

普通話和實現現代漢語規範化的政策，對在學校中樹立普通話的崇高地位，初步培養起講求用語規範的風氣，起了很大作用。至少使在學校中提倡使用普通話以及規定普通話是教學語言（特別是在語文課中），有一個強有力的依據。但是僅有這樣的政策是不夠的。

由于不能在社會上禁止使用方言，不能用行政命令消滅方言，各種漢語方言還將長期在社會上流行下去。而學校與社會、與作為社會細胞的家庭又息息相通，在語言使用習慣上相互間並沒有屏障。因此，政策上還須對普通話的作用或應用範圍作具體的正面規定，而教學中也要採取有效的辦法，以使學生願學、願說普通話並逐步養成說普通話的習慣。

1986年在北京先後召開的全國語言文字工作會議和“七五”期間語言文字工作規劃會議，明確提出要積極普及普通話，確定到本世紀末在全國範圍內使普通話成為教學語言、工作語言、宣傳語言和公共場合的交際語言⁽⁸⁾。隨着語言政策這種新的規定在社會上的貫徹執行，一定能在應當說普通話上給學生以相當大的社會壓力。而社會上普及普通話一旦蔚為風氣，也會給學生隨意使用母方言以強有力的約束。

但是，要使這種壓力和約束力轉變為說普通話的現實動力，還有賴語文教學採取如下一些必要的措施。

首先，要使學生十分明確所學語言——目標語的功能。教師應該在課堂中強調，不僅普通話的書面語是文化、科學的重要工具和各種社會工作的必要手段，因而需要學好，普通話的口語也是集體工作、集會、公眾的文化體育活動和其他社交場合中正式的、最適宜的交際工具，是國內各民族之間共同交際語，必須也同樣掌握好。有必要讓學生懂得，如果不全面掌握好普通話的書面語和口語，將會嚴重影響他在社會生活許多方面中的行動。學生要是很明確，他的語文課整個學習過程，“是在作好準備，以便為了一定的目的，以一定的身份，在一完的場合使用所學語言”⁽⁹⁾，他就會積極學習普通話口語，願意開口說並且多多去說普通話。

其次，教師應當要求和鼓勵學生盡量多地用普通話作口頭交際，並給他們創造進行這種交際的良好條件。只有把目標語用于口頭交際的實踐，才能以一種相反的力量克服慣用方言的“地方根性”（provincialism）⁽¹⁰⁾。語文教學盡可結合課文知識，穿插安排種種口頭應用普通話的訓練活動，

(8) 分別見《中國語文》1986年第2期和《語文建設》1986年第6期上對兩個會議的有關報道。

(9) 皮特·科德《應用語言學導論》漢譯本，41頁。

(10) 參見德·索緒爾（F. De Saussure）的Course in General Linguistics，英譯本，205—206頁，1960年英國版。

諸如課堂內同教師的對答、學生互相答問、辯論會、朗誦會、演講比賽、話劇和相聲表演、座談作品讀後心得、收聽廣播或觀看電視劇後覆述基本內容，等等。如果帶領學生參觀應用普通話較多的文化機關社團如廣播電台、電視台、電影廠、劇團之類，訪問播音員、演員等普通話說得很好的人士，也必然會有良好效果。

再次，有一種有助于培養口語習慣而一向未被注意的辦法，也可以採用。它是利用一般思維同語言密切結合的原理，讓學生用普通話進行思維活動，並逐步形成習慣。思維活動是憑藉無聲的內部言語來進行的，而說話時思維活動的內部言語會很自然地轉換為由同一語言符號體系所產生為的有聲言語。如果說的有聲言語要使用一種較不熟悉的、不同于內部言語所用的語言符號，這其間所須進行的換碼過程就使有聲言語說起來很不方便迅捷，說的話語不可能流暢、生動。因此，只有讓學生經常用普通話來進行思維活動，普通話才能在他們身上植根，他們才會習慣于而且樂于口說普通話。要讓他們做到這一點，自然須向他們講清楚帶來的好處，更重要的是須採取一些利于檢查和訓練的方法。例如在很短時間內默讀一段詩文，緊接着仍用普通話盡量背誦出來或講出大意，或者默讀劇本或相聲作品若干頁，仍用普通話背出其中最感人、最有趣的語句，這樣的做法是會行之有效的。關鍵之處是學生須自覺地、誠實地確實用普通話去默讀，而且要有毅力強迫自己改變用母方言默讀的習慣。如果進一步能夠堅持用普通話默讀小說等長篇作品，那麼以普通話進行思維就能最終習慣下來。

要抑制或減少漢語方言的內部干擾，主要靠語文課教學挖掘自身的潛力，從教學內容和教學方法兩方面設計出有效的辦法。這裡一個很重要的原則，是須要針對母方言最易給目標語學習者帶來習慣影響的部分以及學生感到普通話難學好的部分，來組織教學內容和確定教學方法。比如在北方方言區，主要須突出聲調的教學，多作母方言與普通話的聲調對比，讓學生掌握兩種話在聲調上的規律對應，多糾正學生朗讀時出現的調值偏差。在南方方言區，語音教學的重點應是掌握普通話的三套齒音聲母、兒化韻、輕聲，以及克服母方言異于普通話的聲母、韻母的影響；另外，普通話口語詞的掌握及母方言特殊詞語向普通話的改換，也應突出為重點。這是共同所在；南方不同方言的流行區裡，各自還有一些特殊之處。以粵方言代表地點廣州市為例，這個地方除了突出三套齒音聲母尤其是捲舌音的教學和重點抓兒化、輕聲之外，須着重克服聲母 j 、 η 、 v 和韻母 α 、 αy 、 σ 、 σi 、 νi 、 νu 、 $i\epsilon$ 等所帶來的影響，要把廣州方言的大量特殊詞語同普通話的相應說法作比較，特別留意消除把方言詞語尤其是英語借詞搬到普通話裡來的現象。此外，為了糾正語句裏來自廣州方言的不規範的句法，可將廣州方言一些特殊句法現象同普通話句法作有趣的對比。

對於南方方言區的學生來說，普通話同他們的母方言差別很大，可說是皮特·科德 (S. Pit Corder) 所認為的“第二語言”(11)。雖然不等于一種外語，但學好它的困難程度是接近于學好一種外語的。加以普通話同母方言之間又有許多類似的、同源而相近的成分，比外語還更易摻進母方言的大量成分。因此外語教學中為正確掌握外語和克服母語影響的有效方法，大體上也可以為南方方言區的漢語教學所用。這其中，特別是強調聽和說的訓練具有重大的意義。讓學生經常仔細收聽普通話的播音，勤作聽述和字母拼音的聽寫練習，勤作對話和朗讀等，對克服母方言的內部干擾，是能起良好作用的。

(11) 皮特·科德《應用語言學導論》漢譯本，44頁。

EXPLOITING THE MICROCOMPUTER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE WRITING INSTRUCTIONS

Frances Leung

Introduction

The microcomputer has permeated education abroad. It has come into classrooms of various subjects, including the language classroom. In Hong Kong, the use of computer in education is also becoming widespread. As far as the author knows, computer-assisted instruction in English language teaching at the tertiary level is so far only carried out systematically in the Department of Languages, Polytechnic of Hong Kong, and the English Language Teaching (ELT) Unit of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in which the author works. This article reviews the author and three colleagues' experience in incorporating the computer into our English writing instructions.

Background Information

The English Language Teaching Unit of the Chinese University of Hong Kong provides two levels of communication skill courses to about 3 000 students every year. One is the compulsory faculty-based general English course for most freshmen; the other is a set of elective courses of more concentrated communication skills such as writing, reading, speaking, listening, business communications, etc. The Writing Skills course into which we integrate the computer is one of the elective courses. In the autumn of 1985, we were given funds by the University to purchase six IBM-compatible personal computers and three printers along with space to house all this hardware. The purpose is to enable computer applications in language teaching in our Writing Skills course. At the initial stage, we plan to teach our writing students to exploit a word processing program as a helpful writing tool. Eventually we hope to introduce computer-assisted instruction materials in class. In September 1985, we selected approximately two hundred undergraduates, who were taking our Writing Skills course, to participate in the pilot project and decided to only use the word-processing capabilities of the personal to start with. We encouraged this group of undergraduates to do all their written work on the word-processor.

We hypothesised that if our students were given the opportunity to use the computer to write, they would be better motivated and would spend more time in revising and editing their English written assignments, which would hopefully lead to more accurate and refined writing. With this purpose in mind, we gave our students a user-friendly program which can be actually used after four hours of hands-on lessons.

A Review of Our Teaching Experience

After teaching students word-processing skills for two semesters, we made the following observations.

1. Have more than one student at a machine. Students feel less intimidated if they have a peer to talk to during computer lessons, which reduces alienation and depersonalisation to the minimum. Two is the ideal number per computer because it allows for optimum student practice and exchange.
2. Encourage the students to use Cantonese to talk and help one another. In fact, Cantonese was used as the medium of instruction in computer lessons although the course is an English language proficiency course.
3. When explaining computer functions, try to relate them to students' conventional writing experience. For example, translate the computer functions into the language of writing with pen and paper: save typed material by "scratching" it onto a diskette for actual retention just like we do on paper.
4. Computer lessons are best conducted in discovery or inductive mode. As each command is introduced, have students perform the operation right away and see for themselves the actual effect by noting the contexts both before and after the command is used.
5. Do not overwhelm students with too many functions of the word processing software in the introductory lessons. Just teach the operation essentials that will enable students to use the computer to finish assignments, but then ensure that an experienced consultant is on duty in the computer room during practice sessions so that students can ask questions and extend their skills when they are actually using the computer to write. Our experience shows that it takes a student approximately four hours to acquire enough basic operational skills required for their undergraduate written assignments.
6. After the initial training, students have to practice a lot to reach the threshold level necessary to fully exploit the computer in pre-writing, writing, editing and revising. And they need to adopt and adapt the new working mode to fit their conventional writing habits.

Results of One Year

After two semesters, approximately two hundred students had computer training and used the microcomputer to finish written assignments. The preliminary results are favourable:

1. Most students welcome the opportunity to use the computer as a writing tool. In fact, our computer laboratory is now so heavily used that students wait outside the laboratory before it opens in the morning, and we have to usually turn several students out at the end of the day. Occasionally, even staff members have to be bumped because students who have priority for using the computers show up with work to do.

2. As we hypothesised, the microcomputer does lead to better student motivation; students do not usually swarm to our Writing Skills course which has a reputation for requiring a heavier work load than other courses. However, after we introduced the computer, the number of students requesting the course has risen considerably.
3. We have collected hard evidence on the word processor's qualitative effect on student writing; the analysis is now in progress. But for now, those of us involved in this pilot project can at least say that the quality of some students' work has improved in that students who care produced more refined writing. The experience of this one academic year observing 200 second-language learners using the computer and reading their work has convinced us of the benefits of incorporating the word-processor into our writing instructions. An evaluation is now underway.

Future Research Directions

The computer team in the ELT Unit has received funds from the Institute of Social Studies of the Chinese University to study the long-term effects of using computer-assisted instruction in our English writing program. In this two-and-a-half year study we will investigate five broad research questions:

1. How can the personal computer be integrated most effectively into a traditional writing curriculum, considering factors like students' computer background, the amount and nature of computer instruction, and student problems?
2. What are the tasks which a computer might help students to perform more efficiently, accurately and better, and what are the tasks the computer does and does not lend itself to? This would involve the search for commercially produced and public domain computer-assisted instruction software, and the development of in-house software to suit our needs.
3. How does the computer affect students' conventional writing habits in pre-writing, writing, editing and revising? What adaptation do students have to make in order to fully exploit the new mode of writing?
4. How does the new mode of writing affect the quality of student writing, in terms of idea arrangement, grammatical accuracy and style?
5. How should English writing curricula be established which have the micro-computer as a central instructional tool? There are many types of formal writing tasks which have standard formats. The drudgery of working within these formats can be in part relieved through the use of the computer. The author has in fact just pioneered a course on the computerised research paper and a review is now in progress.

So far we have collected some preliminary findings pertaining to the above five research question. We hope to answer as much as possible the

questions by analysing the findings so that the most effective place for the computer in our ESL writing curriculum can be found.

Conclusion

The applications of the computer to language teaching are very useful, and the instructional possibilities of the personal computer could go well beyond word-processing capabilities. This article has only touched on our small scale experience in introducing the word processor into our writing class and the early results so far. As mentioned earlier, we still have to analyse research findings in order to fully exploit the word processor in our writing instructions. We certainly do not claim that the word processor is a cure-all and necessarily leads to good writing, but it can indeed facilitate the essential processes of the preparation of well-written text, especially in editing and revising. This is, of course, not to mention the fact that the word processor is rapidly becoming an essential tool rather than a luxury for any one who has to deal with words. For this reason, it deserves an important role in the ESL writing curriculum.

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- Frances Leung is Language Instructor in the English Language Teaching Unit, Chinese University of Hong Kong.*

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CRITERIA WHICH A GROUP OF HONG KONG AND MACAU STUDENTS OR ENGLISH LIST AS THOSE WHICH MAKE A GOOD TEACHER

Carol Maclennan

Introduction and Statement of Problem

Attempts to determine which criteria may contribute most significantly to effective teaching and may thus help to promote effective learning, have generated much research¹. The justification for the present study stems from the possibility that psychological barriers to learning may be set up when the expectations of the student are not perceived as having been met by the teacher and the programme s/he has set up. As Brumfit and Roberts point out

What seems to underlie certain new approaches is the idea that learning a foreign language is almost more than anything else, a question of overcoming psychological inhibitions, and emotional problems so that one can bring one's inherent intellectual resources fully into play.²

Quoting Henner-Stanchina and Riley (1978)³, Richards and Rodgers write that

There is thus, an acknowledgement, in some accounts of Communicative Language Teaching that learners bring preconceptions of what teaching and learning should be like. These constitute a "set" for learning which when unrealised can lead to learner confusion and resentment.⁴

These writers continue by pointing out that many students have preconceived ideas, for example, that the teacher is their primary source of interaction and they may be unhappy to find that in some communicative language teaching classes they are required to interact mainly with each other. Another preconception may be that the teacher should collect in, mark, and allocate a grade to all work that is assigned to students. In Communicative Language Teaching classes students may be upset to find that they are sometimes required to mark each others' work or even their own, and that the teacher does not always collect in everything that they are asked to do.

In his article on teaching in Mainland China, Alan Maley⁵, points out several discrepancies in the interpretation of key words between foreign teachers and their Chinese colleagues, hosts and students. He notes, for example, that the following concepts; teacher training, literature, E.S.P., book, reading and test, are all used in very different ways and have very different meanings for mainland Chinese people and native speaking, teachers of English. Most Chinese institutions involved in teaching, Maley indicates, regard teacher training merely as "language improvement," therefore someone who simply "knows" MORE English is regarded as being

better trained and more qualified to teach than a teacher who "knows" less. No concepts of "methodology, classroom observation, material trials and development," the setting of aims and objectives, or anything beyond fairly crude forms of evaluation, which are important to foreign teachers, seem to be included in the mainland Chinese view of teacher training.

Maley argues that the two views are almost irreconcilable and calls attention to the fact that "Chinese students and foreign teachers rarely share the same views on the nature of the teaching process." He goes on to outline how memory-based learning is most widely accepted and, even today is regarded as the most effective, if not the only, method of learning. Although, clearly, there are many differences between the system of education which has developed in the Mainland and that which is currently practised in Hong Kong, nevertheless, as Maley points out with reference to the use of tests, it is not only in the Mainland that misunderstandings arise over the use of these words.

This study attempts to discover (a) if there are likely to be discrepancies between students' expectations and the classroom situation, and (b) to check out three of Maley's points in relation to Hong Kong and Macau students. These are students' perceptions of the functions of (a) teacher training, (b) testing and (c) reading literature. Differences in definition and/or interpretation of these words and the concepts they stand for, are also likely to prevent students expectations from being fulfilled, thus setting up barriers to learning.

The Hypothesis

It was hypothesised that criteria listed by groups of Hong Kong and Macau students of English, as those they regard as being characteristic of a "good" or effective teacher, would indicate the likelihood of there being important differences between students' perceptions of the processes of learning and teaching English as a foreign language, and those advocated by a Communicative Language approach.

Subjects

92 subjects were drawn from pre-university summer courses taught at the University of East Asia, Macau, during July and August of 1987. One set of data was incomplete and had to be eliminated. This left 46 male and 45 female subjects aged between 16 and 28 years. The length of time they had been learning English ranged from one year of study to 16 years.

Methodology

The study was divided into three parts. On the first day of the course, after a placement test which streamed the subjects into three groups, they were asked to respond to the following questions.

1. WHAT CRITERIA DO YOU THINK MAKE A "GOOD" TEACHER?

2. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE ROLE/JOB OF THE TEACHER INVOLVES?
3. WHAT BEHAVIOURS/ACTIONS DO YOU EXPECT FROM A "GOOD" TEACHER?

One week later a further short multi-choice questionnaire was administered to the same groups of subjects and at the end of the course they were asked to fill in an evaluation sheet, this last will not be discussed further in this paper.

Results

1. The Questions

The responses to the first set of questions, on the criteria which subjects think make a good teacher, fell into three fairly distinct categories. These may be termed, the affective, the moral and the theoretical/methodological. Items such as "patient," "gentle," "Kind," make up the first category. "Punctual," "hard-working," "honest," fall into the second, while "competent in teaching," "well organised," "wide Knowledge," were allocated to the third because they seemed to indicate some understanding of the wider practical and conceptual perspectives of the teacher's role.

The initial question, WHAT CRITERIA DO YOU THINK MAKE A GOOD TEACHER? elicited the following responses.

Table 1-1

Group	Affective	Moral	Th/M	Total
A	95	79	16	190
B	98	91	16	205
C	28	36	15	79
D	58	77	19	154
E	44	49	13	106
	323	332	79	734

Most responses can be classified as affective or moral, 323 and 332 respectively, while only 79 responses could be categorised, even loosely, as having a theoretical/methodological orientation. This outcome lends some support to the view that students may have expectations of their language classes which are not entirely appropriate to the learning situation. When these are not met they may generate feelings of confusion or resentment which, in effect, create psychological barriers to further learning.

What seems to be important here, is that students expectations of teachers and lecturers are centred on affective and moral qualities and behaviours, whereas teachers and lecturers, while not neglecting these aspects of their role, are far more likely to be focusing their attention on practical theoretical and methodological dimensions. Although, as Gagne⁶, points out, the

critical effects of human models cannot be ignored, even if the learner's initial predisposition towards the teacher is positive, this may be undermined, reduced and even eliminated as a consequence of the attitudes the learners develop incidentally and fail to examine.

2. *The Questionnaires*

Turning now to the questionnaires,⁷ I will discuss only a few of the most interesting responses. The final group totals of combined male and female subjects for questions 2, 3, 8, 9, and 12 provide evidence which appears to support the major hypothesis of this study. This is that the perceptions Chinese students of English in Hong Kong and Macau have of the characteristics and behaviours which make a "good" or effective teacher may not be in accord with those which underpin communicative language teaching programmes.

If we look now at the individual questions it is seen that subjects ratings for question 1, do not directly support the hypothesis for that question; this was that "KNOWING MORE ENGLISH IS A MORE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO MAKING A "GOOD" TEACHER THAN TEACHER TRAINING." The subjects indicated that "having been trained to teach" was the most important response here, with "knowing the most English" as the second most important asset of the teacher.

Table 2-1

Q.1. A GOOD TEACHER IS ONE WHO ...

	<i>Ranking</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Combined</i>
A. Knows the most English	2	2	2
B. Has been trained to teach	1	1	1
C. Is a Native speaker	4	3	3
D. Knows the most grammar	3	4	4

The combined male groups state that D, "knowing the most grammar" is more important than C, "being a native speaker," while the combined female groups reverse this order, reflecting the combined totals in their third and fourth choices. These responses appear to suggest that students in the Hong Kong and Macau area have a broader concept of teacher "training" than their mainland counterparts and that they may also have a different approach to the effects of such teacher education on teacher behaviour. However the possibility that subjects were responding as they thought the researcher wanted, cannot be ruled out here.

The responses to question 2, for which the hypothesis was that subjects would indicate that the teacher is the main source of attention in the classroom, positively support this. All combined groups unanimously rated interaction with the teacher as students' principal focus of attention. Item C, "listening to the teacher" was seen as the most important function for

students, with item A, "communicating with the teacher alone" as a close second.

Table 2-2

Q.2. IT IS MOST IMPORTANT FOR A STUDENT TO ...

	<i>Ranking</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Combined</i>
A. Communicate with the teacher alone in class	2	2	2
B. talk to many other students	3	3	3
C. listen to the teacher in class	1	1	1
D. Work with a partner	4	4	4

These responses, contrasted as they are with the low ratings subjects give to items B and D, interacting with other students, suggest that their understanding of the aims of the communicative approach to TEFL are likely to be limited, and even inadequate for successful study by this method. Programmes of the communicative type attempt to maximise the amount of time students spend actually using the target language, and this can only be done effectively by having students working and communicating with each other. From their responses to this question it would seem that the subjects in this study are unaware of the reasons for using each other as resources or of the validity of the practice. Such a view is upheld by the ratings allocated by subjects to question 3. Here the hypothesis, that subjects will indicate that teachers (and teachers alone) should mark all students' work, was borne out. The combined totals on this question reflect closely the individual totals for each group.

Table 2-3

Q.3. A GOOD TEACHER ...

	<i>Ranking</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Combined</i>
A. Never lets students mark each others work	2	4	2
B. Must grade all subjects work	1	1	1
C. does not need to mark everything S's are asked to do	4	3	4
D. Never late S's mark their own work	3	2	3

Most subjects, in fact, indicate that they consider a good teacher must mark all the work students produce, a position which conflicts with both the practice of communicative language teaching and the theory on which it is based. Once more the highest rated item, B, "a good teacher must grade all students' work," indicated that these subjects hold a somewhat traditional view of the teaching and learning processes, and are, perhaps, not aware

of the range of varied purposes for which students are given tasks and assignments, particularly in communicative language programmes. The limited view these subjects have of the aims of classroom interaction is further emphasised by their other responses to this question, which however, were not unanimous as was their first rating, item B.

Never letting students mark each others' work was regarded as second in importance by the combined male groups and the combined male and female groups, with this being considered of least importance by combined female groups who place D—never allowing students to mark their own work, in second place. These responses once more suggest a fairly authoritarian, structured approach to the classroom with students expecting to have very little autonomy in relation to their learning.

The next set of results to be examined are those for question 8. The items in this and the following four questions, were, like question 1, based on Alan Maley's article already referred to. Here it was hypothesised that "the development of critical judgement is not perceived as a major reason for subjects to read literature (fiction)." The responses to this question not only support the hypothesis, but also tend to support Maley's comments on the matter. Maley writes that courses of English literature taught at most Mainland Chinese universities are survey-type courses which give an overview of the field along with "the study of short extracts from approved authors."⁸ These are courses which look at the end product while the Western/foreign approach to literature teaching, on the other hand, focuses on the process and aims to provide the student with a set of tools to develop critical judgement.

All groups in the present study rated reading literature "to develop critical judgement" as its least important function.

Table 2-8

Q.8. YOU READ LITERATURE (FICTION) TO...

	<i>Ranking</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Combined</i>
A. develop critical judgement	4	4	4
B. enjoy the story	3	3	3
C. widen your ideas about other cultures	1	1	1
D. learn more English	2	2	2

The most highly rated response was 8C,—that subjects read literature to widen their ideas about other cultures. This response tends to reflect Maley's comment on the "product" approach to literature teaching, by suggesting that the subjects in this study believe that an overview of the culture can be acquired by surveying the important periods in English literature and becoming familiar with major writers, and that such concerns are the main aims of reading literature.

Once more it is possible that some subjects answered this question in terms of what they believed the researcher might regard as "the correct" answer, rather than stating what they actually do in terms of their fiction reading. Item D—reading literature "to learn more English" was ranked second, which, given the difficulties language learners often have with reading fiction in English, is an objective which many students may often resign themselves to. As a result of their preoccupation with vocabulary and their high dependence on dictionaries rather than using the context to decode meaning, it is likely that they often find it almost impossible to adhere to the story-line and so settle for using fiction as a vocabulary building exercise. The hypothesis for question 9 was that "students would indicate that they regard tests as necessary or essential and that they do not consider testing may be over used. This was borne out by the results, with only one male group deviating from the group totals. This group's responses were rather strange, as having ranker B—"tests are essential" as their first choice, they rate "tests are necessary" as their last, after "useful" and "used too often."

Table 2-9
Q.9. TESTS ARE ...

	<i>Ranking</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Combined</i>
A. necessary	1	2	1
B. essential	3	3	3
C. useful	2	1	2
D. used too often	4	4	4

The Male/Female totals in this question, as can be seen from the above table, also do not agree. Males ranked tests "necessary" as their first choice, while females ranked them as only "useful." It seems likely, however, that while they complain, often vociferously, about tests, most subjects, like most Chinese students, accept classroom testing as inevitable. In fact the position of English on the hierarchy of disciplines has a low status in the eyes of many students, partly because of the "low university entry requirement for English ... in an exam driven society,"⁹ especially since most other subjects, like economics, accounting and business studies, for example, test students very frequently. Students are encouraged to take these tests very seriously even when they contribute very little either to the students' overall learning or to their final results.

Maley calls attention to the misunderstandings with which the testing areas is beset, commenting that acting as a vehicle for the passing or failing of students is its main function in Mainland China. This position was not borne out by subjects responses to question 10 as was hypothesised. Subjects place B—the mastery-type function of testing, highest, with C—the progress and achievement function, second, A—the competitive/ranking aspect third and D—the pass/fail intention last.

Table 2-10

Q.10. TESTS ARE USED TO ...

	Ranking		
	Male	Female	Combined
A. show which s's are the best	3	3	3
B. show how much information s's have learned	1	1	1
C. assess students progress	2	2	2
D. tell which s's have passed or failed	4	4	4

These results indicate that Hong Kong and Macau students are likely to have a more sophisticated approach to the testing process than that of the Mainland groups which Maley writes of. This would of course reflect the professional and institutional differences in the uses of testing in the two areas.

The hypothesis for question 11 was that subjects would rate items A and B which refer to the affective/moral qualities of the teacher, more highly than item C—related to teachers' training and experience or item D—a distracter related to traditional teaching. This, however, was not the case. There was almost unanimous agreement that being well trained and experienced was the most important indicator of a "good" teacher. Only one female group varied from this, indicating that the affective aspect "being kind and friendly" was what they looked for in a good teacher. This response came second, before the moral-type item, in all other groups, but one other female groups reversed the latter order.

Table 2-11

Q.11. A GOOD TEACHER SHOULD BE ...

	Ranking		
	Male	Female	Combined
A. kind and friendly	2	2	2
B. punctual and hard working	3	3	3
C. well trained and experienced	1	1	1
D. prepared to follow the text book carefully and give lots of homework	4	4	4

The results for the final question of this type question 12, are interesting in view of the high place given to teacher training in the responses to questions 10 and 1. The responses to this question reverse the previously recorded order and place "having a trained teacher's certificate" as lowest on the scale of priorities. Clearly this could indicate a sophisticated approach to the question which makes a distinction between simply holding a certificate and actually being able to use the professional knowledge it represents, expertly. This interpretation is unlikely in this instance as the responses to question 1 indicate.

The hypothesis, which was almost the same as the one for the previous question, that subjects would rate C—the affective and A—the moral qualities of the teacher more highly than B—teacher training, and was not supported in question 11, was in fact upheld in this question. All groups here rated “having a trained teachers’ certificate” as least important, although they had just, also unanimously, rated it as most important in the previous question.

Table 2-12

Q.12. A GOOD TEACHER SHOULD ...

	Ranking		
	Male	Female	Combined
A. be honest and treat s's fairly	1	2	1
B. have a trained teachers' certificate	4	4	4
C. be patient and good tempered	3	1	2
D. use a variety of teaching methods	2	3	3

These anomalies seem to indicate that the subjects are often “hedging their bets,” and are trying to second guess the questioner in attempts to provide what they believe will be “correct” answers, even though they were told that being “right” or “wrong” is not an issue here.

Discussion

It appears likely that a discrepancy does exist between the preconceptions and expectations which Hong Kong and Macau students bring to the classroom, and the view of the teaching-learning situation held by teachers using a communicative language approach. The set of expectations students have of teachers, it was hypothesised, would not reflect much understanding of current TEFL theories or practices, but would be based on a mixture of attitudes to education which students have absorbed from their parents, their own past classroom experience, popular social attitudes to the teacher's role generated by the media, along with their current subjective attitudes and emotions.

Although the syllabus for the lower secondary schools in Hong Kong¹⁰, advocates a communicative approach to functional competence, it is possible that the rationale behind this approach, along with the approach itself, is not well known or understood by many Hong Kong students. If this is the case, then students may be sabotaging their own learning by subconsciously developing attitudes towards learning, and expectations of the learning situation, which are unhelpful.

Gagne¹¹, comments that the fulfilment of an expectation is a powerful factor in the establishment of positive attitudes. On the other hand it is possible that failure to meet students' expectations may therefore generate negative attitudes. When, for example, the teacher's programme, methods,

or behaviour don't accord with their expectations students are likely to become confused and even resentful.

Allwright¹², notes that student motivation is a complex concept involving a whole cluster of variables. Family influences and various types of mass media are powerful sources of attitude shaping and change. Attitudes are, of course, central factors in the development of motivation and are, as Gagne¹³, emphasises, frequently incidentally learned, therefore there is often no consciously considered rationale behind them. An example of this is the popular song that was enthusiastically received by many young people a few years ago. The message of Pink Floyd's song "we don't need no education/we don't need no thought control," may have been accepted by more than a few adolescents quite uncritically. Powerful media forces appeared to be giving their approval to the "message" of this song. The video which accompanied it portrayed the teacher as an evil indoctrinator while portraying students as innocent victims of his authority. The attitudes to teachers and to the learning process, which this song, given its widespread popularity promoted, are likely to have been adopted fairly uncritically by impressionable young people. Some students may have been influenced quite incidentally to adopt its negative message and hostile position towards education.

In his 1974 study, Allwright¹⁴, points out that the amount of power available to the teacher is likely to be very much less than is generally believed. What teachers can be expected to accept as their responsibilities are seriously limited by the amount of actual power available to them. Allwright comments on the opponents the teacher may have to contend with. Peer group approval in adolescence, for example, is often gained by being seen not to try to learn in class, or by opposing the teacher in other disruptive ways. This of course, is linked to other areas which may detract from, or limit the teacher's power; these are the psychological predispositions of the learner. As Gagne¹⁵, emphasises, the "conditions that form and modify attitudes surround the individual constantly."

Morrow¹⁶, comments that education must be ultimately concerned not just with teaching but also with learning. He continues by noting that one consequence of this is that what happens in the classroom must involve the learners and must be judged in terms of its effects on them. Learning therefore becomes, to a large extent, the responsibility of the learner. This is clearly the case in the communicative language classroom although it is probable that this point is not generally evident to students, who may still believe that learning is something that happens to them simply as a consequence of the teacher's teaching.

In her study "Classroom Interaction and the Second Language Learner," Janet Holmes¹⁷, refers to Willes¹⁸, (1975, 1983) studies into the socio-linguistic rules of the classroom and gives examples which illustrate the importance for pupils of knowing the rules for interacting in the classroom. It is also important, it would seem, for Hong Kong students of English to know

and understand the directives in the Communicative language class, and for them to be aware of WHY they are being asked to engage in a particular activity. It is possible and even likely, that such students have few ideas about the purposes or objectives of most tasks set up for them, and they may neither understand, nor may they be informed of, the teacher's objectives and it is probable that they do not set objectives to be met by themselves independently. Because they don't understand the indirect methods of the Communicative Language Teaching Programme, students may consider the activities the teacher sets up as a waste of time, while the teacher of this communicative method will often regard the habitual learning practices of students, based as they often are on rote learning methods, as misguided and unproductive.

The tentative interpretations of this study suggest that further research into student attitudes, perceptions and expectations and their influence on language performance, could produce valuable information about the inhibitions and emotional barriers with which students unconsciously limit their learning.

APPENDIX I

Questionnaire

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>M/F</i>	<i>Yrs English</i>
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Mark 1, for the answer you think most important, 2, for the next most important, 3, for the next, and 4, for the least important.

1.
 - A. Knows the most English
 - B. Has been trained to teach
 - C. Is a Native speaker
 - D. Knows the most grammar.

2. It is most important for student to
 - A. communicate with the teacher alone in class
 - B. to talk to many other students in class
 - C. listen to the teacher in class
 - D. to work with a partner

3. A good teacher
 - A. Never lets students mark each others work
 - B. Must grade all students' work
 - C. does not need to mark everything students are asked to do
 - D. never lets students mark their own work

4. Of your teacher tells you that something in the text book is wrong would you

- A. believe the teacher?
 - B. believe the book?
 - C. ask someone else?
 - D. check the information for yourself at another source?
5. If your teacher makes a mistake would you
- A. lose confidence in the teacher?
 - B. feel doubtful about other information s/he gives you?
 - C. check all future information carefully
 - D. feel it is quite reasonable for the teacher to make mistakes?
6. If your teacher says s/he doesn't know the answer to something you have asked would you
- A. lose confidence in him or her?
 - B. consider it quite reasonable for a teacher not to know?
 - C. tell people your teacher isn't very good?
 - D. Ask h/h to help you find out?
7. You read a book to
- A. learn new vocabulary
 - B. learn grammar
 - C. extract specific information
 - D. to learn as much as you can from it
8. You read literature (fiction) to
- A. to develop critical judgement
 - B. to enjoy the story
 - C. to widen your ideas about other cultures
 - D. to learn more English
9. Tests are
- A. necessary
 - B. essential
 - C. useful
 - D. used too often
10. Tests are used to
- A. show which students are the best
 - B. show how much information students have learned
 - C. assess students progress
 - D. to tell which students have passed and which have failed
11. A good teacher should be
- A. kind and friendly
 - B. punctual and hard working
 - C. well trained and experienced
 - D. prepared to follow the text book carefully and give lots of homework

12. A good teacher should
 - A. be honest and treat students fairly
 - B. have a trained teacher's certificate
 - C. be patient and good tempered
 - D. use a variety of teaching methods

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Carol MacLennan is Lecturer in Sir Robert Black College of Education, Hong Kong.

BUT YOU CAN DO READING RESEARCH: PROJECTS FOR BOOK FLOOD TEACHERS

Margaret van Naerssen

and

Graham Low

Current research in language acquisition suggests that exposure to language (which is both stimulating and comprehensible while slightly beyond the learner's current proficiency level), can contribute significantly to language development. One way in which this sort of exposure can be provided is through a structured "reading for pleasure" program. A reading for pleasure program typically includes one or more of the following: provision of a very large number of books to read (hence the label "reading flood"), regular timetable slots for silent reading of books which the students have chosen themselves and the use of "Big Books", designed to be read orally by the teacher, but allowing the learners to see what is being read. Big books can, of course, easily be supplemented by smaller versions which may be issued to individual students.

Empirical evidence for the success of reading flood programs comes from a series of evaluation studies carried out in Fiji (e.g. Elley and Mangubhai, 1983; Elley, 1985). In the programs evaluated by Elley and his colleagues, not only did the learners significantly improve their proficiency in English as a Second Language, but the gains appear to have spread to other academic areas as well.

There seem to be at least three compelling reasons why an educational authority might want to develop a reading flood program:

1. As long as the reading materials are interesting and comprehensible (to be understood as "slightly challenging") and both teacher and school support the enterprise, there is a high chance that *learners will improve their second language proficiency*.
2. The demands made on the non-native-speaking teacher are not great, and it is supportive of non-native English teacher by providing a source of native English speaker input.
3. Actively encouraging reading for pleasure as a part of the English course ought to foster the habit of reading for pleasure generally—a long-term goal of many education systems.

Possibly because of the obvious success of the Fiji program, several Southeast Asian countries are now experimenting with, or are already implementing, similar programs: Malaysia (Hill, 1983), Singapore (Ng, 1985) and now Hong Kong (see Appendix).

This paper is aimed at teachers, particularly in Hong Kong, who become involved in a reading flood program. In most curriculum development exercises which are organised by an Education Department or Authority,

there is often a considerable delay while external evaluators gather data, interpret them and report on their findings. There is frequently a further delay while the Education Department decides how best to inform teachers of the results. In this sort of situation, the individual class teacher is in a difficult position. On the one hand, a positive, enthusiastic teacher is needed to help motivate the learners; on the other, a delay in receiving feedback about the success of the program can make it hard to maintain one's enthusiasm and confidence. We suggest that one way to maintain your interest and enthusiasm is to set up a small "research" project of your own.

Please note that we are NOT suggesting that you are somehow challenging or replacing any official evaluators. Nor are we suggesting projects which require you to be an expert in research methods and statistics (though collaborating with a colleague who *does* know some statistics would be an excellent idea). As a result of the absence of statistical control, your findings are not likely to be as generalisable or reliable as those of the official evaluators. BUT, and this is an important BUT, you are in a better position than official evaluators on three counts:

1. You have the direct experience of participating in the program at classroom level.
2. You have needs which are specific to yourself and/or your particular institution.
3. You can afford to use your imagination and explore topics which official evaluators would have to regard as "not cost-effective".

Our suggestions are divided roughly into four groups:

1. Studies that examine the effects of the program on language proficiency and use;
2. Studies that examine the effects of the program on reading habits;
3. Studies that examine the development of the teacher's oral reading techniques;
4. Studies that elicit student feedback/evaluation.

The studies cover a broad range of areas and proficiency levels. Although the Hong Kong project is currently only at the secondary level, we have tried to suggest some ideas which could be adapted without great difficulty for use in primary classes, were it to be extended.

A. Studies of the effects of the book flood program on language proficiency and use

1. How do book flood students score on school exams in subjects other than "English"?

Keith Johnson (University of Hong Kong) (1984?) has suggested that the results of any (or all) of four types of language test could be compared with the results of school "subject" exams:

- a. Tests of reading ability in English.

- b. Compositions marked following the procedures adopted by the Hong Kong Examinations Authority. These would function as indicators of writing proficiency.
- c. General proficiency tests in English.
- d. General proficiency tests in Chinese.

As all similar classes in a book-flood school will be involved in the program, you would have to find an indirect way of establishing whether the book flood had contributed to an increase in "academic subject" scores. Although it is difficult to find a perfect solution, we might suggest the following project.

Unless you have good reason to believe that last year's classes were either exceptionally clever or exceptionally poor, you could use them as a substitute "control" or non-experimental, comparison group. Better still would be to take the average of the last *three* years classes. You could then see whether this year's average 'History', 'Chemistry' or whatever mark differs from the average obtained by students *not* involved in a book flood. If there was any really noticeable increase, you could perhaps go to the subject teachers and try to discover which particular skills the improvement related to. As long as you recognised that the improvement *might* be due to other causes, and not to the effects of the book flood, you would have a good basis for future planning and some detailed ideas about what areas to investigate the following year. As observable differences in grades for History of Chemistry might take two or three years to appear, it would make a lot of sense to set this up at the outset as a three year project. This sounds like a lot of work, but is not in fact, since the subject teachers will be calculating the grades for you.³

2. What is the effect of the program on English spelling?

Krashen, in "Power of Reading" (1985) summarizes the effects of attempts to teach literacy "skills" directly and in isolation (Smith 1982, Torrey 1969 and Goodman and Goodman 1982 cited in Krashen 1985). He notes that there is no compelling evidence in first language learners that such efforts are effective. Smith argues against teaching phonics in isolation and demonstrates that the phonics rules are too complex to learn and have too many exceptions. The ability to do phonics is a result of knowing how to read, not its cause. Smith's position is based on many case studies of children (first language learners) who have learned to read without formal instruction (Krashen 1985, 108).

With this in mind, let us now look at spelling lessons in particular. Krashen describes a typical spelling lesson in English:

In thousands of English classes children are given a list of about twenty words each week. They are to learn their definitions and how to spell them. They may be given the list on Monday and

tested on the words on Friday. During the week, they do exercises such as using the words in sentences and matching words definitions and synonyms. Those who are "readers" typically know what most of the words mean already, say fifteen or sixteen out of twenty, and can spell fourteen, fifteen of them. They have seen them before . . . The non-readers are not in that position . . . For them, even to even achieve a C—requires a heroic effort. Language arts for them may be nothing more than a test that they fail. And like victims of child abuse, they blame themselves.

Our reaction to such students, more drill and practice, more spelling and vocabulary lists, may simply be making matters worse . . . And the more we drill, the less time students have for what may be the only real cure—reading exposure—and the more we convince them that they will never succeed (Krashen 1985, pp. 108–109).

Will this work in a foreign language environment, when students come to reading for pleasure with a much smaller vocabulary than native-speakers their age? The following is an idea for primary-level book flood programs, but it will take a brave teacher to test this out! In one book flood class you could try suspending spelling lessons, accumulate, weekly, the time normally spent on spelling and use it for silent, free reading. Periodically, spelling tests (the same as are given in other classes) could be given, maybe not every week, but monthly, or every two months. The scores could be charted over the course of the year and could be compared with spelling results from a similar but non-book-flood class.

At the secondary level, where spelling lessons are not common, but dictations are, you could make copies of all dictations before returning them. Then, do not discuss common spelling errors with the class. Using the copies, begin tracking the spelling errors. Then, if possible, compare the progress with another similar but non-book-flood program.

3. Do students begin using the input from stories when they write or orally tell their own stories?

- a. *Openings and Closings*

If you have some examples of students' written stories you could conduct an informal experiment to see whether the reading of stories and books as part of the book flood program has contributed to an increased ability to write effective opening paragraphs to their short stories. You could check in terms of grammatical errors, but you could also check on the degree to which a dramatic start was used, interesting sentence patterns were exploited, or speech was used as part

of the opening sentence. A similar analysis could be made of closings to see whether students begin to write effective closings which have a twist, for example, or whether they begin to adopt the technique of relating the last sentence back to the first one. In primary grades, you could also make notes on openings and closings as used in oral storytelling by students.

Even if you have no comparable data from students not in the book flood program, you could still plot the development, over time of openings and closings. The results would still be of considerable interest. You could also try to relate such phrases back to the openings commonly found in the classroom book collection and used by you in oral story reading (if you are in a primary school program).

b. Noise Words

Children's books are full of various types of noise words. Some imitate sounds:

BANG	CRASH	GRR	SPLAT
BOING	CRUNCH	MMM	THUD
BOOM	DONG	PLONK	TWANG
BRR	EEK	SPLASH	WOOF

Others are more objective, detached descriptions which could be done at the early secondary level.

barking	growling	screaming	warbling
booming	hissing	screeching	wheezing
chirping	hooting	shrieking	whining
chirruping	howling	snuffling	whinneying
coughing	moaning	spitting	whirring
grating	neighing	spluttering	yelling
grinding	roaring	trumpeting	fairy footsteps
froaning	rumbling	twittering	a sickening thud

These are just a selection. You will notice that very few such words form part of a standard EFL program. However, a book flood may offer the student a chance of closing the large gap in this sort of area which he/she would otherwise have vis-avis his/her first language equivalent.

At the primary level, it would not be difficult to test for the acquisition of such sounds. You could design a simple pre- and post-test using noise words from book flood materials and check how much improvement there has been. However, it would be even more interesting to see how learners might go about interpreting such noise words. The pre-test could ask them to associate a pitch level with an animal or an animal source with a particular term (e.g., Would they expect to find

lions or sparrows roaring?). Conversely, you could set up a situation (e.g., and elephant that starts out happy but later is hurt, or a car that suffers a crash and will not turn properly afterwards) and ask learners to slot noise terms into a passage or picture series.

c. *Talking "Proper"*

Children's stories regularly contrast conversational stretches with prose passages. Reading for pleasure should give students a much greater awareness of the differences between conversational and written discursive text. You could study this from many angles, but several simple ways would be to look at the development of one of the following:

- (1) Do students begin to develop appropriate conversational expressions ("How's it going?" "How's life?" "Whatcha doing?" "All right?" and other such expressions commonly found in their books)?
- (2) Do they begin to use contracted forms instead of expanded ones correctly? (e.g., "don't" vs. "do not")⁴
- (3) Are they beginning to be able to distinguish conversational stretches in a written text? Are they, for example able to underline conversational-type language? And can they recognise inappropriate conversational language if it were inserted in a written text? To test this you might find a passage which contains some conversation by a child. Remove the child's words and insert the wording that might be used by an adult. Would the student be able to recognise that the speech was inappropriate for a child? (They would not have to actually produce an appropriate replacement; it should be remembered that recognition is one stage of language acquisition.) It would be especially interesting to see whether the book flood program might help language development in this respect.

When working on any one of these studies, you should be careful to avoid formally teaching any of these patterns or drawing special attention to them as you are testing for sub-conscious learning of such patterns based on the reading program.

B. Studies that examine the effects of the program on reading habits

1. Do joint reading activities found in some book flood programs have any spin-off effect on the reading habits of the students? More specifically do students begin to:
 - a. Read more stories to their brothers and sisters in English or in Chinese for that matter?

b. Help fellow students with their English reading, such as both reading to each other (taking turns); reading whole stories to one another; or telling stories to one another in their own words?

c. Feel less "silly" about talking to one another in English?

Useful answers to these questions could be obtained by talking to the students, observing their behavior in class, and even by using simple questionnaires. However, there is a problem: this might actually encourage joint efforts by suggesting such activities as possibilities. The results might not actually be measuring only the effect of the book flood, though it might have a distinctly positive and beneficial backwash effect!

2. Does the book flood program encourage reading for pleasure outside the classroom, i.e., in the school library?

If you are in a school in which there is a comparable, non-book flood program, the following study could be done. Towards the end of the first year of the program you might ask your school librarian to assist you in determining, from student check-out cards, the frequency of use of the library. Compare this with a similar, but non-book flood class in a neighbouring school if there are no non-book flood classes in your school. If you actually do the counting, the other teacher's permission should be obtained. On the other hand, if the librarian were to do the calculations anonymously for both your class and another, the results might be more acceptable.

If there are no comparable non-book flood classes available you could try the following: The librarian and you could compare students from both groups on their use in the previous year with the current year, once the book flood program has been implemented. Has there been any significant increase in library use that might be attributed to the program?⁵ Librarians are interested in increasing the use of their libraries and in promoting reading for pleasure, therefore, they would probably be interested in helping you in such studies.

C. Studies that examine teacher growth in oral reading techniques

How does an inexperienced story-reader/teacher adapt to the oral story reading demands in a book flood program? (This study in particular could easily be adapted for primary grades.)

Not all teachers are natural story readers. Book flood programs, especially those involving "Big Books",⁶ and other extensive oral story reading by the teachers may, therefore, be somewhat intimidating to some teachers. If you are one such teacher, rather than becoming

nervous about reading dramatically aloud, why not decide to get feedback on your reading techniques and chart your own growth?

1. *Work with a colleague*

Work with a colleague, preferably one in the book flood program if there are others in your school. You and your colleague could listen to each other's story reading: the listening could be done live, in or out of the class, or could be done using a taped version.⁷ Try to decide what is good and bad about your techniques and discuss the different ways in which certain stories can be read. Write these down, along with any suggested remedies. Then each of you work on improving your own bad points as you read stories to the children. Finally, meet again after 2–4 weeks. Plot your progress on a particular skill and try to relate it to a record of how the children reacted. You might even consider audiotaping all of your story reading. Not only could it be used when you discuss your story reading with your colleague, but it could also be given to the larger pilot program for use, anonymously in teacher orientation/training workshops.

2. *Get student feedback*

It would be useful to get feedback from your students on your story reading techniques, but it might be difficult to get it directly. However, you could get them to tell you what like or don't like when someone reads to them either in Chinese or in English. (The discussion could be in the students' first language if their English is not adequate.) You might then reflect on these ideas in terms of your own techniques. You could also ask other colleagues in the book flood program (or outside of the program) to have similar discussions with their students and then pool your results. Such information could be given to teachers new to the book flood program either in your school or city-wide.

D. Studies that elicit student feedback/evaluation

1. What do students like and dislike when stories are read aloud to them? (See C. 2. above)
2. Do students agree with the book selection committee on book choice for the book flood program? And what books do the students especially like?

Perhaps the first question seems a little impertinent; however, in a book flood program the question is crucial. In this type of program it is assumed that the higher the interest and involvement a learner has in the material, the greater the chance of such language exposure significantly affecting language development. (This is, of course, really relevant to all forms of learning!)

Teachers and administrator, selecting books of high interest for such a program do this selecting with the very best of intentions

and base their decisions, to some extent, on their own work/parenting experiences of what children particular ages like to react. There is also a tendency for book selectors to, perhaps subconsciously, choose books that they think are "good for the children." And certainly some adult judgment is needed to weed out socially inappropriate materials such as pornography. At times, however, the books that are finally selected are not really ones that are interesting to the learners. It is not unusual for us, as teachers, to have expectations as to what would be interesting for a student. It is hard sometimes for us to really remember what it was like to be younger.

Another potential cause for misfiring in book selection is concern or lack of concern about cultural appropriateness. First, when book selection committees overseas rely on the lists of "best-loved books" in an English-speaking country, sometimes the cultural load is too difficult for independent reading. Will the "Solid Gold" choice by American children be equally popular with children in Hong Kong, Singapore, China, etc.? Or will the culture and the child's general lifestyle *significantly* affect comprehension? (This is not to suggest that books with any cultural differences whatsoever be ruled out.)

There is also the other side of the coin: when book selectors become overly concerned about cultural relevance. Children's minds want and need to travel, to learn about new worlds, new experiences. There have been failures in book selections in reading programs when, for example, only local legends were selected/developed as readers.⁸ Certainly such readers can be a *part* of a book flood collection, but restriction of a collection to only culturally deeply-rooted materials may sometimes cause problems. If, of course, the purpose of reading is to reinforce culture/or if the reading is to be a part of culture program, that is another matter; this, however, is not the primary purpose of the book flood approach. Since high interest reading material is however, critical, it is very important to obtain the students' views of the books already selected (if they had't been asked before) and about future purchases.

Since the program in Hong Kong is at present simply at the pilot stage, it is very important to obtain feedback on student interests now for two reasons:(1) however well designed the program may be, if the materials aren't interesting to the students, this could spell failure for the whole program; and (2) if it is decided that the program should be expanded, the increased investment in books stands a strong chance of being very profitable in terms of growth in language proficiency in English.