式. "This is not a way of solving the problem of world peace."

*六个月后，他从监狱被放松了.

He was released from jail after six months.

The learner used *fàngsōng* 放松 instead of *shìfàng* 释放, having found 放松 as an equivalent for "release". This is also an example of wrong choice.

*国家需要创造统一的法律制度.

The state needs to create a unified legal system.

This example was given above. Looking up "create" gives the word Chinese word *chuàngzào* 创造. The learner has used this instead of *jiànlì* 建立.

Using a dictionary or entries from a textbook vocabulary list involves using words with no indication of usage, just a translation from the target language to the mother tongue or vice versa. This way causes problems in all areas: basic meaning, grammar meaning and collocation. Learners may arrive at a target language word which does not reflect their idea because of limitations on the part of the dictionary, or their own ability to choose an appropriate word. At the

advanced stage, the result of this influence is that the main structure of the sentences is in the target language but the words may bear traces of the mother tongue. In other words, the grammar is correct but there are quite a lot errors in words usage.

C. Create or modify target language words based on their knowledge of the mother tongue

The third way is "indirect transfer". In this case learners adapt words from the dictionary or listed in the textbook, using word usage rules, grammar or forms of expression from other sources. For example, they may think of a similar word in their target language vocabulary store, and create a new word using a character from the target language and word creation rules from the mother tongue. Hence, words they have used, such as **lǚxíngrén* 旅 行 人 "tourist", **zhèngzhìrén* 政 治 人 "statesman", **kēxuéyuán* 科 学 员 "scientist" and **hǎiguānyuán* 海 关 员 "customs officer" may be influenced by the English suffix "or", "er", "ian" etc, and the Chinese characters *rén* 人 and *yuán* 员, as used in words indicating a person who performs some action, like: *gōngrén* 工 人" worker" or *fúwùyuán* 服 务 员 "attendant". The learners have used rules existing in both their mother tongue and also the target language, but they have overgeneralised these rules. Other examples of this type are:

* 他 电 话 到 别 的 城 市.

He phones other cities.

We can say "phone" somebody in English, but in Chinese *diànhuà* 电 话 cannot be used in a verbal sense. Here it should be changed to *dǎ diànhuà* 打 电 话.

* 一 些 贪 官 污 吏 停 中 国 的 现 代 化.

Some corrupt officials stop the modernisation of China.

An English equivalent of the Chinese word *tíng* 停 is "stop", which may be used as transitive verb. However, 停 cannot be used in this way and should here be changed to *zǔzhǐ* 阻 止.

* 如 果 有 够 钱， 我 就 去 旅 游。

If I have enough money, I will go travelling.

An equivalent of *gòu* 够 is "enough" which, in English can be used to modify a noun, but in Chinese *gòu* 够 cannot be used in this way. It should be changed to *zúgòu de* 足 够 的.

Some previous examples can also be explained in this way:
* 他 们 违 反 当 地 人 的 文 化。

They go against the local culture.

In English "go against local culture" is a reasonable sentence, but *wéifǎn* 违 反 and *wénhuà* 文 化 do not form a suitable collocation .

* 谁 都 受 到 很 幸 福 的 感 觉。

Everyone gets a happy feeling.

"Everyone gets a happy feeling." is a reasonable collocation in English, but it is not possible in Chinese to use *gǎnjué* 感 觉 as the object of *shòudào* 受 到.

Learners transfer rules from their mother tongue to use words and make sentences in Chinese. However, although there are some common characteristics in meaning or grammar function between the two languages, there are also differences in these two respects. Learners often pay attention to the similarities in grammar function and meaning, but ignore the differences; many errors are caused in this simple way. Apart from their mother tongue, other languages they are familiar with are another possible source for borrowing.

4.2 Borrowing from previous target language data

At the advanced stage, learners have assimilated a considerable number of words and phrases in the target language. These words and their meanings which were taught to them at earlier stages, are the main material they use to express

their ideas. However, these words belong in a certain language "network" and when they want to use them in a particular context they discover that the relationship between words and their meanings is more complex than they initially thought. There are two particular problems in learners' words usage.

Firstly, the total amount of their vocabulary is insufficient to express what they want to express. As a result they repeatedly use a core of simple words and words with a wide scope of meaning. This tends to cause errors in meaning. Sometimes they even use words which differ in meaning from the words they need to use. This situation causes them to express themselves in excessively simplistic and imprecise terms, and in language which is generally dull.

* 电视可以当一个危险的工具。

Television can be a dangerous tool.

Dàng 当 can mean "to be", but is not suitable for use here, and should be changed to *chéngwéi* 成为 or *zuòwéi* 作为.

* 环境污染很大。

Environmental pollution is very great.

Dà 大 is a common word which learners are likely to overuse to express degree; here it should be changed to *yánzhòng* 严重.

* 我们应该尊重环境.

We should respect the environment.

Zūnzhòng 尊重 "respect" is used for people; it is probably the only word the learner knew close to the meaning group required, so s/he used it loosely. Here it should be changed to *bǎohù* 保护 "protect".

* 在中国，人与人之间的关系很强.

In China, relationships between people are very strong.

Qiáng 强 "strong" cannot be used to modify *guānxi* 关系 "relationship", although it often used to modify things and matters. Here it should be *mìqiè* 密切 which particularly used to describe relationships.

* 我们应该遵守卫生。

We should pay attention to hygiene.

Zūnshǒu 遵 守 means "abide by", here it should be *jiǎngjiū* 讲 究 "pay attention to" .

As can be seen in the examples, learners are prone to use simpler and more frequently used elementary stage words like *dà* 大 and *qiáng* 强. This pattern of "overuse" makes their language unnatural or causes errors.

A second way of using words based on their target language knowledge, is for learners to employ their understanding of the meaning of Chinese characters. They gain an understanding of the meaning of individual characters from words they have previously learnt. When they cannot find the words they want to use, they will try to use words based on their understanding of characters; this may have some connection with what they want to express, but is not precisely correct. This method is not only used in choosing from words they have learnt before, but is also used when they need to select a word from several meanings in a dictionary. Included in our questionnaire of advanced students was the question:

When you use an English-Chinese dictionary, if you find several Chinese equivalents to an English word how do you choose one?

a. use the first word in the list

b. read the example sentences and choose according to the usage in the sentences

c. look up the words in a Chinese- English dictionary too be before deciding

d. other

Although "choose according to the characters" is not included among the suggested answers, 4 students among the 20 responding answered that they chose according to their understanding of the characters in the words shown in the dictionary. The following examples maybe the result of wrong choices in that situation.

* 发 达 国 家 采 取 了 最 大 的 好 处.

Advanced countries got the greatest benefits.

Here *căiqŭ* 采 取 should be *huòqŭ* 获 取. The character *qŭ* 取 is included both these two words in the sense of "to get". This may have led the learner to make this error.

* 看 电 视 可 以 发 明 别 人 的 特 色。

Watching TV, we can discover others' special features.

Fāmíng 发 明 should be *fāxiàn* 发 现. These two words are different but they both have *fā* 发.

* 人 们 的 选 择 范 围 也 扩 充 了。

People's scope for choice is also widened.

Kuòchōng 扩 充 should be *kuòdà* 扩 大. Although both have *kuò* 扩 in the sense of "expand", here *kuòchōng* 扩 充 may not be used in conjunction with the word *fànwéi* 范 围.

* 大 哥 大 是 一 种 表 示 社 会 位 置 的 东 西。

The mobile phone is something which indicates social status.

Wèizhi 位 置 and *dìwèi* 地 位 both have "position" as a meaning and the same character *wèi* 位, but there are differences between them. Here *wèizhi* 位 置 "position" should be changed to *dìwèi* 地 位 "status" which can be used in collocation with *shèhuì* 社 会.

* 子 女 应 该 培 养 老 人¡

Children should take care of their old people.

Yăng 养 means "feed" and the words *péiyăng* 培 养 and *fŭyăng* 抚 养 both have a richer meaning than the basic "feed" sense, but they take different objects. *Lăorén* 老 人 is used with *fŭyăng* 抚 养, while *péiyăng* 培 养 is used for a child.

Some researchers and teachers lay emphasis on teaching Chinese with characters, since characters are one of the features particular to Chinese. However, some learners are influenced by seeing the same character in different words and are misled into thinking that the words are synonyms. For example, *jiēdài* 接 待 & *duìdài* 对 待, *biăoxiàn* 表 现 & *biăoshì* 表 示 and *qiānràng* 谦 让 & *tuìràng* 退 让.

These pairs are not synonyms, but they are often used as synonyms by learners, because they contain common characters (Liu Jin 1997, p.19). The characters in Chinese words have a many changeable meanings according to their order and collocations. When learners use words purely on the basis of the meaning of individual characters, as in the examples above, if they just know that *qǔ* 取 has the meaning "to get", *wèi* 位 means "position", *yǎng* 养 means to "feed" or "look after", and they use these with a partial understanding, it causes errors such as imprecision in meaning, the wrong part of speech, etc.

We have said that the small amount of vocabulary in the learner's word store is a major problem. Here we should explain that the amount of words includes two concepts. Apart from the actual number of different items of vocabulary, there is a hidden quantity of words lying beyond that. This refers to the different meanings or gradations of meaning that a word has. The hidden vocabulary determines whether the learners can use the words appropriately and can express their ideas freely and naturally. The problem for learners is that they have learnt a word, but only know a few of its meanings, normally the basic ones. This situation influences how they are able to express themselves.

4.3 Word creation based on knowledge of the mother tongue and the target language

We have discussed the learners' two main strategies when they use Chinese words. Here we look at another strategy: creating a new word based on both the mother tongue and the target language. This word may be completely outside the vocabulary of the target language, but still has some connection with real words. Some examples have been pointed out in Chapter 1, the following are further examples:

＊这个教堂两百多米高，它的面貌肯定让人惊乐。

This church is over 200 metres high, its appearance certainly makes people surprised and happy.

The learner used the character *jīng* 惊 from *jīngqí* 惊奇 "surprised" and *lè* 乐 from *kuàilè* 快乐 "happy" to try to express the idea of "surprised and happy" with this 'new word' * *jīnglè* 惊乐.

* 旅 游 业 也 带 来 很 多 弊 处。

The tourist industry has also brought many disadvantages.

The learner has created the 'new word' *bìchu* 弊处, following the pattern of *huàichu* 坏处. Here it should be *bìbìng* 弊病 "disadvantage" .

* 如 果 石 油 价 格 加 涨 的 话， 他 们 就 会 更 多 地 使 用 公 共 交 通 工 具。

If the price of oil were increased, they would use public transport facilities more.

The learner used the *jiā* 加 from the word *zēngjiā* 增加 "increase" and *zhǎng* 涨 from the word *shàngzhǎng* 上涨 "go up", to create the 'new word' * *jiāzhǎng* 加涨. Here it should be *shàngzhǎng* 上涨.

We can see in the examples above that none of the words * *jīnglè* 惊乐, * *bìchu* 弊处 and * *jiāzhǎng* 加涨 are Chinese words, but spliced combinations which do not follow any standard rule. Creating new words exists as a strategy even for mother tongue words, although most such usage produces words which are "quite temporary visitors to the language. They may be used only once, or by one person." (Aitchison 1994, p.157). Aitchison also points out the basic ways and some principal methods of creating new words in English: " Most new words are not new at all, they are simply additions to existing words or recombinations of their components". The actual methods such as "compounding", "conversion" and "affixation" have been pointed out as common ways to create new words in English.

Advanced stage learners often use their understanding of the target language and rules from their mother tongue as methods in the learning process to create new words when they cannot find a suitable words to express their meaning. From the examples above, we can discover that learners may have quite a precise

grasp of the meanings of some Chinese characters, as in the case of *jīnglè 惊 乐 and *jiāzhǎng 加 涨. Although these "words" are errors, they nevertheless can be clearly understood by readers as expressing what the learners intend to express. In the case of the other manufactured word *bìchu 弊 处 , the learner has either got the idea from Chinese words like lìbì 利 弊, in which bì 弊 means shortcoming, and the chù 处 from hǎochu 好 处 and huàichu 坏 处, in the sense of "point". S/he may also have been influenced by the English pattern of compounding as in "good point" and "bad point". They have used the tools from both languages, but have not created proper Chinese words.

Chinese words consist of Chinese characters, but the combinations of these cannot be made at will. They are limited by semantics, structure, internal relationships and combination practices, etc. The other feature is that the word creation methods of English are often used by learners to create Chinese words. However, in Chinese the affixes are very few and cannot be used to create many words. On the other hand, most Chinese characters can be used to create words. When learners try to create a word according to the rules of English word structure with an affix, it is usually not correct in Chinese.

Some researchers and teachers are quite forgiving towards such errors and regard them as a sign that learners are using the target language in a positive way. We regard this strategy as demonstrating that learners have improved their level of language usage, since this method does show a certain level of understanding and knowledge of the target language. If it is used in reading comprehension, the result is positive. In word creation, it has some negative results, because there are strict limitations over word usage. If such creation becomes a "habit" in their learning, it will cause fossilisation or regression (discussed in Chapter 5).

Chapter 5. The Characteristics of Interlanguage in Word Usage

The ideal aim of interlanguage is the target language (Corder 1981). At the advanced stage with the improvement in their language level, learners' interlanguage should contain more characteristics of the target language and less dependence on their mother tongue. Subjectively, learners are also strongly motivated to express their ideas in the target language. However, their interlanguage in their vocabulary learning seems not to follow the progression that their advanced linguistic knowledge and high motivation would lead us to expect. Here, we will attempt to describe the general features of learners' interlanguage in their vocabulary usage, based on an analysis of previous chapters. Then, we will concentrate on the one of the most important characteristics - regression - and try to deduce the reasons for it and how it is connected with "fossilisation", a general characteristic of interlanguage.

5.1 General features of interlanguage in vocabulary usage

A. *Permeability*

C. Adjemian (Adjemian 1976) suggested that permeability is a characteristic of interlanguage. This means that the interlanguage may be influenced or permeated by rules and forms from the learners' native language and the target language. Other languages which learners know should also be included in this. Looking at the learners vocabulary usage, we can find their vocabulary is a mixture of these languages. The concept of permeability implies two things. Firstly, that the native language and the target language always influence learners' language. The interlanguage they use in the learning process includes the rules and forms of both these two languages at some points and some periods. Secondly, it implies that the rules or forms of both the native language and the target language may be incorporated in certain items. In one sentence, or phrase, or even word,

there may appear the influence of both the native language and the target language. Many word usage errors cited above illustrate this point well.

The main strategies and methods relied on by English learners while using words in Chinese were indicated in the last chapter. They can be characterised as borrowing from either the mother tongue or their previous knowledge of the target language. These two main strategies often become the two main sources of errors: transfer errors and overgeneralisation errors. (Littlewood 1984,1995, p.23-27). The learning process itself may also be divided into certain main processes in the transfer of rules from the mother tongue and the generalisation (and overgeneralisation) of the second language rules (Littlewood 1984, 1995, p.29). Littlewood goes on from that to point out that: "Transfer and overgeneralisation are not distinct processes. Indeed they represent aspects of the same underlying learning strategy. Both result from the fact that learner uses what they already know about language, in order to make sense of new experiences." (ibid). Learning vocabulary is basically a process of transfer. Learners will always try to find a concept in their mother tongue to associate with a new form of words in the target language. It is almost impossible to use exclusively target language words without thinking of the mother tongue, even at the advanced stage. In this respect vocabulary usage is different from grammar rule usage. It is not possible to reach a stage where one can apply rules in the same way that one applies grammar rules. Grammar rules are in summary form, and relatively abstract; they can be inferred through a period learning and use. Words and phrases are connected to many concepts which have to be expressed in the other language, so the transfer process continues from beginning to end. For the learner it is not easy to get rid of the influence of the mother tongue. Even among the examples we have categorised as overgeneralisation errors, there are also transfer problems involved. For example, when we analysed the sentence:

* 在 中 国 人 与 人 之 间 的 关 系 很 强。

In China, relationships between people are very strong.

we categorised it as an overgeneralisation of the word *qiáng* 强, but in fact it was probably influenced by their mother tongue too. This is because in English we can use the word "strong" to describe "relations", and the English equivalent of *mìqiè* 密切, "intimate" often has inappropriate affective connotations.

A further example shown above is * 发 达 国 家 采 取 了 最 大 的 好 处。 "Advanced countries got the greatest benefits." We can view this as a choice problem between the target language words *cǎiqǔ* 采取 and *huòqǔ* 获取, but we should also consider the possibility that the English word "get" can be used to express both these Chinese words, so this too may have influenced the learner's choice.

Hence, looking back to the learners' errors or strategies in using the target language, it is not difficult to find these two factors accompanying the learning process. It is natural to find these two factors mixed together in their interlanguage and they cannot easily be distinguished.

B. *Regression*

One of the most important characteristics of interlanguage is referred to as "fossilisation".

> "Normally, we expect a learner to progress further along the learning continuum, so that his 'interlanguage' moves closer and closer to the target language system and contains fewer and fewer errors. However, some errors will probably never disappear entirely. Such errors are described as fossilised, meaning that they have become permanent features of learners' speech." (Littlewood 1984, 1995, p.33)

As Selinker has pointed out we can find a similar fossilisation or "non-development" situation in learners' vocabulary learning. "Fossilisable linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules, and subsystems which speakers of a particular IL will tend to keep in the IL relative to a particular TL, no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation and instruction he receives in TL." (Selinker 1972, p.215). Fossilisation is a general feature of any learning process, it

is not confined to language learning. When learners reach the advanced stage, they have a certain standard of ability and knowledge of the target language. On the other hand, the learning content is more difficult than at the initial stage, hence it is natural that their progress is slower than before, and even stops in some cases.

We have analysed the strategies and approaches used by learners during their learning and usage of Chinese vocabualry, and have looked at the problems caused by various different factors. Although we tend not to agree that some errors will become permanent features, we should admit that they may persist for a long time as learners pass from the elementary stage to the advanced stage. Some language points are not easy to grasp completely even when they feature in the learning process over a long period. Hence, it seems appropriate to use the "fossilisation" concept to describe such features when they arise during the process of learning vocabulary. A feature of fossilisation at this advanced stage in vocabulary learning is that learner's dependence on their mother tongue seems to increase rather than diminishing, we refer to this tendency as "regression". This unexpected phenomenon contrasts with the situation in grammar where a uniform rate of progression away from the mother tongue and towards the target language seems to occur.

Regression in learners' vocabulary learning, is one of the forms of fossilisation. This suggests that when learners use interlanguge, it does not necessarily grow consistently closer and closer to the target language, but experiences many twists and turns. This rate of progress constantly changes according to the content of the learning, the learning stage, and other factors. It sometimes goes smoothly forward, sometimes stops and sometimes regresses.

As far as the learners' subjective performances are concerned, their strategies, as discussed in the last chapter, often involve borrowing from the rules of their mother tongue. The more complicated the concepts they want to express, the more dependent they are on their mother tongue rules for approaches or actual words.

5.2 The causes of regression - distinctive characteristics of vocabulary learning

Dependence on the mother tongue is something learners have to rely on when they are learning vocabulary. The difference between the vocabulary of the mother tongue and the target language is much greater than differences between these two languages in pronunciation or grammar. The differences in grammar between the two languages are obvious, so they are easier to comprehend. The learner can use comparisons to grasp the similarities and differences, then assimilate the target language through the process of transference. In this way, English speaking learners can understand and master Chinese sentence patterns or grammar points which do not exist in English. An example is the position of adverbs of time and places, which is completely different in English and Chinese. At the elementary stage, learners often produce sentences like *我 们 见 面 在 公 园 "We met at a park." or *他 们 开 始 上 课 每 天 早 上 "They start their class every morning." which follow the English word order. Once the learner has understood the Chinese rule and practised it repeatedly, s/he can reach the goal of using this pattern correctly. Another example is the way the aspectual particles *zhe* 着, *le* 了 and *guo* 过 are added to verbs to modify their aspectual connotation in a way very different to anything in English. English learners find these difficult to understand and use, but they can achieve competence in using these through practice and through their developing sense of the language. The grammatical features of the two languages are obvious, so, it is very clear to learners what they are aiming for during the learning process, and there are rules for their guidance.

The learning content determines the learning method: adult learners are used to learning by generalisation and deduction, and these are characteristic features of their learning method. This method is effective when used to learn basic grammar. For example, when learners learn a pattern like the *bǎ* 把 sentence, which does not have a counterpart in their mother tongue, they can make a lot of

bǎ 把 sentences according to the rules given for this sentence pattern. If the learner is given examples like:

我 把 衣 服 洗 干 净 了.

I have washed the clothing.

请 把 门 打 开.

Please open the door.

They can make sentences like the following according to the pattern :

他 把 今 天 的 作 业 做 好 了。

He has done today's homework.

请 把 窗 户 关 上。

Please close the window.

Of course they may sometimes err into overgeneralisation and as a result produce sentences like the following:

＊我 把 新 自 行 车 有.

I have a new bike.

Verbs like *yǒu* 有 which do not indicate change, are not used in *bǎ* 把 sentences.

＊我 把 家 乡 想 念。

I think of home.

Words like *xiǎngniàn* 想 念 expressing mental activity cannot be used in *bǎ* 把 sentences.

At this point they can be provided with more detailed rules, like those concerned with the limitations on the verbs which can be used in *bǎ* 把 sentences, and so can fine-tune their understanding of this. In this way overgeneralisation is actually a step in their learning process and forms a link in the chain leading to the goal of their learning. This discussion of grammar learning is in order to compare it with the main focus of their advanced stage learning - vocabulary. When the object of learning is the vocabulary system, the situation is quite different. Firstly, the differences between the vocabulary systems of two languages are not as obvious their grammar system differences. For almost every Chinese or English word it is

possible to find an equivalent in the other language in a dictionary or textbook. Furthermore the parts of speech in the two languages are similar. However these superficial similarities conceal major differences in meaning and usage between the vocabulary systems of these two languages. Learners are very prone to ignore this and become confused over the differences, making mistakes when they use words or phrases in the target language. For example:

study and *xuéxí* 学 习

experience and *jīngyàn* 经 验

exciting and *jīngcǎi* 精 彩

ill and *shēngbìng* 生 病

use and *yòng* 用

boring and *wúliáo* 无 聊

All these words seem to be reasonable translation of each other, but they do contain the possibility of problems of usage. Some of them have different collocations, some are different parts of speech, some have different fields of use or overlapping meanings. These differences are reflected in problems such as the following, which are all taken from the material surveyed.

*张 教 授 学 习 历 史。

Professor Zhang studies history.

Xuéxí 学 习 "learn/study" should be changed to *yánjiū* 研 究 "study/research into".

*英 国 菜 很 无 聊。

English food is very boring.

Wúliáo 无 聊 "boring" should be *méiyǒu tèsè* 没 有 特 色 "nothing special".

* 他 今 天 很 病。

He is very ill today.

Bìng 病 is a verb in Chinese, so it cannot be modified with *hěn* 很. This sentence should be changed to 他 今 天 病 得 很 重.

To ignore the differences between the vocabulary systems of these two languages is a mistake in understanding. Learners think that the dictionary or vocabulary list in the textbook provides "bridge" across the gap between the two languages. This misunderstanding makes it more difficult for them to achieve the aim of grasping the real meaning of the items of vocabulary.

Furthermore, the particular focus of their learning - vocabulary - is very complex. The vocabulary of a language consists of a huge number words forming a system of networks. It is too complicated to master perfectly. Faced with such a system, learners either use the simple way of treating things as equivalent, or they baulk at entering into the deeper levels of meaning. When they find difficulties in expression, the simplest or most direct method is to turn back to their mother tongue to find solutions. The initial stage of learning words through one to one translation has been discussed; the result is that at the output stage they also tend to use a simplified method. They do not have the ability to deal with such complicated learning material. Hence, the learning object/content determines that the learners turn back to their mother tongue on the basis of their subjective learning approach and objective ability. Since they are used to such dependency from being school children, they do not become concerned that this simple solution is an inadequate way to reach their aim of using the target language properly.

5.3 Conflicts between learning content and learners' learning approach

This has been mentioned in the discussion above of the characteristics of the content of learning since it is closely related to that topic. It can be said that the content of learning decides the form of learning. However, this does not mean that a suitable form of cognition has been chosen.

At the advanced stage, it is an oversimplified view of the relationship between the mother tongue and target language which causes many problems in usage. Learners need to have a deeper understanding of the differences between

these two languages. This does not only apply to the basic meaning, but also to the various types or levels of meaning of words and phrases. They cannot use the words and master the vocabulary system until they realise that the mother tongue is not a bridge to their language learning aim. Thus, they should adjust their cognitive approach to accord with to the new main target of learning at the advanced stage. If they retain their learning habits used for basic grammar learning at the elementary stage, this inappropriate method of learning will be a factor in the fossilisation of their interlanguage.

It is a normal situation that at the advanced stage, learners make great progress in their cognitive psychology. They can accept the rules of the target language from individual examples by analogy. However, using this analogy approach, which was successful in learning basic grammar as we pointed above, to solve the problems in vocabulary learning is not successful. Vocabulary is different from both pronunciation and grammar. It is not limited like the first , and cannot be analysed in the same way as the later. It is an individual and concrete learning process. The main difference between the rules of vocabulary and the rules of grammar is that the former has limited extension. This means that a rule of a vocabulary which should be useable in theory is not always suitable in a real situation (Leech 1987).

Pit Corder pointed out that the broadly speaking, current theories of language learning fall somewhere on a continuum between wholly inductive learning at one extreme and wholly deductive learning at other. (Corder 1973, p.128). Here we use the two concepts "inductive learning" and "deductive learning" to explain the learners' learning approaches. Inductive learning means the learners get a lot of materials and knowledge then accept the rule or principle of the language through summing up. Deductive leaning method means learners use the knowledge they have grasped to understand new materials or use them in their language practice.

Deductive learning is the adult learners' main way of second language learning. Especially when they reach the advanced stage and understand some basic rules of the target language. It is natural for them to use this method. However, it often causes errors when it is used for learning vocabulary: there is a basic conflict between it and the content of their learning. Learners want to use a way of learning words which has a broad application, the same as when they are learning grammar. They want to use words according to some rules, and then draw inferences. The examples shown above, are caused by the learners' overgeneralisation of the rules of the target language, or by using the rules of mother tongue. They deduced the word *guì lǔkè 贵 旅 客 according to the pattern of guìchǎng 贵 厂, guìguó 贵 国, guìxiào 贵 校; and zìyíng 自 营 from guóyíng 国 营 in Chinese. For the same reason, they transferred collocations used in English to Chinese like: * wéifǎn wénhuà 违 反 文 化 "go against the culture" or overgeneralised to produce * Yīngcān 英 餐 "British food" from the pattern Zhōngcān 中 餐 "Chinese food" and "Western food" Xīcān 西 餐. One learner wrote the sentence: *英 国 菜 很 无 聊 "British food is very boring", under the impression that wúliáo 无 聊 is equivalent to "boring" and can be used to refer to the same things as can be described as "boring" in English.

This cognitive approach is not successful in learning how to use words. Firstly, the rules of words and learners understanding of the words they have accumulated are based on their experience. This is restricted and there are many exceptions which also need to be grasped when they are using these rules. Secondly, using words by deduction often causes problems because the process is not like grammar learning. If the learner uses a grammar rule wrongly, he or she can remedy it according to other rules. This means that even negative transfer or overgeneralisation can improve their understanding. However, in learning vocabulary, the problem is a individual one and cannot be remedied with some rule. Learners cannot be kept on target by using general rules.

Hence, the form of cognition or learning method should change when learners are learning vocabulary. They should give up the deductive method which they used for learning grammar and develop a way of understanding the word system by learning words individually. Otherwise, they cannot cross over the gulf between their mode of expression and that of the target language and make their interlanguage move closer to it.

Learning a language is a process going from general to individual, and from abstract to concrete. The complex of system of words and phrases make vocabulary learning difficult. The learning process for vocabulary is not short, but runs right through the whole language learning process. The learner can be helped to understand the meaning of a word in a certain language context, and the usage of a certain form of the word, but not all meanings and forms. There is no simple way or short cut. The basic grammar is a closed system and can be divided into learning stages; however, vocabulary learning never ends but runs throughout the entire first and second language learning process.

Chapter 6. Some Possible Vocabulary Teaching and Learning Strategies

The contradictions in vocabulary learning have been discussed above. The situation, as William Littlewood pointed out is:

"Research into second language acquisition is a comparatively new field and there are still considerable gaps in our knowledge. For example , we do not yet know much about the development of comprehension skills or about the mastery of pronunciation and vocabulary in a second language. Most crucially for teaching, perhaps, we are still a long way from being able to pinpoint the precise features of the interactions between learners and teachers, or between learners and native speakers, which cause learning to take place more effectively. "(Littlewood 1984, 1995, p.99).

As far as vocabulary teaching and learning are concerned, the main problem teachers and learners face is how to overcome the period of regression and adjust learners' learning approach to match the object of their study - vocabulary.

6.1 Systematic, programmed vocabulary teaching

A. Paying attention to vocabulary learning and teaching from the initial stage

It is accepted that vocabulary teaching is an important aspect of the advanced stage. In fact, the problem of vocabulary already exists at the elementary stage in such factors as the parts of speech of Chinese words, the different meanings of one word, etc. Yet at the elementary stage, it is natural that the teaching syllabus should put most emphasis on pronunciation and basic grammar. Vocabulary is just an additional element in the teaching, which comes in as part of the requirements of explaining the grammar and other language points. For example, when the main language point is the sentence pattern "v + v", example sentences like:

我去北京饭店看一个朋友.

I am going to the Beijing Hotel to see a friend.

我 坐 公 共 汽 车 去 老 师 家。

I am going to my teacher's home by bus.

我 拿 了 一 把 雨 伞 就 跑 下 了 楼。

I took an umbrella then ran downstairs .

are used in textbooks to illustrate this. The verbs here, *kàn* 看, *qù* 去, *pǎo* 跑, *xià* 下, *ná* 拿, appear as a reflection of the needs of the grammar. There is no serious attempt to show their range of meaning and functions although these words vary from easy to difficult in their rules of use. The general situation is: "Pay attention to the grammar teaching but ignore the teaching of words and phrases. Sometimes teaching words is limited to a new words list. Just before the main text is taught, learners read them through after the teacher." (Hu Mingyang 1990, p.6). In fact, vocabulary teaching should receive attention from the beginning. It should not be just an appendage. In this way it is possible to take the opportunity when learners are first coming to grips with the vocabulary system to allow them to use their knowledge of the mother tongue for positive transfer.

A typical example we have mentioned above is that of the learners' understanding of parts of speech. English-speaking learners are sensitive to the part of speech because their mother tongue has a morphology and they are used to using words according to their part of speech, something which is often clear from the morphology. They want to know the part of speech when a Chinese word is taught in class. Students may ask the other forms of a word, for example when they know its verbal form, they want to know what the nominal form is. One of my first year students asked me: "I understand that 'significant' is *zhòngyào* 重 要, but I want to know which Chinese word can be translated by 'significance' ." Such sensitivity to the parts of speech of the mother tongue is not maintained and transferred to the target language because of the absence of indicators at the elementary stage. If the parts of speech of Chinese words are indicated at the elementary stage, learners find them easy to accept with their knowledge of their mother tongue. However, the present situation is that this problem is not receiving

attention in elementary teaching. As the amount of vocabulary that has to be learnt increases, learners no longer have no time to concern themselves with parts of speech. Secondly, since teachers have not emphasised the different parts of speech in Chinese, learners come to feel that, with the absence of any clear morphology in Chinese, the parts of speech are not as important as in English. If teachers can pay attention to indicating the parts of speech from the beginning, this situation can be avoided and learners can be made aware of rich variety of forms and meanings of Chinese vocabulary, and then at least avoid misunderstandings over parts of speech in Chinese.

Of course, vocabulary teaching should follow in step with the characteristics of the particular stage. At the elementary stage, the main focus of learning in the syllabus is basic grammar. Apart from this fact, the learners' language level and knowledge also limits the development of vocabulary learning. This being the case, the one for one translation of words in textbooks is a practical approach. There is little choice at this stage, but nevertheless it should not prevent us from trying to make learners understand the essential features of the target language vocabulary system, since this is the basis for the future development of their vocabulary usage.

Some textbooks have been designed in a very interesting way to offer a more planned programme of vocabulary introduction. For example, the word *hǎo* 好 in 《初级汉语课本》 (Beijing Languages Institute Press) appears in three different kinds of meaning in one text. This provides a fairly complete overview of the meanings and functions of that word, including the basic meaning "good" in *hǎochī* 好吃, the completion sense in *fàn zuòhǎole* 饭做好了 and the meaning "easy" in *bùhǎomǎi* 不好买. Such an arrangement not only allows learners to understand the various main meanings and usages of that word, but also allows them to appreciate the richness and complexity of the vocabulary system. Furthermore, it is based on initial stage language level, yet still features significant

aspects of Chinese vocabulary. This is a good model for the teaching of vocabulary.

B. *Systematic vocabulary teaching throughout the teaching process*

It is important to start teaching vocabulary at the elementary stage, but in addition, we need make it systematic from the beginning to the end of the learning process. There is a commonly accepted schema for the teaching of basic grammar. This includes the basic grammar items, the points that need to be concentrated on in language training, and so on. All such longitudinal aspects are included in the syllabus in a relatively complete and reasonable manner. However, on the vocabulary teaching side, there is no systematic line in the teaching. Although the vocabulary syllabus was designed in 1992, how to implement it and how to include the different gradations of words in textbooks at different levels has still not been satisfactorily resolved. The following points require particular attention.

Firstly, the degree of difficulty should not be reflected in the length of the vocabulary list. The stages in vocabulary learning are normally manifested in the length of vocabulary list and the difficulty of the words. There are more than 100 new words in the texts of some textbooks at the advanced stage (for example, in 《汉语高级教程》 Beijing University Press), and some of the new words are rarely used even by Chinese. This situation causes two repercussions. On the one hand the vocabulary in the textbook exceeds the syllabus norm, puts a heavy strain on the capacity of learners to memorise it and includes items which are of little practical use. On the other hand, learners have a rather superficial understanding of the meanings of words and cannot accept information on the way words fit into their networks. They often remain at the elementary level in their understanding of vocabulary, and just know a word by its one for one translated meaning. The richer and deeper meanings of a word go unappreciated. For example, at the advanced stage, the basic distinctions between words like *rènshi* 认识 and *zhīdao*

知道, between *gāng* 刚 and *gāngcái* 刚 才, between *cáiliào* 材 料 and *zīliào* 资 料 are not appreciated by learners, resulting in many errors of usage in such words..

Hence, the target should be understanding the network relationship between words rather than simply increasing the quantity of vocabulary. The ability to use vocabulary is not solely determined by the number of items in the learner's brain. Comprehending how a word fits into a network and using it in a proper context is more important. Both textbooks and classroom teaching should provide guidance on word usage and help learners develop a network of vocabulary in the target language. Some textbooks, especially intermediate and advanced level textbooks do pay more attention to word usage. These include 《高 级 汉 语 教 程》 (Beijing Languages Institute Press), 《汉 语 高 级 教 程》 (Beijing University Press), *Communicate in Chinese* (Leeds University, Department of East Asian Studies). which introduce the usage of new words by giving some typical examples and provide more comprehensive guidance to the range of meanings of words. In addition, the exercise material includes synonym differentiation exercises. Such methods are helpful for learners to gain a more profound grasp of the usage of words.

Secondly, the way new words are explained should advance in a graded manner. In order to manifest a more graded and systematic approach to vocabulary teaching in advanced level teaching material, attention needs focusing primarily on the treatment of words with multiple meanings or multiple functions. A spiral effect should be aimed for, to overcome the present common situation where once words have appeared they are never again given 'new vocabulary' treatment. What is a "new" word? We should not think that because a word has already appeared in some context, then it is never again a new word. In fact, in contexts where a word has a new usage or new meaning, it may be still a new word and should be introduced again. The present "single strand" structure causes the interlinking relationships in vocabulary teaching to become weakened. Explanations of the meanings of a word should be correlated from beginning to the end, step by step.

Only in this way is it possible to take effective steps to avoid the situation where the learner gains only a partial understanding of the meaning of a word. Some different methods of explaining words have already been discussed. In classroom teaching, we should choose different ways according to the different types of words (Lu Jianji 1987, p.530). At the same time, the different learning stages should have different ways of explaining words. At the beginning, learners are limited by their language level, so the one to one translation method may need to be main way. At the advanced stage, the way should be to explain the meanings and functions of words with examples which can show a specific environment for using a word. The content and method should always attempt to go from the simple to the complex..

Thirdly, the richness and complexity of the meanings of words should be indicated. We have emphasised that words have rich levels of meaning, but even at the advanced stage, normally learners have still only grasped the narrow meaning of a word . This situation is reflected in their usage. It not only influences the accuracy of their word usage, but also the variety and colourfulness of the way they express themselves. For example, there seldom appears in their writings or utterances accurate usage of words with affective meanings, words which are laudatory or condemnatory for example. They often use a strategy, as Littlewood pointed out, of "avoidance in communication" . This is because they do not fully grasp the usage of words, so they try to avoid to using them in order to avoid errors in their utterances. However "avoidance" is not a strategy that can be followed in teaching vocabulary: it is necessary to explain the rich layers of the varied and colourful meanings of words in teaching material and in classroom teaching, in order to focus learners' attention on gaining a real sense of the target language. Then, they will be able to understand in which context to use *yǐndǎo* 引 导 and in which to use *yǐnyòu* 引 诱, or *gǔlì* 鼓 励 and *shāndòng* 煽 动. Similarly they will be able to appreciate the difference in language style between *chīcù* 吃 醋 and *jídù* 嫉 妒. The major feature of the advanced stage is that learners should

come to understand more meanings of each word and be able to use them accurately when expressing themselves, so that should receive more attention in our teaching.

6.2 Starting from the target language in teaching vocabulary

This suggestion may seem contradictory since it has been said above that interlanguage goes from native language to target language. The starting point mentioned here does not mean that the concrete language form exists in the learner's mind when s/he begins to learn a second language. It means we should keep the target language in mind during learning and teaching process whether at the initial stage or the advanced level. The following aspects explain this point more concretely.

A. Concept of teaching and learning

Through teaching and learning, the teachers or syllabus designers should always bear in mind the need to make learners understand and accept the target language characteristics even at the elementary stage. It is necessary adopt a more sensitive approach for beginners to the understand the differences between the native language and the target language. Teachers should explain the target language main features without recourse to complicated materials or teaching content. Examples can be used to show parts of speech, morphology and word function in Chinese in the same way as they are used to illustrate grammar points. A general grammar rule is explained with a simple sentence, for example 我明天去. "I will go tomorrow." is used to show the time phrase preceding the predicate. Such a way also can be employed in vocabulary teaching : 我学习汉语 "I study Chinese." and 他的学习不错 "He studies well." can be used in a similar way

to explain to learners that the same form in Chinese may function as different parts of speech. The latter is a problem of word usage, it is clear that it is not more difficult for learners to grasp than the former.

Learners find it difficult to get rid of the influence of their mother tongue. One of the reasons is that the way of teaching words by one to one translation influences the teaching and learning of vocabulary. It causes vocabulary teaching and learning to be limited to a narrow translation situation. "If we just use this way, it will give learners a wrong impression - they will think that the words in their mother tongue and target language have a one to one relationship." (Hu Mingyang 1990, p.6). The wrong impression interferes with the process of learning. Learners will want to get help from their mother tongue in any situation where a gap exists between their expressive ability and the level of their language.

The process of learning vocabulary is a process of transfer from their mother tongue to the target language. Learners need to create a connection between the conceptions of two languages when they use target language words or phrases. We pointed out that starting from the target language does not mean that the basis of their language - the mother tongue - can be ignored and a castle built in the air. However, it must be emphasised that learners should be enabled to gain a sense of the target language as early as possible, in order to make the transfer process deep and natural. We should avoid a situation where learners feel the need to turn back to their mother tongue for a solution when they meet a problem in communication. On the contrary, they should always be encouraged to seek the solution at the other end of their interlanguage - the target language. The one by one translation of words is a way to establish an initial link between the mother tongue and the target language. Learners should make some further connections within the target language in order to place these new words in the target language vocabulary network, so that those words will be more naturally accepted and appropriately used. For example, some textbooks use a system of explaining new words by giving several commonly used collocations.

报 道 report (news) -　　报 道 经 过 to report on what happened

报 道 会 议 情 况 to report on the conference

新 闻 报 道 news reports

繁 荣 be prosperous -　　市 场 繁 荣 market is brisk

经 济 繁 荣 economy is prosperous

繁 荣 经 济 promote economic prosperity

(《 新 编 汉 语 教 程》 Beijing University Press)

This way not only provides an initial connection between words in the two languages, but also makes the initial impression deeper, and hence is more practical. It is clear that this method goes further towards the target language than one by one translation can reach. Thus, more and more words exist in learners' minds not just as single conceptions but as part of a network of target language vocabulary.

B. Teaching styles and reference works

Since textbooks have already been described in Chapter 3, here some other factors connected with the target language input are considered.

a. Classroom teaching

In teaching Chinese as a second language, so far there are few classes that are completely devoted to vocabulary teaching. However the crucial purpose of this stage is to increase the learners' vocabulary, a generally accepted idea in second language teaching. Vocabulary usage plays a major role in advanced classroom teaching. How to make such teaching more effective is a problem which is of concern to teachers and researchers of second language teaching. The purpose of classroom vocabulary teaching should be to regard the assimilation of the usage patterns of words in the target language as the primary task. One way is to draw some comparisons between the words of the two languages, but the

differences should be paid more attention than the similarities. Whether it is necessary to devote a whole class just to vocabulary class is still arguable, but having a class purely for vocabulary does not mean teaching words without a context or a language environment in which they can be used. A network needs to be created and the items of vocabulary fitted in to provide concrete contexts for each word in a variety of linguistic environments so that they come alive for the learners. In a syllabus designed round a series of skills-based classes on a single topic, using a pure vocabulary class as the starting point or linking class for that unit to solve some problems in vocabulary understanding and usage is beneficial. Having taught such a class I found it was welcomed by learners, who often find that word usage is a major problem in their learning process and feel the need for a specialised class to give them a deeper insight into the rules of usage.

For example, when a topic is given with a word list, some words commonly connected with it will already have been met by learners. Some of them, it may be assumed, have been taken in as passive vocabulary and the connection with their native language is very clear. The teaching process attempts to make these words surrounding the topic be accepted be usable learners in their output. In other words, if classroom teaching fails to cause the teaching material vocabulary to be transformed into active vocabulary in the learner's mind, then that teaching has failed in its principal task.

A further point about teaching arrangements is that as much input of the target language as possible should be included. Learners should be encouraged to enrich their sense of the Chinese language through reading and listening to Chinese materials as much as possible. This should be followed up with measures to improve learners' ability to use the words of the target language through output - speaking and writing. There are arguments over the degree of control which needs exercising over the quantity and level of input materials. Some researchers think that it is necessary to control the amount and level. An alternative point of view is that the amount of input material should be as great as possible without any

control, in order to improve the learners ability in communication. (Littlewood 1984, 1995). The latter view seems more reasonable. In vocabulary teaching, the input materials should as much as possible in order to give a wider basis for the creation of a sense of language. The more input learners get, the more possibility there is that they will understand the language environment in which words can be used. Learners cannot merely understand the meaning of words, but must also understand their connections with other words and phrases, in a word, their conditions for existence. Only in this way, can they move towards a real understanding of a word. For example, some Chinese polysemants may have been given several meanings in English, we can place special emphasis on these in teaching, but learners may still find it difficult to grasp the multiple meanings and usages. The only way to reach the goal is to give more examples in context, and enable the learner to have a greater understanding of the variety of different situations in which a word caan be used, so that s/he can understand the vocabulary network, and use words more precisely.

b. *Using an appropriate dictionary and using it appropriately*

As the Chinese saying goes: "It is necessary to have a good tools to do good work." The dictionary is an important tool in language learning. Apart from textbooks, this is the major tool used by learners when they need to express a concept but have no idea about which target language words can be used. Compared a word lists in a textbook, a dictionary is much wider in its content with almost unlimited possibilities. For learners, a dictionary can be used not only to understand the meaning of a word, but also to get an idea of how to express what they want to say or write. Especially in the latter situation, the vocabulary concerned maybe not explained in other places, like their textbooks or in the classroom, so the usage guide in the dictionary is a key resource, especially when learners use it for this purpose.

Learners may even come to feel that the dictionary is the key to solving any vocabulary problems. However, in practice, for advanced learners, there is quite a lot of misleading information in dictionaries which helps to cause errors in learners' vocabulary usage. There are two aspects to dictionary induced errors.

Firstly, they may come from the learners themselves. Errors which are likely to have been due to a wrong choice of meaning when learners look up a word in the dictionary have been noted above. Thus how learners choose is an important factor we need to be concerned about. A solution is that learners should not use words solely by relying on looking them up in an English-Chinese dictionary. The dictionary is only part of the answer. Learners need to gain an understanding of word usage based on a wide range of language learning materials, otherwise, their word usage lacks a solid foundation and becomes just a castle in the air. When advanced stage learners write a composition, if the topic and the content is too difficult they will try to use a dictionary as a substitute for knowledge, to make up the gap between their aim and their vocabulary usage level. Dictionary overuse is reflected in how they express themselves and many errors are caused by that approach.

By experimenting in giving learners composition exercises on a given title in class and either allowing or not allowing dictionary use, I have discovered that the former situation does not produce better results. In composition class, learners were asked to complete a composition on a given title with or without dictionary. The results from using a dictionary are no better than not using one. One reason for this is that the dictionary cannot solve the problems of expression without a deeper understanding of the background of the usage of words. If learners just concentrate on finding an equivalent word to express their idea, but have no knowledge of how to use it appropriately, the resulting errors will be even more than not using a dictionary. When they write without dictionary, learners can concentrate on the usage of words and choose the most suitable word from their word store.

Secondly, a further problem in using a dictionary is the errors in the explanations in dictionaries themselves which lead to student errors in expression. Some explanations do not give correct parts of speech or suitable meanings. For example, *jīngyàn* 经验 is a noun in Chinese, but the 《汉英词典》 (商务印书馆) and the 《汉英大词典》 (上海交通大学), two standard dictionaries in general use by learners, both gloss it as a meaning "go through" and "experience". They show it as both a noun and a verb, but gloss it as a verb first[2]. Another example is the 《新英汉词典》 (上海译文出版社) which gives the meaning of the verb "inhibit" as *jīnzhǐ* 禁止, *zǔzhǐ* 阻止 both verbs in Chinese. The meaning for the noun "inhibition", although indicated as a noun, is also defined by the verbs *jīnzhǐ* 禁止 and *zǔzhǐ* 阻止. If English learners look up a Chinese word according to the English concept, they will find it difficult to avoid making mistakes in these situations. If there were a dictionary which offered guidance not only to meanings but also to usage, it would partly solve such problems. The dictionary should explain words in Chinese, and not use the word in question but offer numerous examples to explain the meanings and usage of a word. Lu Shuxiang has pointed out that for a dictionary to show usage is very important and such a work is badly needed. He also pointed out that such a dictionary should have five characteristics. These include giving the parts of speech, some standard modern sentences, and some indication some of common errors in usage. (Lü Shuxiang, 1995, p.5)

Solutions to the problems above lie in improving dictionaries. Practical steps have been taken by some teachers and researchers in teaching Chinese as a second language. For example, the words included in the *Syllabus* are to be collected and explained in a usage dictionary soon to be published by Beijing Language Institute

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[2] Jīngyàn 经验 is glossed as both a noun and a verb by some current Chinese dictionaries, e.g. the Xiàndài Hànyǔ cídiǎn 现代汉语词典 (商务印书馆), where it is glossed as a noun first.

Press (edited by Huang Nansong). More and more dictionaries are being compiled, which guide the usage of words, give useful collocations and grammar function, part of speech, etc. They also offer explanations in Chinese, one benefit of which is avoiding the problem of learners becoming fixated with "one to one" translation. Such dictionaries are much more suitable for second language teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Learners' errors, being an important ingredient of interlanguage, can enable us to understand the basic, essential characteristics of the learning process. Through investigating the errors of native English speaking advanced learners of Chinese, we found that at the advanced level, the main problem for learners wishing to express themselves accurately and fluently in the target language is learning and assimilating vocabulary. The characteristics of their Chinese vocabulary usage during the learning process are :

1. Errors in vocabulary usage form the major part of the total errors and such vocabulary errors are of various types, including lexical, grammatical, affective meaning or language style, etc.

The precondition for using words appropriately is that learners understand these different types of meaning. However, in reality, they normally grasp firstly the conceptual meaning, or even just part of that, and use words according to this incomplete understanding. The connection in the learners mind between the words of the two languages is simple and superficial. This tends to conceal differences in other types of meaning. It is clear that a wide gulf exists between learners' understanding of the target language and the rich variety of levels of meaning in the lexical system. The result of this situation is that learners want to paint a beautiful scene with a simple colours. They cannot express their thinking in a suitable language form.

2. Differences between learners' native language and the target language are the basic reason for the errors. Although some researchers have pointed out that sometimes different native language learners may display the same errors in their learning process, a point we would accept, this does not mean we can ignore the connection between mother-tongue - target language differences and learners' errors in word usage.

If we seek the root causes of the misuse of words and phrases, we find that one of them lies in the differences in the vocabulary system of the learner's mother tongue and the target language. Differences and overlap exist in all types of meanings: the conceptual meaning, grammatical meaning and the affective meaning. This gap should be filled during learning process. The learner's mother tongue is the starting point of the learning process and influences the learner's interlanguage, specifically, their word usage in vocabulary learning.

3. Language input also influence the learners' interlanguage. The textbook, which is one of the input factors, may provide learners with the initial, simple material to connect the two languages' vocabulary systems. Owing to learners' low level in the target language and to the teaching syllabus, they get information about new words only in the form of one to one translations from Chinese to English. This is the basis of their knowledge of the target language vocabulary, and its limited input exerts a negative influence on the learners' interlanguage.

4. During the learning process, the strategies used to bridge this gulf by learners are their knowledge of their mother tongue and of the target language. They jointly influence learners' usage. We can categorise the negative effects of these two learning strategies as negative transfer - the transfer of rules from the mother tongue - and over-generalisation - inappropriate use of the target language rules. In vocabulary learning, it tends to be the former phenomenon which causes problems, since the influence of the mother tongue is stronger than that of the target language.

Apart from these limitations and influences, the nature of vocabulary learning itself makes the learning process more difficult to achieve. In contrast to grammar, vocabulary learning is individual, each item has to be learnt one by one. Learners' normal learning method - deductive learning - is more suited to grammar learning that to vocabulary learning.

Owing to these factors, in the course of learning vocabulary, the form of learners' interlanguage does not show regular linear development, advancing steadily from the mother tongue towards the target language. Rather, reliance on the mother language in vocabulary usage at this advanced stage becomes manifestly stronger. In other words the phenomenon of regression appears as learners seek ways of resolving their problems through the mother tongue. Regression is a concrete manifestation of turning backwards during the process of language learning and is a fundamental feature of the development path in advanced level vocabulary usage. It is a particular phenomenon at the advanced stage when the learning target is vocabulary. Learners want to express more complicated ideas, and the syllabus expects them to do so, but their word usage capability cannot reach the level of what they want to express. Faced with such a gap between what they want to say and what they can express, their interlanguage displays evidence of their attempts to turn back to find solution in their mother tongue.

Thus, overcoming the phenomenon of regression is the main task in learning and teaching vocabulary at the advanced stage. How to make their learning methods effective and avoid negative transfer, is something which demands the development of appropriate strategies on both the teaching and learning side. The first is to change the learners' cognitive approach, in other words, to get them to understand the differences between the vocabulary systems of the two languages and to change over from the deductive method, which they are used to employing in grammar learning. Secondly, on the teaching side, we should pay attention to being systematic in vocabulary teaching, both in textbooks and in classroom instruction. This has been ignored for a long time in Chinese second language teaching. The other suggestion is that we should teach and learn starting from the ideal goal of the interlanguage - the target language - and dedicate our approaches in what we teach and learn and in the content of teaching and learning to reaching that end.

This research is intended as a preliminary exploration of English speaking learners' Chinese vocabulary learning. It attempts to provide an overview and point out some basic problems in this field. The teaching and learning strategies suggested in the last chapter are far from a total solution. Vocabulary is a complicated system and consists of a lot of individual words and phrases which learners need to grasp individually. Teaching, learning and research should reflect more closely this situation, in order to understand the real distance the learners need to pass over and to clarify the rules of learners' interlanguage. Interlanguage is still a new field, especially in research on Chinese L2 teaching and learning. Here we have just focussed on one limited aspect in order to try to explore the nature of the problem and offer a contribution to the discussion on how to improve our teaching and learning methods.

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