Exploring Learners' Perception on Communicative Coursebook by Metaphor Analysis: The Case of CECL

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Abstract

Despite the popularity of communicative approach in EFL contexts, the use of communicative coursebook in CLT class has not been well discussed. This exploratory study thus investigates through questionnaires how Chinese students view and understand a set of communicative coursebooks—CECL, short for *Communicative English for Chinese Learners* in classrooms. Questionnaires were distributed to 103 English majors who have studied the material for at least one year at university. Metaphors are used in the questionnaire to pin point both the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook. By analyzing and categorizing metaphors by the students, the study found that students were generally positive about the material since they regarded the coursebook as all-inclusive, authentic, communicative, culture-bound and stimulating. Whereas, negative metaphors reflected students' dissatisfaction with the coursebook due to its disorderly organization and outdated content. Blend metaphors revealed their contradictory feelings to both merits and demerits of the coursebook. The results indicated that task-based communicative materials might confuse students who have long been accustomed to text-based coursebooks and grammar teaching. Evaluation on materials from learners and necessary training on teachers are needed to bridge the gap between theory and practice in classrooms.

Key words: Communicative coursebook; CECL; Metaphor; Metaphor analysis

INTRODUCTION

Communicative language teaching (CLT) has influenced English language teaching worldwide and China is no exception. Under the communicative approach, language learning, teacher's roles as well as learners' roles have been well discussed and interpreted (Li, 1984; Hiep, 2007; Butler, 2011). However, the role of coursebooks seems to remain vague. While researchers have fully scrutinized how coursebooks function in EFL classrooms (Zohrabi, 2011, pp.213-214), less efforts and attention have been devoted to the examination of communicative materials in CLT classrooms. Therefore, the present study attempts to investigate how a set of communicative materials function in classrooms by probing into the attitudes of Chinese students towards CECL, a well-established communicative English coursebook in China.

CECL, short for *Communicative English for Chinese Learners,* is a set of communicative materials for students majoring in English in tertiary education in mainland China. The project of compiling CECL started in 1979 and was jointly undertaken by Guangzhou Institute of Foreign Studies (now Guangdong University of foreign Studies) in China and the British Council. CECL attempts to apply communicative approach in EFL in Chinese context and help learners to develop communicative competence. Xiaoju Li (2000, pp.28-31), the compiler of the materials, holds that communicative competence consists of three components: linguistic competence, pragmatic competence as well as cognitive and affective capacity. This understanding of communicative competence underlies the theory of compiling the materials and constitutes the aim of the whole course. Furthermore, it also forms one of the dimensions to appraise the application of the materials in classrooms.

According to McGrath (2006, p.171), whether coursebooks are effective depends on their inherent suitability for the context as well as the attitudes of teachers and learners. Since communicative approach

holds that students take the central role in learning, students' perception on the communicative coursebook in CLT course is then important. By analyzing the metaphors students created on CECL, the study intends to investigate how well the communicative materials can meet the needs of students and explore its strengths and weaknesses on the level of classroom practice.

1. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1.1 Coursebooks and Communicative Coursebooks

Coursebooks have been well discussed by many researchers. In EFL contexts, coursebooks make up one of the major sources of language exposure for English learners (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 2000, p.171). They provide the core materials for a language learning course and should include work on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functions and the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking (Tomlinson, 2011, p.xi). Zohrabi (2011, p.214) goes one step further to claim that coursebooks determine the classroom activities, influence teachers' teaching methods and students' roles. McGrath (2006, p.171) also suggests that coursebooks are a central element in teaching-learning encounters and they tend to dictate what is taught, in what order and how as well as what learners learn. Wang, Lin & Lee (2011, p.91) believe textbooks can provide guidance in course and activity design and also assure a measure of structure, consistency, and logical progression in a class. EFL textbooks can be distinguished into such different types as coursebooks for general English, English coursebooks for science and technology, English for academic purposes, multimedia materials, self-access materials, and materials for extensive reading etc (Tomlinson, 2008). Different kinds of coursebooks target at various learner groups in divergent contexts and may require disparate dimensions for assessment and evaluation.

Unlike the ample research in field of EFL coursebooks, study on how communicative coursebooks function in CLT classrooms is comparatively limited. Since communicative approach makes a very different concept in ELT from the traditional approaches, communicative textbooks must play a different role as well. Practitioners of CLT view communicative materials as a way of influencing the quality of classroom interaction and language use. Therefore, promoting communicative language use becomes one of the primary roles for CLT coursebooks (Ma, 2009, p.52). Numan (1989, p.194) proposes similar views and stresses that communicative materials should be task-based and authentic. Richard & Rodgers (1986) suggest that task-based materials, authentic materials as well as text-based materials make up the three major kinds of communicative materials currently used in CLT. In each of these kinds of communicative materials,

language data and exercises are selected, designed, organized and presented in different ways. Accordingly, they must also function differently in practices regardless of their similarity on the level of theoretical approach. Take task-based materials for an example, they are designed in totally different ways from text-based materials. According to Richard & Rodgers (1986), task-based materials normally comprise a variety of games, role plays, simulations, and task-based communication activities to support CLT classes. These typically are in the form of one-of-a-kind items; exercise handbooks, cue cards, pair-communication practice material. There are usually two sets of material for a pair of students, each set containing different kinds of information. Sometimes the information is complementary, and partners must fit their respective parts of the "jigsaw" into a composite whole. Other assumes different role relationships for the partners. Still others provide drills and practice materials with interactional formats. Textbooks organized and presented in this way are likely to be more complex in a way for learners to follow and may therefore, trigger dissimilar response from learners.

The profusion of various coursebooks in EFL contexts makes the investigation of textbooks indispensable. Many researchers have evaluated different textbooks through the application of checklists and questionnaires, attempting to pin point the strengths and weaknesses of coursebooks and determine their appropriateness in corresponding contexts. No matter how coursebooks are examined, the investigation should involve making judgments about the effect of the materials on people using them, including both teachers' and learners' perception on the value of the materials. It may also consist of measuring aspects like the appeal of the materials to learners, the ability of the materials to interest and motivate learners, the value of the materials in both short-term and long-term learning (of language and of communicative skills) as well as the validity and reliability of the materials etc (Tomlinson, 2003, p.15). While measuring the value of materials, in many cases, can be quite impressionistic, researchers are endeavoring to develop more systematic and potentially revealing approaches. Tomlinson (2011, p.3) suggests that such investigation should vary according to different kinds of coursebooks.

1.2 Metaphor, Metaphor Analysis and Elt

To examine language materials from the perspectives of coursebook users and material developers, checklists, along with interviews and questionnaires, have long been common research tools. However, metaphor analysis has recently come to be exploited by researchers to study various aspects of classroom practices, including how coursebooks function in classrooms.

Metaphor is traditionally defined as a figure of speech. Yet since 1970s, the classical view of metaphor as a product of language has given way to a modern

understanding of metaphor as the way new concepts are initially processed and articulated (Aragno, 2009, p.30). As asserted by Lakoff & Johnson (1980, p.56), most conceptual system is metaphorically structured; i.e., most concepts are partially understood in terms of other concepts and many things are conceptualized with the assistance of metaphors. Metaphors represent understanding of a subject through reference to another subject and build nonlinear relationship between an unfamiliar concept and something more familiar (Guner, 2012, p.40). Metaphors are a vehicle of novelty and new meaning as well as an instrument "through which to express something that cannot be captured in any other way" (Modell, 1997, p.221).

In recent years, researchers have come to consider metaphors to be not only a research object but also a research tool (Cameron & Maslen, 2010, p.vii). By analyzing metaphors, researchers can investigate people's attitudes and conceptions. Metaphor analysis can unveil the underlying feelings and understandings which people may be unable or unwilling to express consciously. It thus constitutes a systematic method of analyzing metaphors people use to express themselves. It is a means of gaining understanding of a person's often unconscious motives or reasons for action or of their conception of the process involved in doing it. It can often reveal the thoughts behind the action (Pitcher & Akerlind, 2011 p.164). According to Pishghadam & Pourali (2011, p.63), metaphor analysis allows for a wide range of research perspectives and it is an interdisciplinary field which links the cultural, social, cognitive and individual aspects of metaphor use. A few examples of related research on metaphor analysis are Guner's study (2012, pp.39-48), which looked into the attitudes of high school students towards learning mathematics, and the study by Pitcher and Akerlind (2011, pp.160-171) about post-doctoral researchers' conceptions of research

When it comes to EFL contexts, a large volume of research has centered on exploring teachers' beliefs on their roles of EFL teachers as well as other aspects of language teaching by analyzing metaphors they generated (Lin, Shein & Yang, 2012; Farrell, 2006; Guerrero & Villamil, 2002). Even though metaphor analysis has become a significant cognitive device in teacher development and education, fewer studies are devoted to learners' perceptions on various aspects of language teaching and learning. One related example is the research conducted by Pishghadam and Pouradi (2011, pp.27-37; pp.63-71). In two similar studies, Pishghadam and Pouradi examined different student groups, Iranian MA students and PhD students, to explore their attitudes towards the roles of both university students and professors in ideal and current situations. Metaphors produced by MA and PhD students revealed that they projected different expectation regarding the professors and students. Results

of both studies showed that behaviorism dominates the current teaching environment in Iranian schools where teachers are inclined to keep the power distance from students and students tend to be their followers.

In another study by Ian McGrath (2006), both teachers and learners were required to create metaphors about the English coursebooks in use. Approximately seventy-five secondary school teachers and several hundred secondary school pupils in HongKong completed the stem "A coursebook is …" with metaphors. After categorizing the metaphors and comparing teachers' images for coursebooks with learners' images for coursebooks, the study found that learner responses covered a much greater range, with metaphors subdivided into more categories. Whereas teacher images for coursebooks were predominately positive, with only one negative category, learner disaffection spanned four categories. The researcher proposed that the differences between teacher and leaner are worth greater attention as the stronger negative feelings of learners towards coursebooks may stem from the inherent unsuitability of the materials or be a product of the way in which they are handled by teachers. Therefore, it is important for teachers as well as material developers to research the feelings towards coursebooks by coursebook users, esp., learners for the purpose of making any possible adaptation in either the coursebooks or classroom practices.

2. THE STUDY

The coursebook under study (*Communicative English for Chinese Learners,* CECL for short) is developed for the integrative English course of two academic years. It is mainly used by English majors at universities in China. CECL covers a wide range of content, ranging from daily talk on describing common objects and people, food and drink, house and home, weather and climate, entertainment and sports to more in-depth topics like education and medicine, economics and trade, social problems and customs as well as politics and history. While introducing western culture, CECL also incorporates native Chinese culture so that students can make comparison of the two cultures for more desirable learning.

The coursebook consists of four volumes, each of which has ten units. Each unit, without a focal text, is composed of some forty to fifty pages of exercises, tasks and other kinds of communicative activities. At the back of each volume are scores of pages of worksheets rather than the appendix offering either vocabulary list or keys to exercises. These worksheets provide students with information necessary for various tasks and communicative activities in all units of the book. Usually two sets of material are arranged on two separate pages for a pair of students, each set containing different kinds of information. (There are, of course, more sets of material prepared if the task involves more students.) The

information is often complementary, and partners must fit their respective parts of the "jigsaw" into a composite whole. Such arrangement of worksheets serves the purpose of creating information gap and unpredictability that characterize real communication situations. The design of the coursebook aims at helping learners to develop not only the four skills but more importantly the abilities that underlie, cut across and interlink the four skills, i.e., the abilities to interpret, negotiate and express meanings in discourse (Li, 2000, p.57).

CECL was first published in 1985 and then the second edition in 2000. As the pioneer in CLT in China, CECL has survived for nearly three decades. In a country where a text-based, teacher-centered learning pattern has dominated for so long, this set of task-based communicative materials has made a considerable break with accepted EFL practice in China. Therefore, the present study attempts to probe into, through categorizing and analyzing metaphors students produced on CECL, how Chinese learners of English view and understand communicative coursebook in classroom.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

Participants in this study are 103 English majors at Guang Dong University of Foreign Studies. They were either in the first or second year of their study at university when they have completed learning CECL for either one or two academic years. Thus they are supposed to be able to make relatively comprehensive judgment on the coursebook in use.

3.2 Instrumentation

In order to elicit the metaphors, a simple questionnaire was designed by the researcher and distributed to the participants. Participants were required to complete the stem "*While learning the course, the communicative coursebook in use i.e., CECL, is like _____* " by making metaphors which represented their attitudes to the materials. Students could provide an explanation to the given metaphors if they felt the metaphors might not be wholly transparent. To ensure fair and objective response to the questionnaires, the researcher assured all the participants that the questionnaires were anonymous and would by no means influence their final assessment since the investigation served for only academic purpose.

3.3 Data Collection and Categorization

After the data was collected, all the metaphors, along with their explanations, were first listed. Then they were analyzed and divided into several categories according to different entailments and semantic relationships. Finally, for each category of metaphors frequency and percentages were calculated. Below are some brief notes on how the data was classified:

a. As Ellis (2008, p.8) stated, metaphor analysis, as a qualitative research methodology, can help researchers to uncover and analyze the hidden beliefs and discuss the ideas behind them. Therefore, the first step in this study was to organize the metaphors into three major categories alongside with their entailments as well as different attitudes indicated. Metaphors reflecting positive attitudes of students towards the coursebook were grouped as "positive metaphors" and those revealing students' disapproval of the material made up the category of "negative metaphors". Furthermore, metaphors suggesting learners' mixed feelings of and contradictory opinions on the textbook were then classified into the third group of "blend metaphors". For example: The coursebook is like *an encyclopedia, covering all kinds of knowledge, rich in resources*. This metaphor, indicating the student's approval of the textbook, was considered to be one of the "positive metaphors". In another example, The cousebook is like *a timeworn boat that lacks modern technology*, the student criticized that the material was too old-fashioned to meet their needs. This metaphor then fell into the category of "negative metaphors". In pro/con statements like "*The coursebook is like a vintage car. It has been outdated in spite of its unique value*", the student expressed both his appreciation of its merits and his dislike of its demerits. Such metaphors were regarded as "blend metaphors".

b. Within these three major categories, metaphors appearing to be semantically related were further scrutinized and then summarized into several subgroups. Metaphors within each of these subgroups were supposed to be similar to each other in terms of their semantic theme. These subtypes were also labeled differently. For instance:

> The coursebook is like an encyclopedia—with rich and comprehensive information
> The coursebook is like an encyclopedia involving all kinds of world knowledge ranging from food, dresses, houses to transportation etc.
> The coursebook is like an ocean—rich in content, including knowledge in various fields.
> The coursebook is like a treasure box containing all we need in daily life.
> The coursebook is like the Internet which boasts everything we need.

These metaphors turned out to be quite similar to each other in semantic theme and reflected similar perceptions from the students: the textbook is inclusive. Therefore, all such metaphors were categorized into a subdivision, labeled as "all-inclusive content". The rest of other subtypes of metaphors were subdivided in similar ways.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Researchers claim that metaphors are crucial in human communication and are effective in understanding and revealing feelings as well as conveying opinions. Metaphors can contribute to exchanging ideas, expressing

attitudes and reflecting values (Wu, 2012, pp.196-198). Therefore, the researcher could not only investigate how students perceive the coursebooks but also identify its strengths and weaknesses by scrutinizing and categorizing various metaphors students produced.

In this study, metaphors created by students were classified into three major categories, i.e., positive metaphors, negative metaphors and blend metaphors. These three major categories of metaphors shed light on the general attitudes of students towards this set of communicative English coursebooks. The frequency and percentages of each major category of metaphors were calculated and listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1
The Frequency and Percentages of Positive, Negative and Blend Metaphors on Coursebooks

The three major categories of metaphors	Frequency	Percentages
Positive metaphors	68	66%
Negative metaphors	9	9%
Blend metaphors	26	25%
Total	103	100%

As Table 1 show, students produced 68 positive metaphors, which accounted for 66% of the total whereas negative metaphors took up only 9%. As positive metaphors tend to reflect that students approve of the coursebook and negative metaphors suggest students' disapproval of the coursebook, the data indicates that the majority of the students under study appreciated and valued the communicative coursebook they were using in classrooms. However, blend metaphors occupied 25% of the total, which means that one quarter of the students were rather contradictory in their feelings towards the coursebook. In other words, the communicative coursebook managed to satisfy the students in some aspects but failed to achieve the same desirable effects in many other fields.

In addition to the overall attitudes of students towards the coursebook unveiled by the three major categories of metaphors, the subdivisions of metaphors within this broad categorization also helped to identify more specific features of the material. Table 2 lists the subdivisions of metaphors classified according to their similarity in respects of semantic theme. Again, frequency and percentages were calculated and recorded in the table as well.

Table 2
The Frequency and Percentages of the Subdivisions of Metaphors

Categories of metaphors	Subdivisions of metaphors	Metaphors	F.	P. (%)
Positive metaphors	All-inclusive content	Encyclopedia (n = 19) Sea (n = 1) Ocean (n = 2) Treasure box (n = 4) Dressing case (n = 1) Handbag (n = 1) Packed suitcase (n = 1) Kit (n = 2) Laptop computer (n = 2) The Internet (n = 1) Searching engine (n = 2) Treasure map (n = 1) Mixed stew (n = 2)	39	38%
	Authentic, culture-bound, communicative tasks and content	History of English culture (n = 1) Native speaker (n =1) Tourist handbook (n = 1) Dictionary for communicative English (n = 1) Handbook for daily communication (n = 1) Bible for communication in English (n = 1) Kaleidoscope (n = 1) Guidebook for life in English-speaking countries (n = 1) Guidebook for real life (n = 1) Guide for life in English-speaking countries (n = 1) Videos of life in English-speaking countries (n = 1) Movie in English (n = 1) Sitcom (n = 1) Playscript (n = 1) Television program on daily life (n = 1)	15	15%

Continued

Categories of metaphors	Subdivisions of metaphors	Metaphors	F.	P. (%)
	Stimulating impact	Assorted chocolates (n = 1) Delicious dish (n = 1) Feast (n = 1) Big meal at grand hotel (n = 1) Meals in college canteen (n = 1) Hot buffet (n = 2) Premium tea (n = 1) Water (n = 1)	9	9%
	Clear and systematic structure	Well-woven net (n =1) the Eight Diagrams (n = 1) Library (n = 1) File holder (n = 2)	5	5%
Negative metaphors	Confusing and outdated	Messy junk store (n = 3) Old history textbook (n = 3) Worn clothes (n = 1) Timeworn boat (n = 1) Closed and isolated castle (n = 1)	9	9%
Blend metaphors	Comprehensive but confusing and practical but outdated	Thick dictionary (n = 1) Dense forest (n = 6) Starry night (n = 1) (Balm) Jade of all trades but master of none (n = 1) Crammed drawers (n = 1) Uncanny chess (n = 1) Complex map for a metropolitan (n = 1) Crossword puzzle (n = 1) Music website (n = 1) Shopping mall (n = 1) Amusement park (n = 1) Unprocessed precious stone (n = 1) Invigorator (n = 1) Water droplets (n = 1) Old manual (n = 2) Old soybean milk maker (n = 1) Vintage car (n = 2) Old vase still in use (n = 1) Relic (n = 1)	26	25%
Total			103	100%

Note: F. = frequency; P. = percentages

As illustrated in Table 2, the three major categories of metaphors were further classified into six subdivisions. As positive metaphors were disintegrated into more ranges of subgroups, these subdivisions of metaphors managed to reflect more accurately the advantages of the coursebooks from the perspectives of the students. For instance, one of the most notable features reflected in the table is the subdivision of "all-inclusive content", which accounted for 38% of the total. That is to say, more than one third of the students agreed that the material showed rich variety in content. With these metaphors, students clearly stated that the textbook was all-embracing and they appreciated the great diversity in its subject matter. Metaphors exemplified in the following statements can well reveal such attitudes:

The coursebook is like an encyclopedia which consists of world knowledge in all fields.
The coursebook is like a suitcase, fully packed with everything we need.
The coursebook is like a kit which contains all the useful tools we need.
The coursebook is like a laptop computer. It has all kinds of useful information. We can get whatever we need in the computer.

…

Among the thirteen different metaphors in this subdivision, the most salient one is the metaphor of "encyclopedia", taking up 19% of the total. As one student stated, the textbook resembles "an encyclopedia that covers everything, ranging from transportation, house and home, and descriptions of people. etc. It is indeed very complete." Encyclopedia, in Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary, means "a book or sets of books giving information about all branches of knowledge, or about one particular subject…". And the Latin origin of "encyclopedia" refers to "complete instruction" and "complete knowledge".

It is this resemblance of diverse subjects that associates encyclopedia with the textbook, which forms one of the most distinct traits of the material and thus wins affection and appreciation from the students.

According to Tomlinson (2011, p.7), a prerequisite for language acquisition is that the learners are exposed to a rich, meaningful and comprehensive input of language in use. In order for the learners to maximize their exposure to the language in use, they need to be both affectively and cognitively engaged in the language experience. Since the cognitive styles and affective attitudes of learners can be highly individual, materials will only be able to crater for the interests of learners if the content is diverse enough. Obviously, the rich and various content encompassed in the material plays an active role in motivating and stimulating students by satisfying their affective and cognitive needs as young adults.

Within the broad categorization of positive metaphors, another distinct feature is the subdivision of ".authentic, culture-bound, communicative tasks and content". About 15% of the total students considered the textbook to be effective in preparing them for authentic use of English in real-life situations. In Metaphors like "kaleidoscope", "bible for communication in English", "guidebook or guide for life in English-speaking countries", "videos of life in English-speaking countries", students claimed that the textbook had offered them "lots of very native English expressions for daily use" and "numerous words and phrases for everyday life and daily communication in English". Such learning from CECL, they thought, was "useful", "practical" and also "interesting". More typical metaphors revealing such opinion are:

a playscript that introduces various background situationsfor different dialogues
a movie in English showing all kinds of conversations in real-life situations
a sitcom where there are different people and scenes. It is a replica of real life.

These metaphors indicated that the textbook had succeeded in creating authentic contexts where students could learn communicative English quite effectively. In fact, this set of communicative English coursebooks has endeavored to design activities ranging along a continuum from pure communicative activities to pure linguistic activities, with all degrees of semi or quasi-communicative activities in between. Some activities focus more on the use and the content; others more on the form. However, for the course as a whole the focus is unequivocally on the use and the content. Therefore, there is always the subordination of the linguistic to the communicative throughout the four volumes of the material (Li, 2000, p.33). Furthermore, communicative competence involves the ability to react mentally and verbally in communicative situations and only authentic situations will most effectively trigger this mental reaction, which is the root of verbal reaction. Since this

set of communicative coursebooks aims at developing communicative competence, acquiring communicative competence then has to rely on a great deal of communication practice in real situations (Li, 1984, p.5).

In addition to plentiful exposure to authentic use of English for communicative purpose, the coursebook also opens a window for the learners to English culture. Students claimed that the material had introduced "different customs, folk culture as well as routine habits in foreign countries, esp. in Britain." in metaphors such as "history of English culture" and "tourist handbook". In a textbook evaluation study by Alemi and Sadehvandi (2012, p.64), the incorporation of European culture in many skill-related activities in the textbook was reported to cause frustration and bafflement among Iranian adolescent English learners. On the contrary, Chinese students in this study appeared to be more appealed by learning English together with its culture. One of the possible reasons for this might be the intercultural character of the textbook in aspects of both content and task designs. Rather than being only limited to introduction of foreign culture, CECL also endeavors to combine and contrast both native Chinese culture and foreign English culture. Such combination and comparison is likely to raise students' awareness of the characteristics of the two cultures and bring about better understanding and more effective learning.

Among the fifteen SLA principles put forward by Tomlinson for developing materials (2011, p.8), the first and foremost one is that materials should achieve impact and that is when learners' curiosity, interest and attention are attracted. Similar notable effect on learners could be interpreted from the third subdivision of metaphors in Table 2. Metaphors of "assorted chocolates", "delicious dish", "feast", "big meal" and "hot buffet" revealed that students were attracted by both the novelty of content and the diversity of exercises in the material. They relish learning CECL in similar way as they enjoy the wonderful taste and assorted flavor that characterize chocolate assortment, feast and hot buffet etc In another two metaphors of "premium tea" and "water" which diverge a little from other metaphors, students emphasized the "fantastic and unforgettable flavor" created by tea or water once mixed with other ingredients, which also suggests a similar kind of desirable effect of the textbook on learners.

In some previous studies, students were reported to criticize the monotony of every session in a reading coursebook without any diversity (Zohrabi, 2011, p.219) and teachers complained about the repetitive format of textbooks (Tomlinson, 2013, p.247). Contrast to the resentment of those participants, fulfillment and contentment were detected among students in this study. This is understandable regarding different themes presented in CECL. These themes in terms of content allow a new design for almost every thematic unit. Every unit varies in their designs not only for the sake of creating variety and

boosting motivation but also out of the intrinsic need of real communication, which never follows a fixed pattern but changes its form and mode according to requirements of the particular theme (Li, 2000, p.55). As a result, the more varied the choice of topics, texts, and activities, naturally, the more likely is the achievement of impact with more learners (Tomlinson, 2011, p.9).

The last subgroup of positive metaphors is the subdivision of "clear and systematic structure". Data in Table 2 shows only five students agreed that the textbook was logical and well-organized. This makes sense when about half of negative metaphors and blend metaphors refer to the strong dislike of students towards the disparate organization of the material.

Although metaphors suggesting total negative connotation accounted for only 8% of the whole population under study, they were rather consistent in the attitudes and opinions illustrated. These negative attitudes are mainly twofold: The textbook is confusing in organization and outdated in content. Some students compared the textbook to "a messy junk store" in that "it is over crammed with all kinds of messy stuff." Other students, on the other hand, complained about the textbook for lagging behind modern times. Such resentment can be distinctly identified in metaphors like "old dusted history textbook" and "heaps of worn clothes" etc.

These two major deficiencies of the textbook are echoed and reinforced by findings from blend metaphors. As shown in Table 2, there were 26 students found to be contradictory about the coursebook. On the one hand, these students appreciated the textbook for being comprehensive and practically useful. On the other hand, they also devalued it for being outdated in content and being disorderly in organization. For instance, in several metaphors of "dense forest", students complained that "The coursebook includes too much content. It is hard to follow the focus and find the way out even though it is rich in resources." Other metaphors like "starry night", "thick dictionary", "crammed drawers" and "crossword puzzle" etc indicated similar connotation: students were confused by the density and complexity of the textbook and it was beyond their reach in spite of the complete content. Students claimed that they are not used to the design of the textbook and making clear of the complicated arrangement in the material was time-consuming and painstaking. In similar vein, metaphors of "old manual", "vintage car" and "old soybean milk maker" reflected learners' frustration over the material for it was outdated. Since the textbook was complied nearly thirty years ago, no matter how valuable it seems to be, it fails to cater for the needs of modern learners in 21st century, which makes another consensus among blend metaphors.

In fact, what blend metaphors have revealed about learners' attitudes towards the communicative coursebook actually spans both its advantages denoted by positive metaphors and its disadvantages generalized from negative metaphors. Therefore, on the basis of the categorization and analysis of all the metaphors, a comparatively general conclusion can be drawn on the material: It is an all-inclusive coursebook. It is communicative, authentic, culture-bound and thus stimulating. However, it is also regarded as outdated by some students and its task-based design disparate from the usual text-oriented pattern of textbooks also causes disorientation and confusion in the process of learning as well.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

CECL, as the pioneer of communicative approach in China, has managed to survive for nearly thirty years regardless how much controversy it has ever faced. When the EFL context is replete with all kinds of communicative materials, it is even more necessary to evaluate this set of well-established communicative materials from the perspective of its users in the new era. Metaphor analysis was exploited in the study to probe into the attitudes of students towards the material. Results showed that the majority of students appreciated the communicative coursebooks for it was comprehensive and truly communicative whereas others complained about the textbook for being outdated and confusing. While the strengths of the coursebook could be sustained and taken reference from for other communicative materials, its deficiencies exposed should have sounded a loud warning bell for not only classroom instructors but also material developers. Due to the exploratory nature of the investigation, the study was unable to identify the causes for such findings. However, the resentment from learners might be very likely to result from improper processing on the part of teachers in classroom or students' failure to accommodate to the style of task-based materials that are rare in local EFL context.

No matter how theoretically advanced it might be, a coursebook needs to be understood and appreciated by its users (teachers and learners) in order to achieve desirable impact in practice. Since no material can be ideal, evaluation from the perspective of learners can help identify the strengths and deficiencies of the coursebook in use. Furthermore, teachers are also crucial in that they are the ones who actually realize the syllabus, methodology and materials in classrooms (Masuhara, 2011, 238). They are the ones who adapt the materials to suit the learners and bridge the gap between materials and learners by maximizing strengths and minimizing weaknesses of the materials. Therefore, both long-term and systematic evaluation of the coursebook from the perspective of learners and proper training of material evaluation on the part of classroom teachers are needed for the purpose of facilitating the desirable use of coursebooks and promoting effective language teaching and learning.

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