HIERARCHICAL CONTEXT MODEL FOR TEACHING CHINESE VOCABULARY

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Master of Arts in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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2006

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ABSTRACT

Learning vocabulary has long been considered a challenging aspect of learning Chinese as a foreign language. To improve Chinese vocabulary instruction, a number of methods have been proposed: morpheme-based, chunking and collocation-based, and association-based. However, these methods do not achieve an ideal learning result because they ignore the contexts for vocabulary: students do not know when and where to use words or use them inappropriately even though they may “have” a large vocabulary.

Realizing the disadvantage of teaching vocabulary out of context, practitioners and material designers in this field began to emphasize the importance of context and made some exploration in this area. However, an investigation of four sets of representative Chinese pedagogical materials indicates that the understanding of the concept of context is partial and incomplete, which results in inappropriate approaches to vocabulary instruction.

To clarify the complicated notion of context in which vocabulary operates, this study proposes a hierarchical model within which three layers of contexts are integrated. Chinese vocabulary instruction should attend to all three layers of context: linguistic,
communicative, and cultural contexts, in order to help learners use words with linguistic correctness, communicative relevance and cultural appropriateness.

As a pedagogical approach, performed culture puts the culture at the center of language teaching and is devoted to integrating language learning into cultural learning. Meanwhile, performed culture emphasizes that language must be learned and practiced in the cultural context. Thus, vocabulary instruction within performed culture first begins with a clear purpose in mind that vocabulary learning goes beyond mere "word learning". Words are put back to their original cultural contexts to examine their meanings and practiced in authentic communicative activities as well. Thus, the teaching practice in performed culture verifies the feasibility and validity of this model and provides a good example of how to implement this model. Cultural context is created by describing the underlying cultural and social background in detail or by the application of multi-media. Vocabulary is presented and practiced in a well-designed communicative context through performance. In this process, vocabulary and the three well defined contexts are integrated and learned by the learner.

**Key words:** Chinese vocabulary, context, language pedagogy, communication, culture
To my family
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deep appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Galal Walker, for his skills, enthusiasm, support and patience during the process of producing this thesis.

I am highly grateful to Professor Mari Noda for her invaluable comments and useful suggestions.

I would also like to thank Minru Li, Eric Shepherd, Steve Knicely, Professor Charles Quinn and Professor Yong Lang, for their excellent help with particular issues.

Special thanks must also be given to Debbie Knicely who has offered great help and encouragement every step along the way.

Thanks also go to my classmates and friends who gave me their time to proofread my thesis: Timothy O. Thurston, Julie Starr, David Goodman, and Paul Loveman.

Finally, but not the least, I would like to thank my husband, for his tremendous support during the whole process.
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Major Field: East Asian Languages and Literatures

Chinese Language Pedagogy
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Defining Chinese Vocabulary

What is a "word" in Chinese? What people think of as the units of language varies from culture to culture. The concept of "word" ranges from single sounds as English a to palyamunurringkutjamunurtu ('he/she definitely did not become bad') in the Western Desert language of Australia (Crystal 1987, p. 91).

With respect to Chinese, there was no equivalent concept in traditional Chinese studies whose research subject was zi .URI [Chinese character]. “The focus of traditional Chinese studies is the relationship among the shapes, sounds and meanings of Chinese characters” (Chinese Cyclopedia • Language and Graphology • Language and Language Study). And word is usually equated with this concept zi .URI or “Chinese character.” Many characters represent independent words (e.g. rèn “person,” shū “book”), but many others
do not (e.g. tou in mìtou “wood” or pěng and you in pěngyǒu “friend”) (Kubler et al, 1998, p. 50). Actually, the nearest equivalent to zì as a linguistic unit is the morpheme, which is usually defined as the smallest unit of meaning in a language. This is the sense in which Chinese has been called, and to a large extent is, a monosyllabic language—a language in which every syllable has a meaning (Chao 1968, p. 138,139).

The Chinese term for word in the English sense is cí 词, which was first introduced into Chinese in 1907. Since then, what is meant by a word in Chinese has been debated among scholars. The following are some representative conceptualizations:

“It is the smallest language unit that can be used independently.” (Lv Shuxiang, 1950s)
“A cí is that which expresses an idea.” (Li, Jinxin)
“A word should be a unit in the spoken language characterized by syntactic and semantic independence and integrity.” (Li and Thompson 1989, p. 13)

In this study, I will adopt the definition given by Li and Thompson. I treat word as cí and zì as elements of the writing system. The term vocabulary refers to a list or set of words for a particular language or a list or set of words that an individual speaker of a language might use. With respect to Chinese vocabulary, I adopt the following definition:

“Chinese vocabulary refers to the set of words and fixed phrases which function as words (Huang and Liao 1996, p. 247).”

In terms of “fixed phrases which function as words”, there include proper names, idioms, proverbs, locutions and xiēhòuyǔ 歇后语 [the second part of a two-part
allegorical saying that actually carries the message, though sometimes unstated] (ibid, p. 165). Proper names usually refer to the titles or names of places, persons, organizations, such as Zhījiāgē 芝加哥 [Chicago], Wáng Xiǎoyún 王小云 [the name of a person], fūtè 福特 [Ford]. Phrases such as idioms, proverbs, locutions and xiēhòuyǔ 歇后语 are usually developed from the historic stories, formulaic or social expression. The following are some examples:

*Kēzhōuqiújiàn 刻舟求剑 [take measures without regard to changes in circumstances] is an idiom, originally from a historical story in classical Chinese literature, means be stubbornly unimaginative as the man who marked the boat to find his lost sword.*

*Yǒu zhì zhě, shì jìng chéng 有志者，事竟成 [where there is a will, there is a way] is a proverb. Usually the proverbs are concise and comprehensive, originated from words of influential figures.*

*Ròubāozi dà gōu 肉包子打狗--有去无回 [to hit a dog with a meat-bun] is a xiēhòuyǔ, which means using the wrong method to approach a problem because the dog will not be driven off but rather enjoy the meat-bun instead. Xiēhòuyǔ is usually used in informal genres.*
Zōuhōumén 走后门 [get in by the “back door”] is a locution, means get something or secure advantages through pull or influence.

1.2 Characteristics of Chinese vocabulary

As a member of the Sino-Tibetan language family, Chinese is genealogically unrelated to the Indo-European language family, to which English and most other European languages belong. This distinction can be seen clearly in the aspect of vocabulary. Contrasted to English, some distinctive features of Chinese vocabulary include:

(1) Few cognates. Because the linguistic lineage of Chinese is unrelated to Western languages and because of the largely independent development of Chinese culture, there is no substantial loan-borrow relationship and, then, there are comparatively few cognates or related words between Chinese and English. This makes learning Chinese considerably more difficult for the American learner to increase vocabulary than learning an European languages such as French, German, or Spanish, where there are literally thousands of cognates (Kubler et al 1998, p. 52).

(2) In terms of the form of the words, both the audio form and graphic form are distinctive from alphabetical languages. Needless to say, the distinctive pronunciation
and exotic written form of words will cost Chinese language learners much time to practice.

(3) In terms of the meaning, it is hard to find a word-to-word equivalent between Chinese and English. Among Western Indo-European languages, reality is classified in similar ways, as the cultures and the experiences are similar. So when going from one to another of these languages, there is no need to learn a whole new system of concepts in learning the vocabulary. Many concepts have more or less precise equivalents. And when a single-word equivalent is not available, equivalence is possible with a phrase (Hammerly 1985, p. 455). However, with respect to Chinese vocabulary, it is not the case, because the greater the cultural distance between languages, the more likely that simple one-to-one translation of words and phrases will result in misunderstanding.

(4) In terms of the usage, Chinese words are relatively flexible with regard to the grammatical categories to which they can belong. The learner needs to be especially sensitive to word order and context. Meanwhile, the register of words is complicated, such as the distinction between spoken and written vocabulary. As Kubler et al (1998, p. 51) mention, there are many words that are primarily spoken and seldom written, and vice versa. The different usage between words hào ㄏ and rì ㄖ (both refer to the calendar date but rì is primarily used in written genres.) is a good example in this
case. English learners have to distinguish these kinds of words and learn to use them appropriately under different situations.

1.3 Knowing a Chinese Word

Words do not function as isolated units of language, but fit into many interlocking systems and levels. Because of this, there are many things to know about any particular word and there are many degrees of knowing.

In terms of what it means to know a word, the sociolinguistic perspective places more emphasis on what language learners can do with the words they know. Communicative functions, behaviors and pragmatics of the words often inform or affect the definition. Nation's (2001) comprehensive category of vocabulary knowledge is representative of this perspective. According to him, knowing a word means knowing its form (pronunciation, spelling, part of speech), its meaning (form-meaning relationship, concept and referents, associations), and its use (grammatical functions, collocations, constraints on use (register, frequency...)) (Nation 2001. p. 26). Let us take the Chinese word hóng 紅 as an example (table 1.1).
Table 1.1: What is involved in knowing the Chinese “word” hóng 红 [red]

In terms of the degree of knowing a word, each one of the above mentioned aspects of vocabulary knowledge may develop along a cline. All word knowledge ranges from zero to partial to precise. This would mean that all word knowledge ranges on a continuum, rather than being known versus unknown (Schmitt 2000, p. 118). For example, with respect to the meaning, one can not say he has known all meanings of the word even after he has learned all meanings of the word listed in the dictionary. According to Hammerly (1982, p. 449), each meaning of a lexical item consists of a denotation (what it refers to) and its cultural connotations (the ideas society associates...
with it. Continuing with the example hóng 红 [red], the main denotation or basic meaning of the noun 红 is “a colour of red.” It is clear that this denotation of 红 is identical with the basic denotation of the English word red. However, the connotations between the word 红 and its equivalent red are quite different: (1) 红 usually symbolizes a happy event, good luck, and other positive meanings in Chinese culture, while red often tends to be associated with blood or violence, heat or hotness, love, anger, or even embarrassment in American culture. For a good part of 20th Century, “red” referred to unpopular political views in the United States; (2) the bride is usually dressed in red in traditional Chinese wedding ceremony, while in western culture, white is the common color.

Additionally, each word-knowledge type may be receptively or productively known regardless of the degree of mastery of the other types. According to Haycraft (1978, p. 44), receptive vocabulary is “words that the student recognizes and understands when they occur in a context, but which he cannot produce correctly,” and productive vocabulary is “words which the student understands, can pronounce correctly and use constructively in speaking and writing.”

Taken together, this indicates that learning words is a complicated and gradual process. As the students see, hear and attempt to use the word through a variety of
activities and contexts, a more accurate understanding of its meaning and use will develop.

1.4 Chinese Vocabulary Instruction

In the field of teaching Chinese as foreign/second language (TCFL/TCSL)\(^1\), vocabulary instruction is the weakest part and has not been improved significantly during the past decades (Hu, 1997). This can be attributed to the influence of a deep-rooted structuralist view of language which has dominated the field of TCFL/TCSL. A perspective evident is the fact that grammar is the focus of language instruction. In most of the textbooks available, sentence pattern, explanatory notes on grammatical usages and syntactic rules are explicitly given accompanied with loads of decontextualised structural exercises. With respect to vocabulary instruction, usually only a vocabulary list with English translation for each word is given. In particular, vocabulary learning means word-to-word translation between two languages and mechanical memorization. According to my survey, this situation remains unchanged even in some newly-published textbooks which claim to have adopted the functional or communicative pedagogical

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\(^1\) Whether it is TCFL or TCSL depends on the language learning environment. It is TCSL if Chinese is the language used in that learning environment, otherwise, it is TCFL. In this study, the two terms are exchangeable because vocabulary instruction can be applied in both environments.
approaches. This point will be examined in more detail in Chapter 3. In terms of classroom activities, there are four common instructional formats in current use:

1. Repeating of the textbook. The instructor asks learners to read the words and expression appearing in the vocabulary list and gives the English meaning;

2. Giving all meanings of the words and expressions in the dictionary;

3. Intensive vocabulary learning. learners are asked to memorize hundreds of words and expressions in a few weeks;

4. Avoidance of the direct instruction on vocabulary, permitting learners to refer to the vocabulary lists in the textbook.

The relatively minor importance attached to the study of vocabulary instruction is also visible in the paucity of studies by researchers and practitioners in this field. Compared to the study of grammar, pronunciation, and other linguistic domains, studies on the methods of vocabulary instruction are rather scarce, and the existing research can be limited to only four categories:

1. Morpheme-based method or character-based method

A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of language. Compounds combine morphemes and there are by and large certain rules on the relationship among morphemes. For example, if the meaning of the morpheme zhuāng 裝 [clothing] is
introduced to the students when learning the word 服装 [clothing], a series of words containing the morpheme of 装, 男装 [men’s clothing], 女装 [women’s wear], 童装 [children’s clothing], 老人装 [clothing for old people], 情侣装 [clothing for lovers], can be learned efficiently (Xiao, 2002).

Many scholars recognize the role of the morpheme in enlarging learners’ vocabulary and propose that Chinese vocabulary instruction should focus on morpheme and morphology knowledge to learners to enlarge their vocabulary (Sheng 1990; Lv 1999; Jia 2001; Xiao 2002). They argue that it can be used to help the learning of unfamiliar words by relating these words to known morphemes, and it can be used as a way of checking whether an unfamiliar word has been successfully guessed from context.

The drawback of this method is obvious, as pointed out by some researchers (Xiao 2002). First, morphemes with the same meaning are not interchangeable. For example, 圈 and 环, both are translated as “circle”. However, 花圈 means wreath for the purpose of condolence while 花环 means wreath for the purpose of celebration or decoration. Second, the meaning of the compounds is not always equal to the combination of the morphemes. For example, the word 酸甜苦辣 is not the combination of the four tastes “sour, sweet, bitter, hot”, instead this
word means *the joys and sorrows of life*. The four tastes function as a metaphor. Another example is the word *dōngxī* 东西 [things or stuff] which does not logically result from the morphemes *dōng* 东[east] and *xī* 西 [west]. Therefore, the question is, is the effort of learning morphemes repaid by the opportunities to meet and make use of these word parts?

(2) Chunking and collocation-based method

The term “collocation” is used to refer to a group of words that belong together, either because they commonly occur together like *take a chance*, or because the meaning of the group is not obvious from the meaning of the parts, as with *by the way* (Nation, 2001, p. 317). Miller (1956) distinguished ‘bits’ of information from ‘chunks’ of information. Bits of information are formed into chunks by the process of ‘recoding’ that is creating larger meaningful chunks.

Therefore, both collocation and chunks are larger linguistic units, which in actual communication occur at high frequency and are more fixed in structure. Recognizing the drawbacks of teaching vocabulary in isolation and advantages of lexical chunks and collocations, some researchers (Wang 2002; Yang 1999) applied this method into Chinese vocabulary instruction. For example, when teaching the new vocabulary in classroom activities, some lexical chunks are given as following. Then ask students to do
substitution drills to consolidate the memorization of these lexical chunks (Wang 2002) as shown in table 1.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English translation</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...怎么了</td>
<td>...what happened</td>
<td>这台电脑怎么了？ [What is wrong with this computer]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>这辆车怎么了？ [What is wrong with this car]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有点儿...</td>
<td>A little bit...</td>
<td>有点儿冷 [a little bit of cold]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>有点儿不舒服 [a little of uncomfortable]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>是不是...</td>
<td>be or not be... ;</td>
<td>是不是真的？ [It is true or not?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>是不是很冷？ [is it cold or not?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...怎么吃</td>
<td>...how to cook</td>
<td>鸡怎么吃？ [How to cook the chicken?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>鱼怎么吃？ [How to cook the fish?]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 Teaching Chinese vocabulary by lexical chunks

The main advantage of this method is reduced processing time, meaning that language reception and language production are made more effective by having chunks of language in long-term memory. Also it reduces the occurrence of inappropriate lexical collocations. However, as chunks become bigger, their frequency of use becomes lower. So the questions arise, where is the balance point between frequency and lexical chunk size? How many words can be used in this method? Failing to answer these questions, the author restated that lexical chunking can not take the place of words. It should be combined with the teaching of words to accomplish vocabulary instruction.
(3) Association-based method

Knowing a range of associations for a word helps understand its full meaning and helps recall the meaning in appropriate context. To a large degree the associations of a word are a result of the various meaning systems that the word fits into. From the perspective of mental lexicon, words are interconnected in a network. These include, for example, synonyms, opposites, family members, words in a part-whole relationship, and superordinate and subordinate words (Nation 2001, p. 104).

Enlightened by the research in the field of mental lexicon, some scholars proposed teaching vocabulary in semantic groups (Sun 2002), by associations, synonyms, antonyms (Li 2004), and in games (Zeng 2004).

However, other researchers argued that these groups of words are seldom used in the same context simultaneously in real communication (Nation 2001). Hammerly (1982) also argued that teaching “related” words such as the parts of the face or the body, names of fruits or vegetables, or the names of the various animals at the zoo or circus is little different from teaching word lists, for the situational context is invariable and there is no significant change in the linguistic context (p. 472). For example, the names of the parts of face are not closely related linguistically or situationally. The word eye is much more frequently used in connection with eye color, with glasses or looking than with words
like nose, mouth, and so forth. Thus the importance of this method is discounted to some degree.

(4) Teaching Chinese vocabulary in context.

The importance of context in vocabulary instruction also draws some researchers’ attention (Sun 2002; Jiang 1998; Chang 1994). Sun (2002) points out that the interpretation and usage of words cannot be separated from context because most words have different meanings in different contexts. Moreover, the pragmatic colors of some words can only be illustrated in the contrastive contexts, words such as xiàtà 下榻 [stay (at a place during a trip)], and huìwù 会晤 [meet] can be used only in formal situations. Jiang (1998) also proposed to teach vocabulary in the sentence, especially for poly-synonyms, parasyonyms, and functional words. Yang (2003) suggests practicing vocabulary by making sentences or discourse with the given words.

Among these four methods of vocabulary instruction, the first three, morpheme or character-based method, chunking/collocation-based method and association-based method, all consider words as isolated linguistic items and teach vocabulary without reference to context. The focus of these studies is the accumulation of the quantity of vocabulary rather than the quality of the mastering of vocabulary. That is to say, their concern is how many words learners have learned instead of how well they can use them.
Thus, a question arises: can we consider a lexical item "learned" if it is used inappropriately? Or, can we separate the vocabulary knowledge from its appropriate use?

The ignorance of context has resulted in problems. For example, students do not know when and where to use the words they have learned even though they have a large vocabulary. As Hammerly (1982, p. 471) stated,

"Vocabulary lists and cards matching second language and native language words one to one are therefore not only inadvisable but clearly harmful, as they lack either type of context and lead therefore to the "generation" by simple concatenation of linguistically terrible native language-based sentences."

In other words, learners are decoding each word, then summing up the whole meaning, which will inevitably lead to numerous communication malfunctions. Therefore, it is high time for us to shift the vocabulary instructional method into teaching vocabulary in context. As for the fourth method, it does make further progress to teach vocabulary in the context of sentences. However, the concept of context in this sense is still limited in the sentence level, which seems insufficient and untenable when communication and culture are taken into consideration. For example, the following conversation is between a Chinese student and an advanced level Chinese learner. They are classmates and ran into each other on the campus. After chatting for a while, the Chinese wanted to leave for class.
C: 有时间到我家来吃饭吧。
CL: 什么时间？这个周末怎么样？
C: 这个，呃 ... (尴尬)

[English translation]
C: Please come to my home for a meal at your free time.
CL: What time? How about this weekend?
C: This ... (embarrassed)
(C: Chinese, CL: Chinese Learner)

It is clear that the Chinese learner understood each word in the conversation and she recognized it as an invitation. However, in most cases, the expression 有时间到我家来吃饭 [Please come to my home for a meal at your free time] in Chinese is a formula to show your friendliness and convey an intention to build up a relationship with someone, rather than an actual invitation to a meal.

To understand the real meaning of the exchange, Chinese learner should know that the phrase 有时间 means whenever you have free time, a purposely vague expression. When offering a real invitation in Chinese culture, the time is certain and specific rather than vague. Knowing that point may help learners to judge whether it is an invitation or not.
1.5 Defining the Concept of Context

Vocabulary can not be separated from context. This is clearly stated by Beheydt (1987, p. 13): 'For vocabulary learning . . . it is absurd to learn words out of context, as isolated words do not reveal the inherent polysemous versatility and the context dependent variation that are fundamental characteristics of the word.'

However, context is a notoriously complicated concept in the field of language study, both in first and second language. Even though attempts at defining context within vocabulary acquisition have been made in the past, these have not resulted in a commonly recognized and workable format (Engelbart & Theuerkauf 1999, p. 57). The definition of context appears to depend upon the purpose for which the definition will be used: the more practical the purpose (i.e. describing readers' use of context, or training in the use of context), the more specific the definition (Walters 2004, p. 243).

For the purposes of this study, context will be used to refer to anything inside and outside the text that helps to shed light on the meanings of words.

1.6 Significance of This Study

From the above, it is not hard to see that current Chinese vocabulary instruction, in practice as well as in research, mostly ignores or underplays the role of context.
Therefore, it is evident that investigations are necessary for an understanding of the issues regarding how and to what extent context is involved in the current vocabulary instruction.

Meanwhile, in light of the growing recognition that the conventional method of teaching vocabulary out of context is inadequate to satisfy the learner’s needs and knowing that communications between Chinese and Americans are gaining in frequency and importance, it is necessary urgent to develop new approaches to vocabulary instruction in context. This study addresses what context means and how to incorporate context into vocabulary instruction.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This paper is organized as follows.

First, a brief review of the theoretical background of context and a hierarchical model of context for vocabulary instruction is presented in chapter 2.

Based on the model, an investigation on the contexts in which vocabulary is presented and practiced in the current pedagogical materials in the field of TCFL will be conducted. This will be done in chapter 3.
In chapter 4, the application of the model in material design and teaching practice is offered to verify its validity and efficiency.
CHAPTER 2

HIERARCHICAL CONTEXT MODEL
FOR CHINESE VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

Various studies in previous years have shown that learning vocabulary in context is an effective method and has been proven to be more successful than other methods in terms of the learners’ ability to participate in culturally appropriate communication (Nation and Coady 1988; Mondria and Wit-de 1991; et al). However, there is not a common definition of context and different categories of context are presented depending upon the purpose for which the definition will be used. In this chapter, the theoretical background of context and different types of contexts will be explored. This will lead to proposing a hierarchical model of context constructed for the purpose of vocabulary instruction. Its components and interactive relationships will be discussed in detail.
2.1 Concepts and Categories of Context

There has been a great amount of research done concerning vocabulary learning from context (Denninghaus 1965; Müller, 1970; Cohen and Aphek 1980, 1981; Clarke and Nation 1980; Henrici and Köster 1987; Nation and Coady 1988; Mondria and Wit-de Boer 1991; Huckin et al. 1993). Many of these studies concentrated on examining the effectiveness of contextual learning and possible failures when using this method, thereby mainly focusing on guessing the meaning from reading. All these publications emphasize strongly the preference of vocabulary acquisition in context but what they fail to do is to offer a common definition of context.

An early definition was formulated by Müller (1970). His article (1970, p. 231) shows the differentiation between a ‘verbal’ and a ‘nonverbal context’, the ‘nonverbal context’ was often inappropriately equated with ‘situation’ (speaker, location, time, matter) and the ‘verbal context’ was often seen as the ‘real context’ (adjoining words, sentences). Henrici and Köster (1987, p. 53) list the following types of contexts, which, according to them, all come under the heading of ‘typical context’: situative context, descriptive context, linguistic context (collocation), relation to the original text (translated by Engelbart & Theuerkauf 1999). Beheydt (1987, p. 16) does not mention the terms ‘verbal’ and ‘nonverbal context’ as such, but instead he uses the term ‘pregnant context’,
which covers many aspects of both contexts. Nation and Coady (1988, p. 102) define context as ‘context within a text’ and ‘general context’. In their opinion, ‘context within a text’ is the morphological, syntactic and discourse information given in a text and ‘general context’ is defined as background knowledge of the subject matter. Engelbart & Theuerkauf (1999) made a distinction between verbal and nonverbal context. In their concept, verbal context consists of grammatical context (morphology, syntax and phonology) and semantic context (collocations, synonyms, antonyms.). Nonverbal context is comprised of situative context (location, speakers.), descriptive context (A descriptive context can be a sentence or a passage in which the unknown word plays a central role and at least partly explains the meaning of the unknown word), subject context (or reader’s background knowledge), and global context (world knowledge).

Among all these categories, there is hardly any disputation on the reference of the type of verbal context (or real context or context within a text), which can be a sentence containing the words or parts of the text/discourse beyond the sentence. Whereas there is no agreement on what the nonverbal context really means. Interpretation of this concept is determined by the understanding of what else besides the verbal content influences the communication. Although the subcategories of nonverbal context given by Engelbart & Theuerkauf (1999) are rather detailed and elaborate, it is hard to apply it into the
vocabulary instruction in second language teaching and learning. According to Hammerly (1982, p. 40), a language is made up of interrelated parts or subsystems and vocabulary is just one of these subsystems linguistically. Meanwhile, a language is primarily used for communication and communication with other people is not only linguistic but also social. Furthermore, a language is used within a culture because culture and language are inseparably intertwined (ibid, p. 43). Therefore, with respect to the vocabulary instruction in Teaching Chinese as Foreign Language, context can be classified into three types as follows:

(1) Linguistic context;

(2) Communicative context; and

(3) Cultural context.

2.2 Types of context

2.2.1 Vocabulary in the Linguistic Context

Linguistic context refers to the sentence or utterance in which the target word occurs. As Rivers (1981, p. 254) states, the meaning of an individual word is usually difficult to determine when it is separated from a context of other words and phrases.
Linguistic context sets the context for the words and limits the meaning and grammatical function of the words within it. As we know, most words have more than one meaning. Without context, the same word can be interpreted in different ways, thus causes the ambiguity of meaning. Let us take the example hóng 红 [red] again. As mentioned above, hóng can be considered a noun, verb or adjective depending on the context. When put in a sentence such as, tā de liǎn hóng le 他的脸红了 [his face turns red], herein hóng appears after a noun and is followed by le, which marks the change of status. All the grammatical rules given by this context determine that the word hóng can only be interpreted as a verb, meaning “change to red” rather than others.

However, sometimes the meanings are still vague in the linguistic context. For example, jī bù chī le 鸡不吃了” is the well-known example in Chinese which has divergent meanings. This sentence in isolation can be interpreted differently:

(1) The chicken does not eat any more.

(2) (Someone) does not eat chicken any more.

In this case, information provided by the linguistic context is insufficient for interpretation. To make this sentence clearer, more information about the context is needed, such as who the speaker and listener are, where the dialogue takes place, and what the topic is. This leads to the next type of context I will discuss.
2.2.2 Vocabulary in the Communicative Context

From a communicative point of view, context is more than just a linguistic phenomenon. Vocabulary ability also draws on the various types of pragmatic knowledge specified by Bachman and Palmer. Words must be associated with both linguistic and sociolinguistic contexts, as meaning is a sociolinguistic phenomenon (Hammerly, 1982).

One reason that sharing a linguistic code is not tantamount to sharing intentions and thus communicating effectively is that language is variable and sensitive to context (Tyler 1978; Hymes 1972; Gumperz 1968). Various combinations of linguistic code can have different meanings, senses (Tyler 1978), intentions, and goals associated with them depending on what the speaker is doing, the purpose or intention implicit in the situation, the roles of the participants in the event, the time or location of the event, or the location of the utterance in a sequence of events (Gatewood 1985). Much of the meaning of the language is extracted by the receiver from the context in which messages are transmitted rather than from the dictionary meaning of the words (Stewart, 1991). The same statement can be a warning, an order, an act of persuasion, even an inquiry depending on the intention of the speaker and his relationship to his interlocutor (Hammerly, 1982).

Continuing the example “鸡不吃了”, given that the sentence is a response taken from a dialogue in a Chinese restaurant: a waiter is asking the customer zhè gè nín hái
yào ma 这个您还要吗？ [Do you still want this?] when pointing to the chicken on the table, the interpretation for this would be “we will not eat that chicken any more”. Herein the communicative context eliminates the alternate meaning.

Besides that, communicative context can also give new meaning to the words. For example, jī diǎn is the common expression meaning what time in Chinese. However, this expression does not mean that in the following dialog. Once I had a party at my home and many friends were singing Karaoke. We were so happy that nobody noticed the time until my neighbor knocked at the door. He said, nǐ zhī dào xiànzài jǐ diǎn le ma 你知道现在几点了吗？ [Do you know what time it is now?] And I understand immediately the noise disturbed him and apologized to him. Here the expression “Do you know what time it is now?” actually states “it is quite late now” rather than an inquiring about the reading of a chronometer.

One point worth noting is that some Chinese words with semantic meanings that directly correspond to words in English may be unable to be used in the same communicative context. Perhaps the best example is the word xièxiè 谢谢 [thanks], which overlaps thanks or thank you in English. However, the way xièxiè and thanks are used is quite contradictory. For instance, xièxiè implies acceptance and thus is hardly used as a response when you receive a compliment in China; on the other hand, it expresses
the kind of intention of others in English and so it is common for Americans to say *thanks* in response to compliments.

Exploring the underlying reason of why *xièxiè* is not used in receiving a compliment, one will find that expressing acceptance to a compliment conflicts with the Chinese cultural value of modesty. Therefore, the word, *xièxiè*, entailing the function to convey appreciation, cannot be used in that cultural context. I will return to this point in the following discussion.

2.2.3 Vocabulary in the Cultural Context

According to Halliday (1989, p. 49), the context of culture is the institutional and ideological background that gives value to the text and constrains its interpretation, which provides a broader background against which the text has to be interpreted (ibid, p. 46).

Cultural models provide frameworks for understanding the physical and social worlds we live in. These models are implicitly and explicitly transmitted through language. Therefore, linguistic analyses, particularly of words and expressions, reveal underlying assumptions, interests, and values. As Seelye (1988, p. 2) said, whether blue lifts you up or puts you down must depend on where you are. Perceptions of colors, kinship relations, space and time—all differ from language to language and from culture to culture, which demonstrates the association between vocabulary and culture.
Cultural values and symbols are encoded in words or expressions and are then used by speakers to transmit emotional, attitudinal, and symbolic meanings. Forms of the new language must be linked up with their own culture-specific inferences, which must be created through experiences with the language and with the culture. That is why Rivers (1992, p. 252) proposed that “we must come to know their limitations, expansions and cross-associations in relation to apparently similar meanings of words and expressions in a culturally and linguistically rich context.” In other words, the social and cultural situation in which lexical items are used significantly influences their meaning (Chapelle, 1994).

For instance, the word *chóu* 憂 [worry] is usually translated into sorrow, regret, agony, woe, despair, suffering and endurance. However, none of these translations succeed in presenting the rich association of the word *chóu*. *Chóu* is an emotion that has roots deep in the Chinese culture, representing not only the Chinese people’s unhappiness and suffering but also their hopes for a better life and a better world. The cultural distinctions codified in the situations where this word is used appropriately have made it untranslatable to other languages and cultures (Gale, 1992). There are numerous words and expression like *chóu* in Chinese which have different cultural meanings than their
equivalents in English. Yang (1996) gives a long list of these kinds of words: words for
different colors, for seasons, for directions, to name a few.

In a culturally communicative context, words are also endowed with cultural
meanings. Without clarification, not all the cultural rules can be perceived by the learners.
Each society has specific interactional norms and shared values and expectations. One
learns these rules through both formal and informal processes of socialization from
childhood, from observations of family, peers, and even strangers in public places. Later
on, he will use these guidelines to shape his own behavior and to evaluate actions of
others. Rules governing behavior are rarely objectified by participants and are not
consciously stated or even recognized. One usually assumes that behavior in these
contexts is natural, although it is in fact conditioned by his culture just as much as
activities in formal settings. Only once these norms or rules are violated, that is, when
someone speaks inappropriately, can he realize his culturally shared models of
appropriate behaviors (Bonvillain 2003, p. 85).

However, for adults learning a foreign language and culture, they do not have the
luxury of exposure to the target community to observe and experience the underlying
cultural norms. Or, even given these opportunities, they are unable to look through the
underlying rules and values. These cultural rules or norms must be explicitly displayed to
the learner. Without explicit explanation of the culture setting, learners are likely to interpret and use language in a culturally inappropriate way.

Once I visited my American English teacher’s home when I was in China. After being seated, he asked me, “Would you like something to drink, coffee or tea?” I replied in English, “No, no, thanks.” My teacher confirmed my intention by asking “Is that a Chinese no or English no?”

It is obvious that my English teacher realized that there was an ambiguity between cultures. First, this event occurred in an American’s home in China. Second, the conversation is between a Chinese student who is learning English and an American teacher who is teaching English in China. Both the place and roles in this performance have a mixed cultural background. That is why the teacher clarified the cultural background before interpreting the meaning of the word no.

When interpreting the word no in Chinese cultural context, no is the way to show appropriate guest behavior rather than to decline an offer of refreshment, which would be the meaning of no in American cultural context.

The different interpretation of the same word is actually the reflection of different assumptions on the social behavior which are established by the culture. Regarding to the performance of the guest and host, in Chinese culture, the guest should decline the
offered refreshment an appropriate number of times and the host insist until the guest partakes or sets it aside. But in American culture, the host mentions the refreshment options and the guest gives his choice directly (Walker 2000).

2.3 Constructing the Hierarchical Model of Vocabulary Instruction

2.3.1 The Hierarchical Model of Vocabulary Instruction

Teaching vocabulary in linguistic context is not enough--one must also know the communicative context and cultural context in which the words and expressions are used. Without knowing the communicative context, the Chinese learner will not know what to say, to whom, why, when and where. Without knowing the cultural context, he may misunderstand the meanings of the words or expressions or use them inappropriately. It follows from this that Chinese vocabulary instruction should attend to all three layers of context--linguistic, communicative, and cultural.

Figure 2.1 shows the visual representation of the hierarchical model. The model is divided into three layers: cultural context, communicative context, linguistic context.

The first layer from the center refers to the linguistic context, which restricts the meaning of the word or expression to a certain degree. Also, vocabulary in this layer indicates its grammatical function and collocation with other words. Around this layer is
the communicative context. Here the word or expression is used in communication and its meaning is again endowed and limited by the communicative context. The outermost layer in this figure is the cultural context.

![Diagram of Hierarchical Model of Context of Vocabulary]

Figure 2.1: The Hierarchical Model of Context of Vocabulary

Therefore, the goal of vocabulary instruction should be

(1) correctness or accuracy in linguistic context;

(2) relevance in communicative context;

(3) appropriateness in cultural context.

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\[2\] This model follows Hammerly’s (1982, p. 214) model of competences involved in second language learning. Since the discussion focuses on instruction, I have used “context” to emphasize what an instructor presents to learners.
2.3.2 The Relationships among the Layers

The three layers involved in the model should be regarded as a system rather than a conglomerate of unrelated elements. Since all communication takes place in a culture, culture sets the broadest context for all communication. Communication then sets the second layer of context for the use of language. Linguistic context is the immediate context in which vocabulary takes part in as a linguistic item.

With regard to the three types of context—linguistic, communicative, and cultural, they are all important and none can be ignored. In the linguistic context, students learn the grammatical functions of vocabulary and collocations of words and expressions in order to acquire linguistic skill with accuracy and correctness. In this sense, knowing the linguistic context in which a word or expression can be used is the basic and fundamental layer in this model. But students must also know when, where, to whom, why and how to use the words or expressions appropriately and relevantly in the real communicative context, in that the ultimate goal of language learning is to communicate. Therefore, communicative context is equally important for vocabulary instruction. Finally, since all communication takes place in a cultural context, the usage and meaning of the word or expression in a communication is also influenced and determined by the cultural context, which is also indispensable for the vocabulary instruction.
In terms of the effect of vocabulary learning, the more meaningful the context is, the easier it is to learn a word or expression. Highly meaningful words in a passage of prose can be recalled three to eighteen times better than words with low levels of meaningfulness (Johnson 1973, p. 50). The level of difficulty decreases as words are learned in isolation, in pairs, in sentences, in sentences with linguistic context, and in sentences with both linguistic and nonlinguistic contexts (Hammerly 1982, p. 60).
CHAPTER 3

INVESTIGATION OF CURRENT

CHINESE VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

To examine the present state of vocabulary instruction, four sets of teaching materials are selected for analysis. The reason for this is that instructional materials usually embody an underlying pedagogical approach. And a perusal of the course description in school catalogs and interviews with teachers from various schools clearly indicates that textbooks adopted for various classes determine the curriculum. In most cases, the textbooks are the curriculum. Therefore, analysis of instructional materials serves as a window to find out how vocabulary is instructed in context.

This investigation will focus on the following questions:

(1) What kinds of context in which vocabulary is presented?

(2) What kinds of context in which vocabulary is interpreted?

(3) What kinds of context in which vocabulary is practiced?
3.1 Materials used in this investigation

The four sets of pedagogical materials are listed as follows, which are all published after 1990s and are currently used in American institutional colleges. The target students, teaching objectives, and components of these materials are introduced briefly.


New Practical Chinese Reader (abbreviated NPCR below) is a series of Chinese textbooks compiled for the purpose of teaching Chinese to native English speakers or those who use English as their principal second language. The series consists of seventy lessons in six volumes, taking students from the beginning level to the end of the intermediate level. Each volume comes equipped with a workbook, an instructor’s manual, audiotapes and CD-ROMs. This set of textbooks is designed for overseas students who either take Chinese as an elective or major in the language for a period of three years. It aims to develop the learner’s communicative ability in Chinese by learning language structures, functions and related cultural knowledge as well as by training their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (preface, v).

The goal of *Chinese Link* (henceforth CL) project has been to integrate the “5Cs” principles of the National Standards for Foreign Language Education - Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities - throughout the program in order to provide a new approach for the teaching and learning of Chinese language in 21st century. The program aims to help beginners develop their communicative competence in the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while gaining competence in Chinese culture, exercising their ability to compare aspects of different cultures, making connections to their daily life, and building links among communities. This multi-media material includes a textbook, workbook, instructor’s resource manual and audio materials.


*Integrated Chinese* (henceforth IC) is intended to be a set of instructional materials covering all levels of instruction (from beginning to advanced and beyond), which will include textbooks, workbooks, character workbooks, teaching aids, audio tapes,
videotapes, CD-ROM, laser discs, computer programs, and interactive multimedia programs. In the 1997 version, the series contains the following volumes: level one (textbook, workbook, character workbook, teacher’s manual) and level two (textbook, workbook, teacher’s manual). This series seeks to train students in all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The principles of this series are to give students grammatical tools and also prepare them to function in a Chinese language environment.


*China Panorama* (henceforth CP) is specially designed for the American learners of SCOLA TV networks, equally effective for native speakers of English and those who use English as a medium of instruction. CP consists of textbooks of various levels from beginning to advanced level, accompanied by both audio and video tapes and CD-ROM for learners to choose. As for the goals of this series, as stated in *Approaching Chinese* which is the first level of this series,

"On completing this course the learner should have a command of about 1,000 basic words, 200 sentence patterns. The course includes over 3,000 commonly used sentences, which will enable him to survive in his daily communication.” (CP, Introduction)
3.2 Investigation on the context of vocabulary presentation

3.2.1 Context in which vocabulary is presented

In all these four sets of instructional materials, vocabulary is introduced within sentences in dialogues within situations. In this way, all words and expressions to be learned appear in the dialogues, which provide firstly the linguistic context of the vocabulary. According to Hammerly, a well-written dialogue can provide the students with samples of the spoken language, that is, frequently-used vocabulary, idioms, grammatical patterns or rules, and types of constructions used in speech. In terms of vocabulary teaching and learning, it is easier to memorize a sentence than to memorize the six or seven words that make it up (Hammerly 1982, p. 376).

Therefore, the investigation will be concerned with whether the words and expressions are situationally relevant and appropriate in the communicative and cultural context created by the dialogues.

3.2.2 Discussion

3.2.2.1 Communicative context is not always clear

The investigation indicates that all these four sets of instructional materials have noticed the importance of communicative context and adopted different means to enhance students’ consciousness of the communicative context.
Chinese Panorama

Each text is a situational dialogue on a functional theme. All the texts are about Fang Xueqin, a Chinese girl, her family, work, life and love.

To set the communicative context of each dialogue, there is a brief introduction before the text, indicating the functional theme, the roles and settings in the dialogue. For instance,

“When you first meet someone, how do you greet him/her, and how to tell him/her your name in Chinese? Today Fang Xueqin is going to start her new job and she has come to her manager’s office.” (CP, lesson 1, p. 3)

In the VCD, the dialogues are performed in real settings, giving the learner a vivid impression of the communicative context.

New Practical Chinese Reader

This set of materials develops a series of attractive stories, narrating the lives of three international students. There is a general introduction on the roles at the beginning of the textbook. Each lesson is a situational dialogue on a functional theme. The context of the dialogue is illustrated by one or two pictures.

Chinese Link

In Chinese Link, the text is called language in use, which “contains situations that incorporate the lesson’s core vocabulary and grammar points.” (CL, preface, xv.)
of the context, “it is accompanied by an art program that adds context and makes the lesson more interesting.” (CL, preface, xv). In each text, a picture is provided to show the context of dialogue. Besides that, there is no introduction on the roles or settings of the context in which the dialogue occurs.

*Integrated Chinese*

Similar to CL, the context of the dialogue is mainly indicated by a picture, occasionally there is a very brief introduction to the situation, such as “Wang Peng is talking to Li You.”

The examination of the investigation indicates that the communicative contexts in which the dialogues occur are not quite clear in many cases and some expressions are inappropriately used in these cultural contexts.

Let’s take the topic of greeting and exchanging names as an example. All these materials take greetings as the first or second lesson. As one of the basic communicative activities in daily life, greetings function to begin communicative interactions or to acknowledge the presence of others. Although the basic structure is stereotyped within each culture, optional elaborations or innovations are possible. Speakers can use more or less formal constructions, pronunciations, and/or prosodic features to create diverse introductions to encounters, depending on situational context, status relationships
between interlocutors and personal goals. Therefore, greeting can best epitomize the design of the communicative context in these materials.

*Integrated Chinese*

王先生：你好！
李小姐：你好！
王先生：请问，您贵姓？
李小姐：我姓李。你呢？
王先生：我姓王。叫王朋。你叫什么名字？
李小姐：我叫李友。
( IC, vol. 1, Lesson 1, greetings dialogue 1, p. 23)

Mr. Wang: How do you do?
Miss Li: How do you do?
Mr. Wang: What’s family name, please?
Miss Li: My family name is Li. What is yours?
Mr. Wang: My family name is Wang. My name is Wang Peng. What is your name?
Miss Li: My name is Li You.

In terms of the communicative context, the text is accompanied with a picture, illustrating the roles and settings: a man and woman in the street are shaking hands. Besides that, there is no verbal introduction on the context of the dialogue. First, it is inappropriate to design greeting as an “in the street” dialog. Second, due to the unclear communicative context, a series of inquiries will arise: Who are they? What are the relationships between them? Are they friends or strangers? Are they in different social status? Is this the first time they meet? When does this dialogue take place?
Such information essentially determines the words and expressions used in the exchange of greetings. Because of the vagueness of the contextual information, it may be perplexing for learners to know when, where and to whom to use the words and expressions introduced in the dialogue in a real conversation. For instance, *nǐ hǎo* [hello] is a general term of greeting, but it is usually used among well-educated people or between Chinese and foreigners (Yang, p. 203). Also, this expression is often used in a formal situation. According to Yang (1999, p. 203), the most commonly used greetings in Chinese are “nǐ hǎo”, “chī le ma?” “zúi jín zěnmeyàng?”, and which one to choose strictly depends on the communicative context.

Meanwhile, words or phrases that should be used in different contexts are mixed up in this dialogue, which makes the communicative context more confusing.

1) *nǐ* [you] and *nín* 您 [you (respectful form)]. *Nín 您* is the polite way to address others. In this dialogue, *nín* appears once and *nǐ* is used four times. In the same communicative context, Mr. Wang uses the two words interchangeably while Miss Li does not use it. It is very confusing what is the difference between *nǐ* and *nín* and when to use them respectively.

2) *nín guìxìng* 您贵姓? [Polite way to ask one’s surname] and *nǐ jiào shénme míngzi* 你叫什么名字 [What’s your name?]. These are two ways to ask for other’s names.
The former is rather formal and more respectful and usually used when two persons meet for the first time. Whereas the latter is seldom used between strangers, because it is rather impolite to ask one’s given name in social situations if the person is not familiar with you or has a higher social status than you. However, in this dialogue, these two expressions are given in one dialogue.

*Chinese Link*

Mary: 你好！请问你贵姓？
John: 我姓李，我的英文名字是 John Lee，中文名字是李文中。你呢？你叫什么名字？
Mary: 我叫 Mary。我的英文名字 Mary Wood，中文名字是吴小美。
John: 她呢？她是谁？
Mary: 她是我的同学于英。
    （CL, vol. 1, lesson 2 What's your surname? p. 16）

Mary: Hello. May I ask your surname?
John: My surname is Lee. My English name is John Lee. My Chinese name is Wenzhong Li. What's your name?
Mary: I'm Mary. My English name is Mary Wood. My Chinese name is Xiaomei Wu.
John: How about her? Who is she?
Mary: She is my classmate Ying Yu.
(CL, English translation of “language in use”, p. 426.)

Similar to IC, the context of the dialogue is merely indicated by a picture, indicating there are three roles involved in the dialogue. The status of the roles, their personal relationships, the situation when the dialogue takes place and other related information
essential to the communicative context are not mentioned. The same problems, when to use the vocabulary in this dialogue and the difference between nǐ guìxing and nǐ jiào shénme mingzì, also exist in this dialogue.

Additionally, the expression tā ne? tā shì shuí? 她呢，她是谁？[How about she? Who is she?] is inappropriate to be used in this communicative context, because this is usually used when asking a person who is not close to the speakers. However, the person being asked is just standing beside them, as can be seen from the picture.

*New Practical Chinese Reader*

陆雨萍：力波，你好。
力波：你好，陆雨萍。
（NPCR，Lesson 1，你好。p. 3）
(English translation)
Lu Yuping: Libo, hello!
Libo: Hello, Lu Yuping!

In this dialogue, the information about who the roles are is known from the introduction of the textbook: Ding Libo is a foreign student and Lu Yuping is a reporter. However, other information, such as the relationship between them and when and where the conversation occurs is not clear.

*Chinese Panorama*

(Today Fang Xueqin is going to start her new job and she has come to her manager’s office.)
方雪芹：您好！
刘经理：你好！
方雪芹：我叫方雪芹！
刘经理：欢迎你！
（秘书杨丽进来）
刘经理：（对方雪芹介绍）她叫杨丽。
方雪芹：你好！我叫方雪芹。
杨丽：你好！欢迎你！
（CP, lesson 1 Ni Hao. p. 3-4.）
Fang: How do you do!
Liu: How do you do!
Fang: My name is Fang Xueqin.
Liu: Oh, welcome!
Liu: This is Yang Li.
Fang: How do you do! My name is Fang Xueqin.
Yang: How do you do! You are welcome!

Compared to the three dialogues given above, this dialogue provides the clearest communicative context: the roles, their relationships, social statuses and the situation the dialogue takes place are clear to the learner. Meanwhile, the words and expressions used in the dialogue are relevant and appropriate to the communicative context.

(1) The dialogue provides a good example to show that nǐhǎo/nín hǎo is used as a way to greet each others for the first meet.

(2) The different usage of nǐ and nín is clearly indicated. Because of the social status, Fang greets to the manager in a more respectful way using nín hǎo while nǐ hǎo to the secretary.
As the sample of the usage of language, dialogues in instructional materials should be typical and clear in displaying the appropriate context to use the words and expressions, because language is what native speakers say, not what someone, native or nonnative, thinks they ought to say. However, most of the dialogues in these materials are designed according to the imagination of the editor of materials. A dialogue with a bad designed communicative context will confuse or mislead learners with when and where to use the words or expressions.

3.2.2.2 Cultural context is generally ignored

Except IC, NPCR, CL and CP all claim that culture is one of their concerns in teaching Chinese language. The following quotations illustrate this:

"The students will be in the cultural setting of Chinese society...through much interesting experience; the student will not only learn authentic Chinese but also understand Chinese society and culture." (Back cover of the NPCR textbook)

"Proficiency in a language involves knowing both the structural forms of the language and their appropriate use on different cultural contexts." (CL, preface)

To incorporate the culture into language teaching, all these three sets of materials contain a special section introducing cultural knowledge about China and Chinese language.
In NPCR, there is a special section called *culture notes* in each lesson which “… aims to develop the learner’s communicative ability in Chinese by learning language structures, functions and related cultural knowledge.” (NPCR, Preface) Examples of the related cultural knowledge are: the Chinese language and common speech, currency, loanwords, the student dormitory.

Similar to that, there is also a special section called “A Glimpse of Modern Chinese Culture” in CP “provides learners with a background knowledge of China” (CP, introduction). This includes architecture, marriage customs, China’s climate, the menu in a Chinese restaurant, to name a few.

In CL, this section named “Culture Link” contains three components: the first is the Culture Notes, which “are carefully chosen to relate to those the core lesson. It is hoped that this part will help students to better understand Chinese societies, as well as how language reflects culture.” (CL, preface). For example, lesson 12, “May I borrow your car?” includes a reference to China’s Auto Industry -- introduces both the history of China’s domestic auto industry and the current policy on the purchase of private car (vol. 1, p. 198-199). In the lesson “I want to buy a shirt”, the “Culture Notes” is “Chinese Traditional Dress.” Another part in Culture Link is “Fun with Chinese”, which “introducing a common slang expression, an idiom, or a motto that either utilizes new
vocabulary presented in the lesson or is closely related to the theme of the lesson.” For instance, *Nǚ dà shībā biàn* 女大十八变 [a girl grows with eighteen changes, which means that girl changes quickly in physical appearance from childhood to adulthood.], *lín shí bào fó jiǎo* 临时抱佛脚 [to embrace Buddha’s feet and pray for help in time of emergency, which means making effort at the last moment]. The last section in Culture Link is “Let’s Go!” which “gives students an opportunity to interact with Chinese in an authentic context.” For instance, several authentic photos on food shop signs are provided for students to discuss the Chinese snacks (p. 185).

According to Hammerly (1985, p. 513-515), the instructional discourse on the target culture can be divided into three parts: achievement culture, informational culture and behavior culture. Among them, achievement culture is the artistic and literary accomplishment of a society. Informational culture refers to the information and facts that members of a society value, including historical facts, social facts, and geography—the kind of information that would appear in newspaper and as topics of community gossip. Behavioral culture considers how the people in a society behave and includes conversation formulas, kinesics, ways of thinking, perspectives, and so forth. As behavior culture is a form of cultural memory that is crucial to successful communication,
Hammerly claims that it should be emphasized throughout all levels of a foreign language program. Walker (2000, p. 234) further divided it into three sub-categories:

1) Revealed culture—the aspect of behavior that a native will consciously contrast with the base culture and inclined, even eager, to relate to foreign learners.

2) Ignored culture—behavior that natives assume to be universal until nonnatives systematically fail to comply.

3) Suppressed culture—the behavior that natives of a culture will not wish to reveal and will often censor out of presentations of the culture.

However, cultural knowledge in these materials mainly refers to information and achievement culture. With regard to the behavior culture, most of the materials ignore it.

In one word, culture is considered marginal or even separated from language teaching and learning in the four sets of materials,

1) Some dialogues are designed in a culture-free context.

Due to this understanding of culture, language items are often put in the cultural context. Judging from the content of the language, it is hard to tell what kind of culture context the dialogue occurs. For instance, after the introduction of words, a sentence pattern is given in Chinese link as the following,
A: 你吃饭了吗?
B: 还没有呢。我不饿。
A: Have you eaten yet?
B: Not yet. I'm not hungry.

(Chinese link, p. 316)

There is no mistake as far as each word in the linguistic context is concerned. Also the dialogue seems very likely to be a real communication at first glance. However, when cultural context is taken into account, it is not the case any more.

It is well known that eating plays an essential role in Chinese life and Chinese culture. Eating can be a way to make friends, build up relationship with others, and celebrate the course of daily life, to name a few. Anthropologists Frederick Simoons (1991) and Kwang-Chih Chang (1977) have noted that the Chinese believe food plays a central role in life. That food is a dominant topic of Chinese conversations can be seen from the numerous typical greetings framed in culinary terms, such as chī le ma (吃了吗)? [Have you eaten?]

Shepherd (2005, p. 183) found that the phrase chī le ma (吃了吗?) [Have you eaten?], given specific contexts, can be intended as at least four meanings,

1. A greeting—"hello" if two acquaintances pass on the street around mealtime, but their body language suggests that they don’t have time to talk;

2. A means of small talk or opening a conversation—"what’s up" if two acquaintance meet in a similar situation but stop and through body language, intonation, or other metacommunicative means indicate that they wish to engage in extended dialogue;

3. A question—"I am concerned about your well-being" if a younger person wishes
(4) An invitation—“let’s eat together” if two friends frequently eat together and it is time to eat.

According to my personal experience, only under very few situations, the expression *ni chīfàn le ma* “you have eaten?” may mean “have you eaten?” If the dialogue is between my parents and me around meal time, that may be the case. But that is the only situation in which I, as a native speaker, take “you have eaten?” as a real inquiry.

2) Some dialogues are designed in an unauthentic cultural context.

Many a dialogues in these materials are artificial and unnatural. Some of them sound weird and unlikely occur in Chinese cultural context. For instance,

小高：小白，九月十二号是星期几？
小白：是星期四。
小高：那天是我的生日。
小白：是吗？你今年多大？
小高：十八岁。
小白：星期四我请你吃晚饭。
小高：太好了，谢谢，谢谢。
小白：你喜欢吃中国饭还是美国饭？
小高：我是中国人，可是我喜欢吃美国饭。
小白：好，我们吃美国饭。
小高：星期四几点钟？
小白：七点半怎么样？
小高：好，星期四晚上见。
小白：再见！

*(IC, vol.1, lesson 3: dates and time. p. 59)*

*(English translation)*

Little Gao: Little Bai, what day is September 12?
Little Bai: It's a Thursday.
Little Gao: That day is my birthday.
Little Bai: Really? How old are you this year?
Little Gao: Eighteen.
Little Bai: I'll treat you to dinner on Thursday. How's that?
Little Gao: That would be great. Thank you very much!
Little Bai: Do you like Chinese food or American food?
Little Gao: I'm Chinese, but I like American food.
Little Gao: Thursday what time?
Little Bai: How about seven-thirty?
Little Gao: All right. See you Thursday evening.
Little Bai: See you.

First of all, this dialogue talks of one's birthday. In China, one seldom tells others that their birthday is coming. If that happens, the unspoken words are that he is asking for a birthday gift or meal from others. The only exception may be between very close friends, but there is no introduction between the relationships between the two speakers. Second, in the dialogue, when Xiao Bai says that he will invite Xiao Gao to dinner for his birthday, Xiao Gao accepts the invitation immediately with excitation. This is unreasonable and unauthentic conversation between Chinese. In Chinese cultural context, most Chinese would first decline the invitation several times before accepting it finally.

The following is another example.

李友：我下个星期要考中文，你帮我练习说中文，好吗？
王朋：好啊，但是你得请我喝咖啡。
李友：喝咖啡，没问题。今天晚上你有空儿吗？
王朋：今天晚上有人请我吃晚饭，不知道什么时候回来。我回来以后给你打电话吧。
Li You: 好吧，我等你的电话。
(IA, vol. 1, lesson 6: making appointment, p. 115)
(English translation)
Li You: Next week I have a Chinese exam. Could you help me practice speaking Chinese?
Wang Peng: Sure, but you must buy me a coffee.
Li You: Buy a coffee? No problem. Are you free this evening?
Wang Peng: This evening someone is taking me to dinner. I don’t know when I’ll be back. Why don’t I call you after I get back?
Li You: O.K. I’ll wait for your call.

In this dialogue, Wang Peng agrees to help Li You practice speaking Chinese but asks Li You to treat him a coffee. This conversation conflicts with the Chinese morals and culture. In China, it is considered improper and immoral to ask a reward when offering a favor to others. In this sense, this conversation probably does not take place in Chinese cultural context, but that is not made clear to the learners.

It seems very likely that the main reason why the editors design such unnatural dialogues is to introduce the target expressions. However, to create an inappropriate communicative context for the presentation of vocabulary is even worse than to introduce vocabulary in isolation. The phenomena introducing target vocabulary or grammatical items at the price of sacrificing the authenticity of communicative and cultural context is by no means peculiar to one or two lessons. It unfortunately permeates all the materials more or less.
3.3 Investigation on the Context of vocabulary interpretation

3.3.1 Vocabulary interpretation

The examination of the investigation indicates that the means of interpreting the vocabulary in the four sets of materials are almost identical with only minor differences.

In all these four sets of materials, vocabulary is interpreted mainly by the means of a vocabulary list. The following shows the common format of the vocabulary list, which usually consists of the written form (characters), spoken form (Pinyin Romanization), part of speech, and English gloss.

朋友  pénɡyǒu   N.   friend
开始  kāishǐ   V.   to start
帅  shuài   Adj.   handsome

(IC, vol. 1, P. 129)

Another means to interpret certain important vocabulary is giving more detailed explanation in the section of notes. As the editors of the materials state,

"Notes--these include explanations and exercises involving important language items to help the learner to grasp basic usage of vocabulary, grammatical, and even character items." (CP, introduction)

"different types of notes provide explanation for selected expressions in the text." (IC, preface.)

For instance, after giving a brief English gloss in the vocabulary list mentioned above, shuài 帅 is given more detailed explanation on its usage:
“帅 is used to describe a handsome, usually young, man. To describe a pretty girl one uses the word 漂亮 (piàoliàng, beautiful). The term 好看 (hǎokàn, good looking), is gender neutral. It can be used for both sexes.” (IC, vol. 1, textbook, p. 132)

Besides the vocabulary list, usually an index of vocabulary will be placed at the end of the textbook with pinyin, grammatical function, English gloss, and the number of the lesson in which it appears.

As the preceding discussion mentioned, vocabulary knowledge includes its form, meaning and usage. Since form is seldom influenced by the context, the investigation focuses on the meaning and usage of vocabulary.

3.3.2 Discussion

3.3.2.1 Linguistic context is the focus of vocabulary presentation.

In all these four sets of materials, words are viewed as isolated linguistic units and one-to-one word translation is given based on their semantic meanings. Vocabulary list serves the same function as a simplified bilingual dictionary to facilitate the comprehension of the text. As stated in China Panorama,

“New words and phrases--These are given before the text with the aim of removing obstacles in vocabulary before dealing with the text.” (CP, introduction)
Thus, in most cases, the meanings of words or expressions in the communicative context and cultural context are filtered during the translation. Let us take the interpretation of the phrase duibùqǐ 对不起 as an example (Table 3.1):

However, it should be noted that *duibùqǐ* 对不起 [I am sorry] in Chinese is not used as often as *excuse me* or *I am sorry* in English. In Chinese, 对不起 is used as a formal apology for a seriously failing to meet other’s expectation. Whereas in English, *excuse me* is used in many situations which Chinese people do not think it is worth apologizing. Unfortunately, the difference between them is ignored in these materials, which is revealed in the examples given above, most of them are the way “sorry” or “excuse me” is used rather than “对不起”. With the mistaken notion that “对不起” is the equivalence of “sorry” and “excuse me”, Chinese learners would use this word when they want others to repeat what is said or give way to him. Although this will not lead to a miscommunication, overuse of 对不起 will keep reminding the natives that you are foreigners. One interesting point worthy noting is that there is a tendency that 对不起 is used in China much more often than before. More or less, this is influenced by the translation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the material</th>
<th>English translation</th>
<th>context in which the phrase is used in the text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| IC                    | I'm sorry           | 李友：我不喝酒，我要一杯可乐，可以吗？
                     |                     | 高小音：对不起，我们没有可乐。
                     |                     | (IC, vol. 1, p. 94) |
| CP                    | sorry               | 李文龙：对不起。
                     |                     | 过路人：没关系。
                     |                     | (Li wenlong is looking for the building when he
                     |                     | bumps into someone and apologies to the person)
                     |                     | (CP, p. 41) |
| NPCR                  | I'm sorry           | “对不起，我是问，这个汉语怎么说” (NPCR, p. 49) |
| CL                    | I'm sorry; excuse me.| “对不起，因为太忙了，所以今天才给你写电子邮件。” (CL, p. 374). |

Table 3.1: Explanations of *dui biqı* 对不起 in four Chinese pedagogical materials

Instead of interpreting the meanings or usages of words in communication and culture, some materials give more attention on the inner structure and meanings of morphemes or the expansion and collocation of words, as stated by the editor of NPCR:

“Two points should be emphasized in the instruction of vocabulary: one is to pay attention to the forms and meanings of morphemes which constitute words—this will help learners to know the structure of Chinese vocabulary and draw inferences about other cases from one instance; another point is to stress the expansion of words, which help learners with the usage of the words and the ability to produce sentence as well.” (NPCR, the instructor’s manual, IV).
For example, the meanings of characters are provided in isolation in the section of *Chinese character*, most of them are morphemes. For example,

- **nóng** 农 [agriculture]
- **ér** 而 [and; as well as]
- **rù** 入 [to enter]

(NPCR, vol 2, p. 219)

The interpretation of **zāogāo** 糟糕 is “in a wretched state; in a mess, too bad” together with the phrases **tài zāogāo** 太糟糕 [too bad], **zhēn zāogāo** 真糟糕 [very bad]”, while there is no interpretation on how to use it.

It may be the most efficient and simplest format to explain the meanings of words by means of bilingual word list. However, interpreting word meaning is in no sense such a simple job as copying an entry from a bilingual dictionary, especially for languages which have no family relationship, such as Chinese and English. Both the meanings and usages between these counterparts in these two languages are far from each other.

### 3.3.2.2 Communicative context is underemphasized

The limitation of word-to-word translation in the vocabulary list and importance of interpreting vocabulary in a communicative context is being acknowledged gradually by
researchers and material designers. In the four sets of materials, some words are given more detailed explanation, usually in the section of Notes.

Some words and expressions are given the explanation on the communicative contexts in which they can be used. Let’s take the interpretation of nǐhǎo 你好 again as an example. Although not all these materials provide an ideal context for the use of the nǐhǎo 你好 in the dialogue, some give the explanation of contexts in which this phrase can be used (table 3.2).

However, one point worth noting is that not all these explanations are correct. For instance, it is inappropriate to say *it can be used when two persons meet for the first time in the same manner as English speakers say “How do you do!”* (Integrated Chinese) or *it can be used at any time of the day and appropriate to both a stranger and an acquaintance* (Chinese Panorama). It is acceptable for strangers to greet with “how do you do” or “hi” in American culture, however, it is very rare for two Chinese to greet each other with nǐhǎo if they do not know each other.

Some interpret the meaning of the words or expressions in the communicative context rather than that in the linguistic context. For example,

李友：你们家很大，也很漂亮。
小高：是吗？(IC, vol. 1, p. 94)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Explanation in the Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Link</td>
<td>你好 [Nǐ hǎo!] (hello!) usually used for the first meeting; often used by receptionists when taking an incoming phone call or greeting visitors. 你好 means “hello!” It is a common greeting that may be used for “good morning”, “good afternoon”, or “good evening”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Practical</td>
<td>Nǐhǎo: “Hello!”, “How do you do?” This is the most common form of greeting in Chinese. It can be used at any time of day when meeting people for the first time or for people you already know. The response to this greeting form is also “你好” (nǐhǎo).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Reader</td>
<td>Nǐhǎo and nǐn hǎo: These are common greetings used at any time of the day and appropriate to both a stranger and an acquaintance. The same is used as a reply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Panorama</td>
<td>The expression “你好！” (nǐhǎo!) is a popular form of greeting. It can be used when two persons meet for the first time in the same manner as English speakers say “How do you do!” or used by people who have met before to exchange greetings. “你好！” (nǐhǎo!) is usually answered with “你好！”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Explanation of nǐhǎo 你好 in four pedagogical Chinese materials
(English translation)
Li You: Your house is very large and also very beautiful.
Little Gao: Really?

In the Notes, there is an explanation for the expression shima 是吗? [really] as follows,

“是吗 is not a question here, although it takes a question mark. It is an expression commonly used in showing modesty when receiving a compliment. Another phrase which can be used for the same purpose is 哪里. The original meaning of 哪里 is ‘where’ when paid a compliment, some Chinese people would say, ‘哪里’ or ‘哪里哪里’. In recent years, 哪里 has become somewhat old fashioned.”

Unfortunately, only a few words or expressions are distinguished from English counterparts in the respective communicative contexts. The majority of vocabulary is not interpreted in its communicative contexts, due to the less study on the context of vocabulary. For example, the Chinese expression bùyòng 不用 [no need] is a very commonly used phrase as a response. In most of the four materials, this phrase is translated into “need not”, however, what it actually means depends on the different contexts.

(1) In the host-guest interactions. When the guest tends to take his shoes off or asks the host whether he should do that, usually the host will say, “no need, no need”. (不用不用). Sometimes even seemingly more sincerely, “You really need not do that” (真的不用). However, both the guest and the host know that “bùyòng bùyòng” is actually a
polite formula to show the hospitality of the host by not troubling the guest. In this situation, the guest should not follow the host’s remarks, but insists taking off his shoes. And the host stops resisting after a while.

(2) The common response to the offer of help from others is also “no need, no need” (不用不用) even if in some situations the person may actually need and want the help.

需要帮忙吗？/不用不用。

Do you need a help? / No need, no need.

So the appropriate reaction to this answer is to keep asking for several times, or try to help to show your sincerity. After resisting for proper times, the help may be accepted finally.

(3) Between the beneficiary and the obliger. Usually the beneficiary expresses strong appreciation to the obliger and the obliger will decline that by saying “no need, no need” (不用不用).

谢谢谢谢，真是太感谢了！/不用不用。

No matter how the obliger declines the thanks, the beneficiary should keep expressing the appropriateness for certain time. Otherwise, if the conversation stops at the response of “不用不用”, the obliger may feel uncomfortable for thinking the beneficiary undervalues the favor.
Since the same expression may have various meanings in different contexts and followed by different implement to that, interpretation of the vocabulary should be in the communicative context.

3.3.2.3 Cultural context is ignored

Compared to the meaning in communicative context, the meaning of the vocabulary in the cultural context is even more ignored because it is much harder to find. Since cultural symbols are embedded in the words. Words also convey many kinds of cultural meanings which add to, transform, or manipulate denotative senses of words (Bonvillain, 2003, p. 61).

For example, dog is considered to be a disagreeable animal in Chinese culture and there are numerous words and expression about the dog which demonstrates these derogatory senses, such as zōugōu 走狗 [running dog, referring to a man hired or assigned to carry out a disagreeable task or an unscrupulous order.], gōuzāizi 狗崽子 [dog son, curse words], gōuzázhōng 狗杂种 [a bad person, curse word], zhūgōubùrǔ 猪狗不如 [be more worthless than dogs and pigs, curse words], gōuzhàngrénshì 狗仗人势 [be a bully under the protection of a powerful person, with negative sense], gōujítìàoqiáng 狗急跳墙 [a cornered beast will do something desperate, with negative
sense], *gǒuyàn kàn réndì* 狗眼看人低 [act like a snob] (Chang, 1995). However, the dog represents loveliness and friendliness in western culture, and many words and expressions containing dog have a good meaning which is rarely seen in Chinese. Such as, *every dog has its day, Lucky dog, a gay dog; a good dog deserves a good bone.*

Therefore, the word with the same denotation in Chinese and English evidently evokes different mental representations. However, this aspect is overlooked in these materials.

This word *gǒu* 狗 [dog] is introduced in lesson 6, *my family*, in *Chinese Link*.

妈妈：你家都有哪些人？
学文：我家有爸爸，妈妈和我。
妹妹：我们有宠物，我们养了一只狗，你呢？你家有狗吗？
(CL, lesson 6, P.86)

(English translation)
Mother: How many people are there in your family?
Xuewen: My Dad, Mom and I.
Sister: We have a pet, a dog at our home. How about your family? Do you have a dog?

Obviously, here the dog is put to the equal place as the members in the family. It is possible for an American to view his pet as one of their family members, but this hardly occurs in Chinese cultural context. Pets, especially dog, are viewed as low and subordinate to humans. Now as more families in China begin to have pets, this is...
changing but is still an area that is culturally quite different than what is in the United States.

The same appears in New Practical Chinese Reader, also in the lesson, how many people are there in your family, in which the dog is considered one of the family members patently.

王小云：贝贝是你妹妹吗？
林娜：不，贝贝是我的小狗。
王小云：小狗也是一口人吗？
林娜：贝贝是我们的好朋友，当然也是我们家的人。
（NPCR, p. 96）
(English translation)
Wang Xiaoyun: Is Beibei your younger sister?
Lin Na: No, Beibei is my dog.
Wang Xiaoyun: Is the dog one of your family members?
Lin Na: Beibei is our good friend. Of course it is a member of our family.

According to Walker (2000), learning a foreign language is learning to be a player in the culture as you would become player in a game. The learner must be aware and capable of recognizing the target cultural context when speaking that language. To cultivate this type of competence, the target cultural context in which language is used must be very clear to the students. Otherwise, s/he will interpret what they come across in their own culture because the default culture in which beginning language learners use language is their native culture unless the teacher creates an alternative, such as the culture’s being studied (target culture) (Walker and Noda 2000, p. 194).
The examination to these pedagogical materials also finds that some of them have noticed this point and interpret meanings of words in the cultural context. An example is from *Chinese Panorama*. In a dialogue, Fang Xueqin's boyfriend wants to ask her to attend a party, but Fang Xueqin has to take her English class. After knowing that, Fang Xueqin's boyfriend says, *tīng hǎo de* 挺好的. After giving the English translation, *quite good*, in the vocabulary list, a more detailed explanation is given in the CD,

"In Chinese, we have a lot of expressions which carry another meaning ...Li Wenlong" answer was *tīng hǎo de*, but everybody knows that he did not really mean so... In China, there are a lot of innuendos you do not always catch, if someone says *tīng hǎo de*, you hear the *hǎo* and you think ‘o, it’s good’, but actually *tīng hǎo de* usually means his thoughts and his answer are not the same, so if you say *tīng hǎo de*, it means you are thinking something different from what you are saying."

Another example is *nánpénɡyǒu* 男朋友 [boyfriend]. In *Chinese Panorama*, after giving the English translation as *boyfriend* in the vocabulary list (CP, Approaching Chinese I, p. 70), a more detailed explanation on the cultural connotation of this word is given in the section “living in China” in the CD,

"In China, it is very different if you say “boyfriend” than when an American says “boyfriend”. In China, if you say, *this is my boyfriend*, which means you are going to get married perhaps. It is a bit like saying fiancé in English. You only bring a boyfriend to your house if you are going to get married. It is very serious sort of thing. And people here are will quite shocked when an American say, oh, my little first-grade daughter has a
boyfriend because they think of boyfriend as something they reserve for their fiancé. So in China, when you say, do you have a boyfriend, the person may say yes or no, actually they may have what an American calls boyfriend. But if they say yes, you will know they will soon be married. So this is of quite difference between our two cultures. A boy friend in China is very serious.” (CP, lesson 4)

However, most of the vocabulary is still interpreted and used in a culture-free context in the studied materials. The difference of the cultural connotation between Chinese and English is often ignored.

3.4 Investigation on the context of vocabulary practice

3.4.1 Vocabulary practice

Achieving lexical command is a slow process. As Meara (1980) states, “learning new words is not an instantaneous process—if it were, and if presentation were the only critical variable involved, then words would not be forgotten and need to be relearned” (p. 121). Therefore, vocabulary drills and exercises are necessary for the consolidation and extension of words.

Meanwhile, as vocabulary learning involves not only developing knowledge about the words but primarily developing knowledge of the words, that is, the ability to function in it, fluently and accurately. Therefore, after getting the knowledge of “what a
word is”, the next step is to develop knowledge of “how to use the word” through various exercises. In this sense, vocabulary drills and exercises are an important, if not more, than vocabulary presentation.

Additionally, the ultimate goal of vocabulary learning is to use it in communication rather than merely store them in the mind. Vocabulary exercises ought to offer opportunities to practice words in realistic situations.

By means of meaningful practice, first in meaningful exercises and then in communicative activities, the learner can internalize the relationship between form, meaning, and function. This step is the most time-consuming one, but it is essential (Hammerly 1982, p. 462)

3.4.2 Results of investigation of vocabulary practice

Basically, the activities for vocabulary practice can be categorized into three groups: drills, exercises and communicative activities. Drills are the first step in the practice stage. They are mechanical and usually have only one acceptable answer. Exercises imply emphasis on the conscious application of knowledge to construct responses and often have more than one acceptable answer. In other words, drills are more mechanical and exercises more creative, although neither drills nor exercises constitute communication.
In the communicative activities, students have considerable freedom in choosing what to say, and their responses are largely unpredictable, as they may contain new information (Hammerly 1982, p. 439).

The following are the common formats of vocabulary exercises in these four materials:

1) Read words and phrases aloud. Usually a list of words or phrases is given after the instruction. Three out of the four materials offer this kind of exercise.

2) Matching between spoken forms (Pinyin) or written forms (characters) of the words and their English equivalents. For example,

老师  student
你好  and you
不    also
你呢  teacher
也    hello
学生  not
（Chinese Link, elementary Chinese 中文天地, p. 7）

1) Translation between English and Chinese, for example,

Write the following adjectives in Chinese
1. warm 2. hot 3. cold 4. (time) long 5. short 6. fast
7. slow 8. difficult 9. many 10. few 11. big 12. small
（Chinese Link, elementary Chinese 中文天地, p. 285）
The goal of these activities is to strengthen the correlation between word forms and meanings. However, these exercises treat vocabulary as isolated items and practice it in a decotextualized manner.

4) Extend the word to larger language units, making up phrases or sentences with given words;

    Now try to use the following characters to make words, phrases, and then sentences,
    1. 春 2. 久 3. 放 4. 气 5. 其 6. 暖
    (Chinese Link, elementary Chinese 中文天地, p. 285)
    Making sentences using the given words and 得。
    写字/好
    说英文/快
    打球/不好
    学汉字/不太好
    喝啤酒/多
    (IC, workbook, vol. 1, p. 81)

5) Filling blanks with suggested vocabulary

    chí 吃，xiǎng 想，jiǎozi 饺子，è 饿，néng 能，hǎochī 好吃
    我____了，____饺子，我觉得____，我__吃四两饺子。
    (China Panorama I 中国全景, p. 188)
    我和我的姐姐____（both）喜歡聽____（music）。我們____(often)____(together)
    聽。我們____(also)喜歡____(study)中文。____(however)，中國人說中文
    說得____(too)快。我____(feel)語法也____(a bit)難。 (IC, workbook,
    vol. 1, p. 79)
6) Substitution

A: 那是谁？
B: 那是我朋友。
A: 他/她姓什么？
B: 他/她姓马。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>她男朋友</th>
<th>张</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>加拿大学生</td>
<td>丁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>英国小姐</td>
<td>林</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is found in the investigation that there are only very few exercises or drills are designed exclusively for vocabulary. Most of these activities are drills and exercises and vocabulary is mainly practiced in the linguistic context. Few communicative activities are offered to practice vocabulary in real or realistic communication. Learners devote most of their time to activities (drills/exercises) merely in linguistic context that are designed for basic skill acquisition. Learners may have an extensive vocabulary and high grammatical level but lack the ability to find the appropriate words or phrases for an effective communication.

Such kinds of drills and exercises train students to become experts in recognizing isolated words or producing sentences without any context involved. Superficially, students are “actively” using the language which gives them a false sense of language proficiency and language knowledge. Simultaneously, the teacher, unaware of the potential pitfalls of such vocabulary exercises, will assume improved vocabulary knowledge and plan future lessons accordingly, neglecting the actual needs of students.
Therefore, there is no apparent connection between vocabulary usage and communicative ability.

Therefore, highly contextualized and culturally authentic activities are in great need to prepare learners truly communicative, culturally coherent interaction in the target language. Only in this way can learners gain basic linguistic skills in the cultural context. They need to learn not only the spoken form, the written form, their grammatical features and other basic linguistic aspects, more importantly, the meanings of words in specific context and when and where to use the words.
CHAPTER 4

APPLICATION OF THE HIERARCHICAL MODEL
IN PERFORMED CULTURE

As a new pedagogical approach, performed culture puts culture at the heart of language learning and emphasizes the communicative competence in the target cultural context. With the respect of vocabulary instruction, this pedagogical ideal provides a good model in terms of incorporating the three layers of context together.

This chapter will provide concrete examples of presenting and practicing vocabulary in different layers of contexts and how vocabulary is incorporated within context in performed culture. The examples given here by no means exhaust the variety of activities that are conducted in performed culture. All these activities mentioned in this study result from the author’s observation and experience.

To be specific, the following three products are used as the main samples for the analysis and observation. These three products are all designed under the guidance of performed culture theory.
1) *Chinese: Communication in the Culture* (henceforth CCC), a set of Multi-media instructional materials designed for the rank beginner who wants to speak Mandarin Chinese. These materials include a “Performance Text” and an audio program.

2) Act class in Intensive Chinese 101 (henceforth Chinese 101), a course designed for beginning learners in an intensive program, which I taught in 2005 summer.

3) Networking in U.S. and China (henceforth Networking), a course aimed to explore the assumptions and expectations motivating behaviors in different cultures when developing interpersonal relations and professional networks, which I take in 2006 spring.

### 4.1 Performed culture

According to Walker (1995), performed culture means to learn language in appropriate cultural contexts and to participate in that culture by performing the related behaviors. This is especially necessary when an English speaker is learning Chinese. As mentioned above, Chinese is truly a foreign language because of the cultural distance from the Western cultures.

The implication of this concept of performed culture for language study is that no one really learns a foreign language but learns to do particular things in a foreign
language (Walker and Noda, 2000). In performed culture, the first step for learners to do is to acquire both culture and language knowledge. Then learners must perform the knowledge in authentic communicative activities in situated cultural contexts. In this way, various performances are stored as "stories" into learners' memory. Finally, the compilation of "stories" into the knowledge of a learned culture will lead to learner's second-culture worldview construction which leads him or her to be a successful foreign participant in that culture. Thus, performed culture becomes the foundation of a memory that can be drawn upon when needed in the future (Walker and Noda, 2000).

4.2 Setting cultural context

Languages are huge symbolic systems that are imbued with meaning by context that is in turn provided by an even larger symbolic system: culture. Thus, language must be learned within a cultural context (Walker, 1995).

Language always operates in a culture and no instructional setting is culturally neutral (Christensen & Noda, 2000, Walker, 1995). When learning a foreign language, the default culture is in which language learners use language in their native culture (Base Culture) unless the teacher creates an alternative, such as the culture being studied (target culture) (Walker and Noda, 2000).
As the ultimate goal of Chinese language learning is to function in the target culture in the future, the learning environment should be dominated by the target culture. Therefore, no matter in the instructional material or in classroom teaching, cultural context should be set up and defined clearly. Learners are required to understand the situation in which the conversation occurs and what the speakers accomplish by their participation in the conversation rather than merely knowing each word in the conversation.

In terms of the pedagogical material design, the common way to do that is to select the language materials which are appropriate in the cultural context and describe clearly the cultural settings to the learner. Meanwhile, the involvement of multimedia also helps to create the Chinese cultural settings, as the CCC audiotapes/CD-ROM program did.

Let us take the following situated dialogue as an example,

Dialogue setting: A stranger has come to the office looking for the assistant manager. The secretary, Ms. Wang does not know who the gentleman is. Perhaps for this reason, she isn’t very much helpful at all.

Keren: Qingwen, Hua Xiaohui fujingli shi neiwei?
Wang Liyu: Hua fujingli ma? Ta ya...... jiushi neige you shou you ai de nanren.
Keren: Ta Xianzai you kong ma?
Wang Liyu: Wo bu-qingchu.

[English translation]
Visitor: excuse me, which one is vice manager of Hua?
Wang Liyu: Vice manager of Hua? He is just that man who are both thin and short.
Visitor: Is he available now?
Wang Liyu: I am not sure. (CCC, unit 1 stage 7, identifying people, p. 94)
Here Wang Liyu is the secretary of the company. Given that secretary is usually very considerate and enthusiastic, this dialogue may sound untypical and abnormal. However, this dialogue actually reflects the underlying communicative rules in Chinese cultural context, which are given as follows,

Since the visitor has simply come up straight to the speaker, and has not been properly introduced, Wang mishu, does not feel obligated to be helpful. Generally speaking, when you are working with people in Chinese culture, you are not polite to them unless you have an idea who they are, and how they are related to your group. We will bump into this concept of politeness very often in this course, because it is important when building relationship with Chinese people. The patterns of politeness in Chinese may be different from your expectation. (CCC MP3)

In this way, what learners learn is more than language itself. Instead, they are learning communication in the cultural context as well.

In the classroom teaching, culturally appropriate social interactions modeled by the teacher or the native speakers and mental imagery derived from study materials are offered to conduct a nonphysical environment favorable to language learning (Walker, 1995). This method is adopted in the courses of Chinese 101 and Networking.

To help learners discriminate between the contexts imposed by their base culture and those imposed by target culture, in the Networking course, all communicative activities are performed twice by Chinese students and American students respectively in their base cultures. Learners, thus, get a better understanding of the different cultural context by the
comparison. For instance, the following is the performance conducted scenario when two
people exchange their names in first contact in a formal setting.

(In American culture)
A: Nice to meet you. My name is David Smith. (shake hands)
B: Nice to meet you, Mr. Smith. My name is Lisa White. How are you?
A: Fine. How about you, Ms White?
A：很高兴认识你。我的名字是史大伟。（握手）
B：我也很高兴认识你，白先生。我叫白丽莎。你好吗？
A：我很好。你呢，白小姐？

(In Chinese culture)
A: 您好！请问，您贵姓？
B: 免贵姓张。这是我的名片。（动作）请问，您怎么称呼？
A: (看名片）哦，张经理。幸会幸会。这是我的名片（动作）。
B: (看名片）哦，王主任，久仰久仰。
A: Hello! Excuse me, what’s your valuable family name?
B: My family name is Zhang. This is my name card (hand in the name card).
Excuse me, How should I address you?
A: (looking at the name card) Oh, Manager Zhang! Pleasure to meet you!
(Repeat it) This is my name card (hand in the name card).
B: (looking at the name card) Oh, Director Wang! I have long been looking
forward to meeting you (repeat it).

Leaving the nonverbal factor aside, from the comparison both in Chinese and English
language, it is obvious to see that learning a language is by no means of the word-to-word
translation. The differences are demonstrated in many aspects in terms of vocabulary,
such as:
1) Social titles are commonly used to address others in Chinese while it is not in English.

2) There are two words for you in Mandarin Chinese, nín 您 and nǐ 你. In this situation, Chinese choose the respectful pronoun nín to address the interlocutor, while there is no other alternative in English.

3) The words, xìnghuì 幸会, jǐyuǎng 久仰 literally means “I have been wanting to meet with you” in English in this situation. But they are used quite frequently in Chinese while the expression “I have been wanting to meet with you” is much less frequently employed in English.

4) The word, guì 贵 is used when asking others’ family name while there is no equivalent in English.

Underlying these differences are the different social values, attitudes to others and other cultural rules in Chinese and American culture. All culture provides rules for appropriate communicative interaction, defining behaviors that should occur, that may occur, and that should not occur in given contexts. Ignoring these will lead to the focus on the linguistic code. This example suggests that teaching a language should not begin with the linguistic decoding, but with its underlying background—culture. It is helpful to turn
learners' attention from focusing on the isolated words to the larger cultural context. Thus better comprehend the intention of others through language.

4.3 Practicing vocabulary in Performance

4.3.1 Performance provides communicative context

In a linguistically rich natural environment, a second language may be acquired well by simply using it. For example, foreign students who are learning Chinese in China have much more opportunities to apply what they learned in classroom to real communication events. However, in a linguistically and culturally impoverished environment, such as students learning Chinese in U.S, far more results may be obtained by rehearsing realistic communication activities designed by the instructor.

Performance in performed culture just provides such a beneficial approach to practice language. Here performances are rehearsals of various behaviors in the target culture, which prepares learners for future use when interacting with people from the target culture. As Walker (1995) states, the primary responsibility of the learners is performance and the primary responsibility of instructors is to set the stage of the performance and direct learners’ performance in a culturally appropriate manner. In this sense, learning language and culture is learning to do things in the culture.
For Walker (2000), performance means the conscious repetition of situated events defined by five specified elements: 1) place of occurrence, 2) time of occurrence, 3) appropriate script/program/rules, 4) roles of participants, and 5) accepting and/or accepted audience.

Among the five elements of performance, scripts are learned bodies of shared cultural knowledge that allow us to predict what others will do and say by limiting the number of possibilities that may occur in a given situation. As Schank (1990) states, “Early education involves learning the scripts others expect us to follow...The more scripts you know, the more situations will exist in which you feel comfortable and capable of playing your role effectively” (p. 8). And vocabulary, together with other knowledge, is just one component included in the script. Thus, the choice and application of words in a performance is prescribed and influenced by both the other knowledge in the script and the four other elements around the script.

4.3.2 Vocabulary in performance

In the language classes, various communicative activities in the cultural context are created, which can be a greeting, an apology, buying a lunchbox in the train, making an appointment with others, or other behaviors that may be encountered in the target culture.
Learners play roles and rehearse the various behaviors in the simulated target cultural settings. Vocabulary is then learned and practiced in the communicative context.

Just as learning to communicate in a foreign language and culture can be likened to learning to play games (Walker, 2000), vocabulary learning can also be compared to playing with all the various of balls, such as basketball, volleyball, football -- different words are viewed as different balls here. The goal of vocabulary learning is not to remember the names of the balls but to know,

(1) Which ball you should choose in a specific game;

(2) Where to play it, i.e. the context;

(3) When to play it,

(4) Why to play it, and

(5) How to play it in the game,

As we discussed in chapter 3, vocabulary instruction in many current instructional materials stops after giving an associative link between an L2 word and an equivalent word or phrase in L1, which is just like the introduction to the names of all these balls. Some go further with instructions to some features of these balls, such as you cannot forward the soccer ball with your hands, or you cannot carry the basketball across the playing field in your hands. In terms of exercises, however, some only give students
opportunities to do mechanical drills without telling them any information about the context. This is just like practicing shooting a basket repeatedly—perhaps one can throw it into the basket each time whereas he may end taking up a volleyball with him to a real basketball match.

By contrast, these situational exercises in performed culture provide learners opportunities and incentive to use Chinese as the means of social interaction. In these real communicative activities, learners then decide what to say and how to say in the specific situation.

One example is from the class in Networking in U.S. and China. Offering compliments is a good way to build up a relationship with others and it is a common case among interpersonal communication. However, the misuse of one word in a specific situation may lead to the opposite effect. Therefore, in the performance of complimenting a person on his intelligence in Chinese, a list of adjective words are introduced by the instructor and the differences among their connotations and usages are given at the same time:

$cōngmìng$ 聪明, $lìhài$ 厉害, $nénggàn$ 能干, $bàng$ 棒, $niù$ 牛

All these words are synonyms of *smart* in the semantic area covered by the concept of English word “smart”. However, words are not interchangeable in a specific situation.
For example, *niú 牛* is a colloquial word and has some joking meaning. It is usually used between friends and popular among young generations. So, it would be considerably inappropriate when one uses this word to compliment his boss or supervisor in a formal situation, although it works well among peers.

After clarifying these differences to students, the instructor then designed a series of communicative events in different contexts. Learners thus learned how to choose the suitable words and use them appropriately by performing the events.

### 4.4 Memorizing vocabulary in stories

Underlying the ability of participating in a culture is a memory for that culture, and that memory, according to Schank (1990), consists of stories and the major processes of memory are the creation, storage, and retrieval of stories.

According to Walker and Noda (2000), story is the personal memory of having experienced a performance mentioned above. An enacting performance creates the memory of a story. Vocabulary, together with all relevant context information thus is stored in stories for future use. In this way, the three types of context and vocabulary are integrated in the stories. When the learners encounter a certain context in the target culture, the relevant vocabulary from similar contexts performed previously will be retrieved.
4.4.1 Meanings of a word are constructed in accumulation of stories

Learning a vocabulary item is not a one-time affair. In other words, it is unrealistic to believe that a learner hears a word or memorizes a word with the result being full knowledge of the word. Vocabulary knowledge is multifaceted and the acquisition is always a continuum from unfamiliar to familiar, from unknown to known. As a word is encountered repeatedly over time, information about the word grows and it moves up the continuum toward “known.” Exposure to the word in many contexts is necessary in order to learn its full meaning, and such exposure should be companied and followed by much use of the word in conversation if it is to be part of one’s active vocabulary (Hammerly, 1985). It is necessary to distinguish the holistic aspects of vocabulary knowledge and the incremental process when organizing and presenting words in the instructional materials.

Therefore, the same word may have different meanings in different stories. Learners learn the various meanings of the same word gradually as they accumulate more stories containing this word. Meanwhile, it is better to memorize and store the different meanings of one word in different stories so that they would not be mixed up.

There is a well-known anecdote concerning the Chinese word náli 哪里. An American student has learned this word as a question word meaning where in English by encountering it in numerous stories such as looking for a place or someone. One day, he

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met one of his friends in a party and his friend introduced his girlfriend to him. Out of courtesy, he complimented her and said to his friend 你女朋友 very beautiful]. When he got the response 你那里哪里, he felt puzzled but had to detail the compliment as “the eye is beautiful, the nose is also beautiful and …” Before he finished his comment, everyone laughed into tears. I am quite sure this Chinese learner will never forget the second meaning of 你哪里 as a way to decline a compliment from this story.

4.4.2 Memorizing vocabulary according to the indices of stories

As more complicated stories added to the learner’s memory, he or she will simplify the management of such memories. According to Schank (1990), memory, in order to be effective, must contain both specific experiences (memories) and labels (memory traces). The more information we are provided with about a situation, the more places we can attach it to in memory and the more ways it can be compared with other cases in memory. Thus, a story is useful because it comes with many indices. These indices may be locations, attitudes, quandaries, decisions, conclusions, or whatever. To simplify the management of stories stored in our mind, these stories can be categorized into cases, sagas and themes.

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For example, CCC is organized based on five sagas: Sino-American trading company/Beijing office, Sino-American trading company/Washington office, Sino-American trading company/Textile factory, Train trip to Fuzhou, Chinese visitor to American Campus, together with a series of cases. These cases are the representative events learners may likely encounter in the future social settings.

Likewise, Networking in U.S. and China is also organized by cases, sagas and themes. Cases such as greeting, compliments, apology and being a guest; sagas such as stories occurring in a business setting or a campus, and themes such as miànzi 面子 [face]. Therefore, in terms of vocabulary learning, words can also be organized around cases, sagas and themes. In this way, we are more likely to remember a word and the word can be retrieved much quickly when needed.

4.4.2.1 Memorizing words in sagas

A saga is a compilation of stories about a specific set of people or a specific location in a culture (Schank, 1990).

For example, in the library saga, one may have multiple stories occurring in this place: the various collections in a library; his experience of searching a book according to the indices such as author, publisher or the publication date; the conversation with the
librarian when checking books in or out. In terms of vocabulary in this particular setting, certain words have a higher frequency than others and usually they are the key words for performance in that situation. The following are the words related to the stories mentioned above:

Collections: shū 书 [book], zázhì 杂志 [magazine], bàozhǐ 报纸 [newspaper], xuéshū qīkān 学术期刊 [academic journal];

Indices for searching a book: zuòzhě 作者 [author], chūbānshè 出版社 [publisher], chūbān shíjiān 出版时间 [date of publication];

Words in the communicative event: jiè 借 [check out], huán 还 [check in], dàoqī 到期 [due date].

In addition, number words and time words may also be involved when talking about the amount of books you borrowed and the due date.

Although these words may not be looked up in an authorized vocabulary frequency dictionary, they are essential and necessary especially for this setting. With these words, one can handle this situation without much difficulty when he later seeks to find materials in libraries in the target language.

In CCC, words are organized in this way. For example, in the saga of Sino-American trade company, when the word chuánzhēnjī 传真机 [fax machine] is introduced in a case
(CCC1, 2.6) talking about sending a fax, words for other objects commonly found in the office are introduced at the same time: 电话 [telephone], 电脑 [computer], 信 [letter], 笔 [pen].

Meanwhile, as a fax number 4325104 is mentioned in the story, all the numbers are introduced together and a series of drills related to numbers are followed, such as finding the right room according to the room number, asking about telephone or fax numbers.

4.4.2.2 Memorizing words in cases

A case is a series of stories about doing something in a culture. Cases are compiled into knowledge structures of the world—what you know of the world and what you can do in it.

Let’s take the leave-taking as an example, which is one of the most basic communicative skills to be taught to language learners. Among the 10 materials I surveyed, most take 再见 as the commonest expression for departure.

However, leave-taking is indeed a collaborative, achieved course of action that follows cultural conventions rather than a simple exchange of terminating expressions. As a social behavior, other factors must also be taken into consideration, such as how to say, when to say and to whom. After investigating 87 video clips on Chinese leave-taking in
various situations from five Mandarin TV series, Wang (2004) concludes that zài jiàn is not the commonest way for departure. The expression for leave-taking varies depending on the contexts, the personal relationship and the gender.

In the Networking class, various expressions about leave-taking are given and performed in specific contexts. For example,

wǒ xiān zǒu le [I leave first]
nà wǒ gào cí le [Then I have to go]
huí tóu jiàn [See you later]
wǒ de huí qù le [I have to go back]
bǎozhòng [take care]

As these expressions are clearly defined with different contexts between people with different gender, social status or personal relationship and performed in simulated contexts, students accumulated various stories on the same case. Thus, they can choose the appropriate way to say goodbye when encountering the situation in the future.

4.4.2.3 Memorizing words in themes

According to Schank (1990), a theme is general life topics that tend to generate goals related to those topics, and the results of those goals related to the overarching themes. A theme is a cultural premise or value underlying communication practices. It is a more abstract and general statement of certain features shared by more than one story in a culture.
For example, *miànzi* 面子, which is usually translated as *face* or *facework*, is an important theme in Chinese culture (Gao and Ting-Toomey, 1998). Face refers to an individual’s claimed sense of positive image in a relational and network context, and facework involves communicative strategies that are used to enact self-face and to uphold, support, or challenge the other person’s face (Ting-Toomery, 1985, 1988). *Saving face* and *losing face* are two dimensions of face. Around this theme, a number of stories can be organized under this category. For example, Chinese would say yes to something that they disagree with in order to give others face, or, pretend to be able to do something at some sacrifice to save one’s own face.

With respect to vocabulary, numerous words and expression are used in this theme.

*Liú miànzi* 留面子 [face must be left], meaning avoidance of the conflict situation.
*Diūliǎn* 丢脸 [lose face], meaning losing social pride, honor, dignity, credibility.
*Yǒulǐăn* 有脸 [have face], meaning having social esteem.
*Búyàoliăn* 不要脸 [no face need], meaning shameless.
*Jiāchóu bùkē wāiyáng* 家丑不可外扬, family disgrace should not be revealed to the outsider.
*Dá zhōng liǎn chōng pàngzi* 打肿脸充胖子, to make your face swell to pretend that you are a fat man”
*Rén yào liǎn, shù yào pí* 人要脸, 树要皮, a person need a face like a tree needs bark.

It is hard to understand these expressions literally. Schank (1990) also believes that it is easier to remember and understand a story than to remember and understand an abstract description, and “stories illustrate points better than simply stating the points.
themselves” (p. 11). Meanwhile, for those words, one story is not adequate to illustrate their meanings. More stories need be put together to provide the general picture of the words, in other words, learning these words under the same theme.

4.4.3 Repetition of words in compiling stories

Stories in different sagas, cases or themes are only segments in a social life. Once learners have gained the ability to tell or enact more stories, they can compile them to form larger knowledge domains by reorganizing or connecting them into larger stories, such as cases, numerous sagas, and deeper themes. In this process, repetition, one important aspect for vocabulary learning, can be realized.

For instance, when I practiced teaching in the intensive Chinese 101, I designed a communicative activity at the end of the class: inviting your classmate to have dinner at home. The story line is given as follows: calling to a person, → making an invitation, asking address, → finding way to your home, → confirm the time, because they have learned all these stories in previous classes.

In this classroom activity, about one hundred words and expressions related to calling, invitation, directions, transportation methods, time words and place names are reviewed and practiced in the simulated situation. And as more stories will be learned, more words can be added into this activity.
Numerous research and experiments have proved that words are not isolated but linked and stored in a network in our mind (Aitchison, 1987). In the second language vocabulary learning (SLVL) area, more and more researchers have recognized the importance of this feature on vocabulary organization and proposed that vocabulary should be taught in networks (Chang 2003; Mo 2004; Yang 2004). There has been an increasing agreement that learning vocabulary in groups based on the links and associations between words is an effective way to facilitate memorization and extend vocabulary.

Organizing words in different stories according to the indices of sagas, cases and themes facilitates learners in the way of word memorization and retrieval as well, because words or expressions in these stories are not isolated linguistic items any more, and appropriate contexts form the cement which holds all these words together.

4.5 Construction of Second-cultural worldview

According to Walker and Noda (2000, p. 205), second-culture worldview construction is the compilation of stories into the knowledge of a learned culture, which involves both developing new behaviors based on target culture patterns and constructing new cognitive frameworks. By this worldview adjustment, the learners can become a successful participant, or a game player in Walker’s words, in the target culture.
The learning of vocabulary and the construction of second culture worldview interact and inter-influence. As learners recognize the second cultural world view through the learning of vocabulary, if learned in proper cultural and communicative contexts, the increasing construction of Second-Cultural Worldview will facilitate vocabulary learning.

4.5.1 Vocabulary reflects different cultural world views

People in all cultures have ideas about the world they live in based on culturally shared models of their physical and social universe. These models are expressed and transmitted largely through language. In daily communicative interaction, the words we choose to use in speaking are laden with many layers of meaning, ranging from direct denotative reference to metaphoric or symbolic content. Taken together, cultural meanings and models that are shared and assumed form a unique world view, providing both an understanding of the world as it is thought to be and a blueprint for the way one ought to behave (Bonvillain, 1993).

Since words are primary encapsulation of meaning in language, Ethnolinguistics studies examine the vocabulary in languages to explore the relationship between language and thoughts. Sapir (1939, p. 90-91) stated, “The complete vocabulary of a language may indeed be looked upon as a complex inventory of all the ideas, interests and occupations that take up the attention of the community".
Vocabulary in different languages reveals the different perspectives to categorize the world. By the very fact that a language provides a word for an object or activity, that object or event becomes culturally significant. For instance, English looks for the difference while Chinese looks for the connection when naming things (Brown, 2002). One example is the different way to name the vehicles used on the ground between English and Chinese. In English, there are different words for different types of vehicles: train, bus or bicycle. In Chinese, however, there is one word chē 车 to generalize all this vehicles. Train is huòchē 火车, car is qīchē 汽车; bicycle is zìxíngchē 自行车. Then, when seeing these words, learners can recognize the category of the words belong to without much difficulty.

4.5.2 Construction of Second-cultural worldview

In reverse, the construction of second-culture worldview will help learners to understand the rationales of the structure and meanings of the words, thus to facilitate their learning of vocabulary.

For example, humility is considered as a valuable virtue in Chinese culture. Once Chinese learners build up the new cultural concept, they will feel it more acceptable and
understandable to use the numerous self-depreciatory words to refer to one's own family members or belongs whereas honorific words to refer to others, as shown in table 4.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referring to oneself</th>
<th>Referring to others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hǎnshè 寒舍 [poor house, my home]</td>
<td>Fūshāng 府上 [your home]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiànméi 贱内 [humble-wife, my wife]</td>
<td>Zūn fūrén 尊夫人 [your wife]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quānzi 犬子 [dog-son, one's own son]</td>
<td>Língláng 令郎 [your beloved son]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bì gōngsī 敝公司 [poor company, my company]</td>
<td>Gui gōngsī 贵公司 [valuable company, your company]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xīng 姓 [my family name]</td>
<td>Guīxīng 尊姓/贵姓 [your respectable family name, valuable family name]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Míngzì 名字 [name]</td>
<td>Dàmíng 大名 [big name, your given name]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Chinese words referring to oneself and others

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\(^3\) Some of these words such as Jiànméi 贱内, Zūn fūrén 尊夫人, Quānzi 犬子 or Língláng 令郎 are not so commonly used in modern Chinese any longer.
CONCLUSION

With respect to vocabulary teaching and learning, various studies in previous years have strongly emphasized the preference of teaching vocabulary in context. But there is no agreement on what context refers to. In this study, a three-layer hierarchical model is presented to indicate the different layers of context in which vocabulary operates. The three layers are the cultural, communicative and linguistic contexts respectively, from the outer to the inner. They are all important and none can be ignored. In the linguistic context, students learn the grammatical functions of vocabulary and collocations of words and expressions in order to acquire linguistic skill with accuracy and correctness. In this sense, knowing the linguistic context in which a word or expression can be used is the basic and fundamental layer in this model. But students must also know when, where, to whom, why and how to use the words or expressions appropriately and relevantly in the real communicative context, in that the ultimate goal of language learning is to communicate. Therefore, communicative context is equally important for vocabulary instruction. Finally, since all communication takes place in a cultural context, the usage and meaning of the word or expression in a communication is also influenced and determined by the cultural context, which is also indispensable for the vocabulary instruction.
In the field of Chinese vocabulary instruction, context has long been ignored. Instructors teach vocabulary by word-to-word translation and learners spend tons of time memorizing vocabulary lists and flash cards by rote. As a result, even when learners acquire a large vocabulary, they still find it difficult to comprehend particular words or express themselves with appropriate words when engaged in communication.

Realizing the fact that context is especially necessary for English speakers because of the cultural distance between Chinese and the Western cultures, many practitioners in this field have contributed a lot to exploring the approach to teaching Chinese vocabulary in context. However, due to the partial understanding of context, vocabulary is presented and practiced mostly in the linguistic context layer, few get to the communicative context layer, even fewer get to the cultural context layer.

How, then, do we incorporate these three context layers into vocabulary instruction? The practice in performed culture provides numerous effective methods to teach vocabulary in different layers of context: setting the cultural context by describing the underlying cultural and social background in detail or by the application of multi-media; practicing vocabulary in well-designed communicative context through performance; helping learners to accumulate various “stories” for the future thus to construct their
second-cultural worldview. In the process, vocabulary and the well defined context are integrated together and memorized by the learner.

There is still room for the exploration of methods on teaching vocabulary in context. On one side, more studies are needed on the context of Chinese vocabulary itself; on the other side, more effects are needed to study the efficient ways of applying these studies to the vocabulary instruction in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language.
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