Strategies of Learning English Vocabulary from Pop Songs

——A Study among College Students in China

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The phrase "the global village" has become red-hot during the last two decades. To the whole world, it means that people in different countries communicate with each other conveniently through modern internet technology. To China, it has another meaning, which is that English education should be highlighted since language is a barrier to connect China with the western world. In this stream of learning English, college students are required to take the College English Test (CET) to prove their English ability. According to the syllabus of CET-4, the basic level of the college students in China, test takers should master about 4,700 English words. However every year, many college students, which are suffering from limited vocabulary, fail in the test.

College teachers spare no effort to expand students' vocabulary. They adopt various methods to help students memorize vocabulary. However another problem arises, namely that students are reluctant to learn vocabulary since it is too boring to memorize. Realizing this problem, some teachers with particular perspectives pay significant attention to students' interests. They find students are interested in English movies, so they try to stimulate their students' motivation for learning vocabulary with the help of these. Nowadays, many colleges open English courses related to movies, such as English Movie, Audiovisual English and so on. In a university in Ningbo, the Audiovisual English Course was opened in 2005. This course has been warmly welcomed by students for years.

Not only English movies, but also English songs are popular among college students. It is commonplace that a college student walks on the campus with earphones and suddenly yells out a string of English words. Though preferred by college students, English songs seem unpopular among teachers since one seldom sees a course named English Song. However the influence of English songs on English learning is profound among college students since some of them intend to learn English words from pop songs in their leisure time. Without teachers' instruction, the students have to learn on their own. They may develop learning

strategies themselves in order to learn vocabulary better in a relatively efficient way.

1.1 Aim

This study aims to investigate the strategies used by college students in China when learning vocabulary from pop songs. Some positive strategies and negative strategies of learning word pronunciation, spelling, meaning and usage from English pop songs will be identified in order to provide a guide for college students to gain a better understanding of learning English words from pop songs.

1.2 Subjects

There are all together 100 college students of different majors selected from a university in Ningbo as the subjects of the study. They get in contact with the researcher via the Internet. All of them are pre-assured with a question whether they have experiences of learning English words consciously from pop songs so that they have certain ideas about the topic of this study. Among them, there are 25 freshmen, 25 sophomores, 25 juniors and 25 graduate students. Since most senior students from non-English major do not have to study English, they are not included in the material of the study. The university of all the participants is a middle level one in China, and ranks about 150 of approximately 500 universities, which is the official statistics provided by the Chinese Academy of Management Science. Hence, the level of the students in this university can represent the general level of Chinese college students.

1.3 Method

First of all, a questionnaire concerning the situation in which college students learn English words from pop songs was handed out to all the subjects (Appendix I). There are altogether 23 questions in this questionnaire. The first five questions intend to give information about how students learn vocabulary from English songs. Item 6 to item 10 are questions related to

word pronunciation. Item 11 and 12 are to investigate the strategies of learning word spelling. From item 13 to item 21, there are nine questions concerning the strategies of learning word meaning from English songs. Finally, there are two questions about word usage. The questionnaire is translated into the Chinese language so that the students who take part in the investigation may access the information directly and without language obstacles. The questionnaire is designed as an online spreadsheet so that the students can answer the questionnaire easily by clicking the mouse and it is also convenient for the researcher to collect the information. Based on the data from the questionnaire, 10 of the subjects were randomly selected to take part in an 11-question online interview to provide supplementary information for the questionnaire and their understanding of positive strategies and negative strategies of learning English words from pop songs (Appendix II).

After collecting the data from the questionnaire and the interview, the researcher organized the analysis and discussion part on the basis of previous studies of vocabulary learning. Four different aspects of learning vocabulary from pop songs, namely learning pronunciation, learning spelling, learning meaning and learning usage, were analyzed. In each aspect, the current learning situation was first discussed and then followed by a discussion of whether these learning strategies are positive or negative. After that, a section with an overall discussion of all the aspects was presented as a summary of the analysis and discussion part.

2. Theoretical background

The theoretical background of this study is divided into six sections. In the first section, general information about words are given as the basis of the following four sections, which are four aspects of English words, namely the pronunciation, the spelling, the meaning and the usage. Then using dictionaries, one of the most recommended learning strategies for the above four aspects, is presented. In the last section, some previous studies of learning English from pop songs are introduced.

2.1 English words

Words are one of the most important elements in the English language. Every day, people utter a large amount of words to communicate their emotions, opinions, requests, feelings, and many other aspects (Katamba 2005: 3). Words are indispensable in people's life. Spender states the importance of words as follows.

> In order to live in the world, we must name it. Names are essential for the construction of reality for without a name it is difficult to accept the existence of an object, an event, a feeling. Naming is the means whereby we attempt to order and structure the chaos and flux of existence which would otherwise be an undifferentiated mass. By assigning names we impose a pattern and a meaning which allows us to manipulate the world (Spender 1980: 163).

As Spender says above, people may have difficulty in communicating with each other without the word to name the object. For instance, if the word *frog* does not exist, it is exhausting to describe that tailless amphibian with other words and it is time-consuming to draw a frog. What is a word then? Katamba defines word as "the smallest meaningful linguistic unit that can be used on its own. It is a form that cannot be divided into any smaller units that can be used independently to convey meaning" (2005: 11). *The Oxford Online Dictionary* (2010) offers the definition as "a single distinct meaningful element of speech or writing, used to form sentences with others". Though there are various definitions of word, they have the same key point. That is a word is a meaningful element in spoken and written form which can be used to construct sentences. Katamba uses the word *frog* as an example to reveal some basic elements of a word.

1 its shape, i.e. its PHONOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION /fr   / which enables to pronounce it, and its ORTHOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION *frog*, if we are literate and know how to spell it;

2 its grammatical properties, e.g. it is a noun and it is countable – so you can have one *frog* and two *frogs*;

3 its meaning.

Figure 1: Three basic information of *frog*. (Katamba 2005: 4)

This figure indicates that there are four elements in a word: its pronunciation, its spelling, its usage and its meaning. Jackson (1988: 8) also states that there are four kinds of word: orthographic words, phonological words, word-form or grammatical variants, and lexemes. Therefore, learning words can be categorized into four subsections. They are learning pronunciation, learning spelling, learning usage and learning meaning. These are dealt in turn in the following sections.

2.2 Word pronunciation

Pronunciation is an important element of a word. Nation argues that knowing a word includes being able to pronounce a word correctly with correct stress (2001: 28). Roach (2000: 134, 138, 144) adds that the mechanical speech approach, such as assimilation and linking which makes it possible to connect single words together in pronunciation, is significant as well. Hence stress, assimilation and linking are three main aspects in this section.

Stress can be described as the relative strength of a syllable, the unit of organization for a sequence of speech sound (Roach 2000: 2). It is easy to find that the first syllable of words such as *teacher*, *arbitrary* and *system* are stressed while the second syllable of words such as *apart*, *relate* and *tomato* are stressed. Roach states that the stressed syllable is recognized as stressed since it is more prominent than other syllables (2000: 94). He also identifies four factors of prominence: stressed syllables are louder than other syllables; stressed syllables are longer than other syllables; stressed syllables have noticeable and different pitch compared to other syllables; stressed syllables may contain a vowel that is different in quality from neighboring vowels (Roach 2000: 94). Hence, both the speakers and the addressees can make sure a syllable is stressed or not according to the above four factors.

The pronunciation of different words may affect each other in many ways. Assimilation occurs when phonemes, units at the phonological level which contrast with each other (Rogers 2000: 45), are pronounced differently with the influence of other phonemes in a neighboring word (Roach 2000: 1, 138). There are two kinds of assimilation.
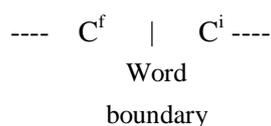
$$---- \quad C^f \quad | \quad C^i ----$$

<div align="center">Word</div>

<div align="center">boundary</div>

<div align="center">Figure 2: Two kinds of assimilation. (Roach 2000: 139)</div>

If C^f changes and becomes like C^i, the assimilation is called regressive, while if C^i changes and becomes like C^f, the assimilation is called progressive (Roach 2000: 139). The two words together *in the* are pronounced as [inn], which is an example of progressive assimilation. *Meat pie* can be pronounced as [mi:p pai], which shows the use of regressive assimilation (Roach 2000: 139).

Though all words have separate pronunciation as separate units next to each other in the sequence, sometimes people link words together in special ways in the real world (Roach 2000: 144). Though linking is quite common in spoken English, it may cause problems. One of the most obvious problems is that linking may cause misunderstandings. The pronunciation of *heal eyes* may be affected by linking and be pronounced as [hi:lais], which shares the same pronunciation as *he lies*. Similarly, *might rain* may pronounced as [maitrein], which is the pronunciation of *my train* (Roach 2000: 145). Although linking may cause some problems in understanding, it is broadly used in daily life without many problems since *heal eyes* and *he lies* do not usually occur together in a same context.

Jackson adopts an example sentence of which the pronunciation is influenced by both assimilation and linking. If just provided with the pronunciation of a sentence, [his diw nid pain milk], it is quite difficult to guess the meaning of the sentence *he said he wanted a pint of milk* (Jackson 1988: 2). Though linking and assimilation may cause problems of misunderstanding, the context of using them can avoid these problems.

2.3 Word spelling

The Oxford Online Dictionary defines spelling as the way in which a word is presented in the

written form (2010). Spelling words correctly is a precondition for communicating in the written form. It is believed that the spelling ability is most strongly influenced by the way the phonological structure is represented by learners (Nation 2001: 45). Nation employs a study by Bradley and Huxford in1994 to illustrate his point.

> Studies of native speakers of English have shown strong effects on spelling from training in categorizing words according to their sounds and matching these to letters and combinations of letters. The training in one of the studies involved 40 ten minute training sessions but the positive effects persisted for years. Early training helps create a system that improves later learning and storage […] One accesses stored representations of whole words and the other constructs written forms from sound-spelling correspondences (Nation 2001: 45).

Hence, in order to learn the spelling of a word, people may both memorize the spelling of the word and follow a sound-spelling relation which could guide people to spell correctly according to the pronunciation.

2.4 Word meaning

Meaning is the most important element of a word. The meaning of a word covers a large area in this study. In section 2.4.1, the information about word meaning, namely the lexeme, and the fuzzy meaning of words are introduced. Section 2.4.2 provides information about metaphor and metonymy. Section 2.4.3 concerns the semantic relations of words in the mental lexicon.

2.4.1 Lexeme and fuzzy meaning

A lexeme, known as the 'item of meaning', is the base form of word which appears as the headword of dictionary entry (Jackson 1988: 9). Therefore, a lexeme is the basic word form in the English language. For instance, *run* is the lexeme of *runs*, *ran*, *running*, and so on.

How do words gain their meanings? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to look at

the relationship between the word meaning and the entity it refers to. Katamba (2005: 115) and many other people believe that the form of a word is associated with the referent in the real world indirectly via the concept in people's minds (see Figure 3).

Concept
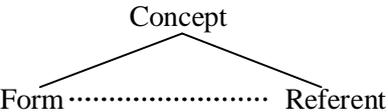
Form ························ Referent

Figure 3: Relationship between form and referent. (Katamba 2005: 115)

Similarly, from Aitchison's point of view, people first translate the entity in the real world into concepts, and then relate the concepts to the word meaning, which is overlapping with the concepts to a large extent (Aitchison 2003: 43). From Aitchison's explanation, it is obvious that word meaning is the intermediate element which connect the real world with words.

However, according to Aitchison's study, the meaning of words is fuzzy. She has two reasons to prove her idea: the 'fuzzy edge phenomenon' and the 'family resemblance syndrome' (2003: 48). Sometimes, the boundary of different entities in the real word is not quite clear, therefore the meaning of the related different words also do not have a clear definition. The following figure is a representative example.
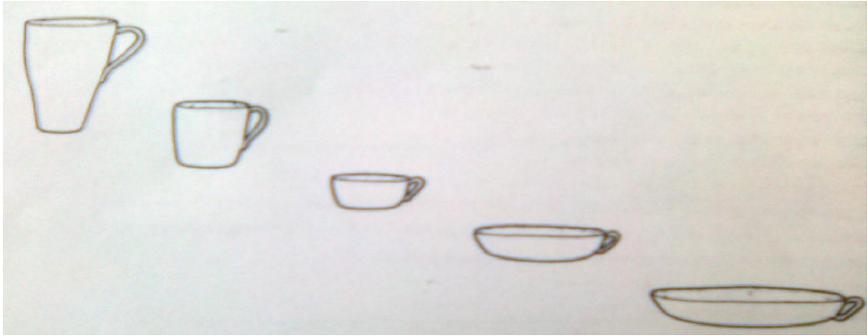

Figure 4: Fuzzy boundary of a vase, a cup and a bowl. (Aitchison 2003: 48)

Just as figure 4 shows, it is difficult to draw a boundary between a vase, a cup and a bowl since their definitions are fuzzy. Hence, fuzzy edge is the essential property of word meaning (Aitchison 2003: 49). As to the 'family resemblance syndrome', Aitchison claims that the

word *game* refers to different games with different features, which deprive the word of owning a fixed meaning (2003: 49-50).

As to this study, fuzzy meaning has another sense. Since the word meaning is fuzzy, it is not easy to learn the word by just learning the counterpart in the source language. More learning strategies such as learning the context of a word and learning the meaning with dictionary examples may be involved in the learning process.

2.4.2 Meaning change

Sometimes, a word may have more than one meaning, which is known as polysemy. Taylor (2003: 103) proclaims that polysemy is "the association of two or more related senses with a single linguistic form". Taking *pig* as an example, it can refer to the animal in the sentence *the pig is in the pig farm* but can also refer to a person who eat gluttonously as in *Tony is a pig in the party*.

Polysemy sometimes causes problems of ambiguity. Taylor adopts *pig* as an example to explain it. He says the sentence *there is a pig in the house* may be ambiguous since the *pig* can be understood either as an animal or as a person (Taylor 2003: 104). Therefore, providing more context of a sentence is a good way of solving the ambiguity problem.

The *pig* example above raises an implication. Why can *pig* be used to describe a person with a bad eating habit? The similarity lies in that pigs always eat gluttonously. This way of using an animal to refer to a person is a metaphor. Metaphor occurs when one conceptual domain, a general field to which a category belongs in a certain situation (Radden & Dirven 2007: 11), is understood by another conceptual domain (Kövecses 2002: 4). The conceptual domain which is abstract and being understood by another is the target domain, while the other domain which is used to understand the former one is the source domain (Kövecses 2002: 4). In the *pig* example, the pig belongs to the source domain, and the person it refers to belongs to the target domain. Hence, the conceptual metaphor is named A PERSON IS AN ANIMAL. There is

a set of systematic correspondences between the source and the target domain in the sense that constituent conceptual elements of the source correspond to constituent conceptual elements of the target and "technically, these conceptual correspondences are often referred to as mappings" (Kövecses 2002: 6). Therefore the relationship between the source domain and the target domain is systematic. Kövecses lists a set of correspondences between the source domain JOURNEY and the target domain LOVE in the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY.

Source: JOURNEY   *Target*: LOVE
the travelers   ⇒ the lovers
the vehicle   ⇒ the love relationship itself
the journey   ⇒ events in the relationship
the distance covered   ⇒ the progress made
the obstacles encountered ⇒ the difficulties experienced
decisions about which way to go ⇒ choices about what to do
the destination of the journey ⇒ the goal(s) of the relationship

Figure 5: Mappings in LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. (Kövecses 2002: 7)

In this figure, seven elements of the source correspond with seven elements of the target. The traveler, the vehicle, the distance, the obstacle, decisions about which way to go and the destination constitute JOURNEY, the source domain. Similarly, the lover, the love relationship, the events in the relationship, the progress, the difficulties, the choices about what to do, and the goals of the relationship constitute LOVE, the target domain. This example clearly shows that in order to become the source of LOVE, JOURNEY should have many correspondences which can be mapped on LOVE.

GOD
COSMOS/UNIVERSE
SOCIETY
HUMANS
ANIMALS
PLANT
COMPLEX OBJECTS
NATURAL PHYSICAL THINGS
Figure 6: The Great Chain of Being structure. (Kövecses   2002: 126, 128)

In the metaphor system, there are two categories of metaphor. One is the Great Chain of

Being metaphor, which indicates the relationship between different things in the world, and the other is the Event Structure metaphor, which emphasizes conceptualizations of events (Kövecses 2002: 134). Kövecses introduces the extended Great Chain of Being as figure 6 above.

These eight levels, which rank from the highest level to the lowest, constitute the Great Chain of Being. When one thing from one level is used to understand another thing at another level, metaphor occurs (Kövecses 2002: 126). Obviously, in the *pig* example mentioned previously, the pig belongs to the ANIMAL level and the person belongs to the HUMAN level. Therefore using the pig to understand the person can be named as A PERSON IS AN ANIMAL. It seems that the Great Chain of Being metaphor is the metaphor system that is mostly concerned with the nouns or pronouns since all the eight levels are nouns. There are some examples to support this statement.

You are pumping me up.	BODY IS THE CONTAINER
You look juicy.	HUMAN IS FOOD
He is a *key* player.	COMPLEX OBJECT IS HUMAN
Tell me what you did with the money, *you swine*.	HUMAN IS ANIMAL

Figure 7: Examples of the Great Chain of Being metaphors with noun or pronoun as metaphorical expression. (Kövecses 2002)

However it is not always true.

His mother was *catty* and loud.	adjective	HUMAN IS ANIMAL
Since then the two have *built* a solid relationship.	verb	SOCIETY IT BUILDING
As a child I had a real *hot* temper.	adjective	ANGER IS HEAT
China's economy is *galloping* ahead.	verb	SOCIETY IS CAR

Figure 8: Examples of the Great Chain of Being metaphors with adjective or verb as metaphorical expression. (Kövecses 2002)

The metaphorical expressions *catty* and *hot* are adjectives while *built* and *gallop* are verbs. These examples reveal that the Great Chain of Being metaphor does not only involve nouns and pronouns but also verbs and adjectives.

```
                    ┌─ STATES ARE LOCATIONS
                    │   CHANGES ARE MOTIONS
                    │   EXTERNAL EVENTS ARE MOVING OBJECTS
                    │   CAUSES ARE FORCES
        EVENTS  ────┤   ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION
                    │   PROGRESS IS TRAVEL SCHEDULE
                    │   PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS
                    │   MEANS ARE PATHS
                    │   ACTIVITIES ARE JOURNEYS
                    └─ DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS
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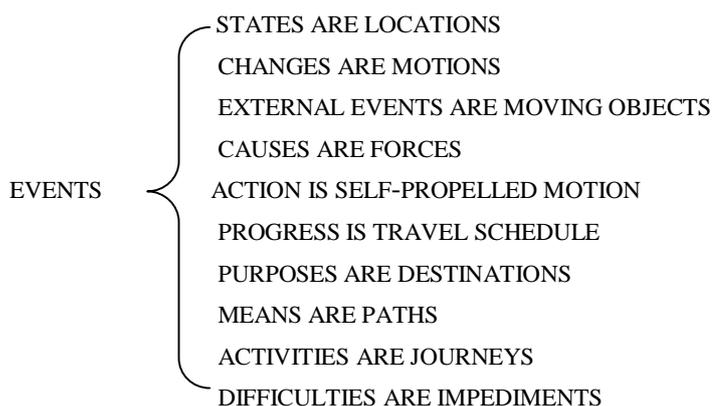
Figure 9: The Event Structure metaphor (Kövecses 2002: 135).

The other metaphor in the metaphor system is the Event Structure metaphor, which uses many different events as the target domain (Kövecses 2002: 135). As can be seen in figure 9, there are various submetaphors in the Event Structure metaphor. Hence the same question appears. Does the Event Structure metaphor only reflected in verbs? There are several examples below which are conducive to answering the question in that their metaphorical expressions are not verbs.

They are *in* love.   STATES ARE LOCATIONS
The *flow* of history…   EXTERNAL EVENTS ARE LARGE, MOVING OBJECTS
We're *behind schedule* on this project.   EXPECTED PROGRESS IS A TRAVEL SCHEDULE

Figure 10: Examples of the Event Structure metaphor with various parts of speech as metaphorical expression. (Kövecses 2002: 135)

In the first example, the metaphorical expression *in* is a preposition. In the second example *flow* is a noun. *Behind schedule* in the third example is an adverb. As a result, the Event Structure metaphor, similar to the Great Chain of Being metaphor, is not reflected in one part of speech but covers a various extent of words.

Metaphors also can be classified as conventional metaphors and novel metaphors according to the conventionality (Kövecses 2002: 29). Conventional metaphors, which contain metaphorical terms that are used in everyday conventional language, have been unnoticed or undiscussed by ordinary people (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 453). This means that most of

ordinary people are familiar with the conventional metaphors and make use of them in daily talking. The figure below shows some examples of conventional metaphors.

ARGUMENT IS WAR: I *defended* my argument.
LOVE IS A JOURNEY: We'll just have to *go our separate ways*.
IDEAS ARE FOOD: I can't *digest* all these facts.
Figure 11: Examples of conventional metaphor. (Kövecses 2002: 30)

People usually talk about the argument, the love and the ideas in terms of the above conventional metaphors naturally and effortlessly. Therefore these conventionalized metaphors may not be considered as metaphors when ordinary people use them.

Novel metaphors are metaphors that are not used in the normal conceptual system, but in "a new way of thinking about something" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 472). Kövecses gives an example of novel metaphor.

LIFE IS A JOURNEY
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
Figure 12: An example of novel metaphor. (Kövecses 2002: 31)

As Kövecses (2002: 31) explains, metaphors of this kind are not likely found in a dictionary or cannot be heard in everyday talking of ordinary people. This might indicates that in order to fully understand novel metaphors, people have to learn the context in which the metaphor occurs.

There is also a special kind of metaphor, metonymy, which is a cognitive process that enables one conceptual entity to provide mental access to another within the same domain (Kövecses 2002: 145). Generally speaking, there are three kinds of metonymy, namely whole for part, part for whole, and part for part (Kövecses 2002: 151-153).

There was cat all over the road.	OBJECT FOR MATERIAL CONSTITUTING THAT OBJECT
	whole for part
They stood at the altar.	SUCCESSIVE SUBEVENTS FOR COMPLEX EVENT
	part for whole
We are reading Shakespeare.	AUTHOR FOR HIS WORK part for part

Figure 13: Examples of three kinds of metonymy. (Kövecses 2002: 152, 155)

The three examples above show the relationship between a whole and a part, which are the three ways in which metonymy works.

So far, two kinds of meaning change, metaphor and metonymy have been introduced. It is known to all that modern English words differ from traditional English words as a result of meaning change. In many modern pop songs, the meaning of a word may not be the literal meaning but an extended meaning. The study of metaphor and metonymy may be helpful in understanding how these words gain a new meaning.

2.4.3 Semantic relations

A single word makes little sense in our daily life. Only when various words are put together do they have the function of communication. Network theories indicate that "the mental lexicon is a sort of connected graph, with lexical items at the nodes with paths from each item to the other." (Aitchison 2003: 84). There are various kinds of words that are related according to their meanings.

Coordination is one of the relations with two subcategories. One is where words gather together at the same level of detail, such as *salt* and *pepper*; *butterfly* and *moth*. The other is a pair of words which constitute a group, such as *left* and *right* (Aitchison 2003: 86). Hence, words related by coordination are parallel in meaning.

Collocation is found between two words which occur together with a stimulus in connected speech (Aitchison 2003: 86). It is also defined as "the combination of words that have a certain mutual expectancy" (Jackson 1988: 96). This means that two words such as *strong*

wind, *dark blue,* and *salt water* are likely to be found together in a sentence. Both coordination and collocation are believed to be strong and permanent links (Aitchison 2003: 99).

Hyponymy is a third relation which can simply be portrayed as a kind of inclusion (Cruse 2000: 150). Therefore, it is convenient to find out the hyponymy with the help of the structure *A is a kind of B*. For example, in order to make sure if *peach* and *fruit* are hyponymy, we can put them into the structure. It is true that peach is a kind of fruit. Hence it is certain that *peach* is a hyponym of *fruit*, and *fruit* is a superordinate of *peach*.

Synonymy occurs when a word has more or less the same meaning as another word, such as *starve* and *hunger* (Aitchison 2003: 86). Though words that are linked with synonymy have a similar meaning, they are sometimes not interchangeable, which can be seen in the following examples.

> More frigging football! Bunch of tarts going round a field *chasing* a ball!
> We need to take the initiative in *pursuing* a strategy for employment and growth.
> (Aitchison 2003: 95)

Though *chase* and *pursue* are synonyms, they cannot be changed in these two sentences since the thing one is chasing is a physical object and the thing one is pursuing is a concrete object. Hyponymy and synonymy are short term and weaker links compared with coordination and collocation (Aitchison 2003: 99).

Semantic relations are able to relate various words together according to their meanings. Maybe it is positive to learn a new word together with its related words in order to get its meaning precisely.

2.5 Word usage

As to using words in sentences, there are two kinds of words. Harley calls them function

words and content words. Content words "carry the meanings that are summarized in dictionary entries" and function words "restrict and organize those meanings, providing the structure that let us communicate better than Tarzan" (Harley 2006: 186). Jackson names them lexical words and grammatical words. Lexical words are the ones that are essential to sentence interpretation, while grammatical words are short and not essential to the basic interpretation of the sentence (Jackson 1988: 15). It seems that in a sentence, there must be some lexical words to carry the meaning and conduct the information, as well as some grammatical words that organize the sentence in a proper way.

Nouns, verbs and adjectives are typical lexical words. It is important to know how to use them to form sentences. Verbs are subclassified as transitive verbs, known as 'vt' in dictionaries, which occur with an object, and intransitive verbs, known as 'vi' in dictionaries, which occur without an object (Jackson 1988: 145). *Buy*, *catch*, *invent*, and *like* are typical transitive verbs, while *work*, *listen*, *look*, and *come* are typical intransitive verbs. However, that is not the whole picture. There is another type in which a transitive verb is used without an object (Jackson 1988: 145). *Read* is a transitive verb as in *Tom reads a book*. But it also can be used without an object as in *they are reading*. Nouns are classified as countable nouns and mass nouns. Countable nouns have a singular form and a plural form and always combine with quantifiers like *many*, while mass nouns have only the singular form with quantifiers like *a lot of* and *some* (Jackson 1988: 146). *Table*, *boy*, *classroom*, and *school* are typical countable nouns, while *baggage*, *homework*, *furniture* and *equipment* are typical mass nouns. There are also exceptions. Harley cites an example about *coffee*. *Coffee* is a mass noun since it can be combined with the determiner *much*, but it can also be used in certain contexts as a countable noun as in *I bought two coffees this morning* (Harley 2006: 213). Adjectives can be classified as attributive adjectives which occur before a noun and predicative adjectives which occur after a verb such as *be* (Jackson 1988: 147). Most adjectives are both attributive and predicative like *big*, but some of them belong to only one like *mere*, *ill*, and *asleep* (Jackson 1988: 147). From the research above, it is clear that many nouns, verbs and adjectives have certain subclasses, but there are always some exceptions which can be referred to the unusual usage of words.

The unusual usage does not occur only to the lexemes, but also to their inflected forms. Inflection is also an important aspect of using words. The irregularly inflection of words does not conform to the majority pattern (Jackson 1988: 148). The irregular inflected adjective has an unusual comparative and superlative degree, such as *bad*, *worse*, *worst*; the irregularly inflected noun has an uncommon plural form, such as *foot*, *feet*; the irregularly inflected verb has different past tense and past participle forms with a certain pattern such as *take*, *took*, *taken* (Jackson 1988: 148, 149). Needless to say, it is not easy to learn the usage of irregularly inflected words since they do not follow the general pattern of inflection.

Since the unusual usage of words is unavoidable in English pop songs and difficult to learn, it is of great significance to adopt a positive strategy to learn it.

2.6 Using dictionaries

The previous sections introduce different aspects of words, and in this section, a strategy of learning words is presented. Among various strategies of learning vocabulary, using dictionaries is strongly recommended by Nation as a helpful learning strategy of vocabulary learning (Nation 2001: 283). Using dictionaries may fulfill many different requirements.

Comprehension (decoding)
· Look up unknown words met while listening, reading or translating.
· Confirm the meanings of partly known words.
· Confirm guesses from context.
Production (encoding)
· Look up unknown words needed to speak, write, or translate.
· Look up the spelling, pronunciation, meaning, grammar, constraints on use, collocations, inflections and derived forms of partly known words needed to speak, write, or translate.
· Confirm the spelling etc of known words.
· Check that a word exists.
· Find a different word to use instead of a known one.
Learning
· Choose unknown words to learn.
· Enrich knowledge of partly known words, including etymology.

Figure 14: Purposes for dictionary use. (Nation 2001: 281, 282)

The figure above reveals that dictionaries provide people with a large amount of information on many aspects of the spelling, the pronunciation, the meaning and the usage in comprehension, production and learning words.

Take the verb *match* as an example. In the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the verb *match* is provided with 11 kinds of different meanings such as 'look good together', 'look the same', 'seem the same' and so on. Under each meaning there is a sentence to specify the meaning in both English and Chinese and examples are provided to illustrate the meaning in use. Intransitive and transitive uses are also marked behind the meaning and some useful clauses such as *well-matched*, and *evenly matched* are introduced. The pronunciation in both American and British English are given directly behind the headword and it also says that this word is one of the 2,000 most frequently used words both in the oral form and in the written form (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 2004: 1209). Therefore, dictionaries provide users with a large quantity of information in many aspects.

Reason for searching for the word	% of total look-ups	% success of the search
to check on spelling	24.4%	92.8%
to confirm the meaning	18.3%	87.1%
to see if the word exists	12.8%	77.0%
to find a synonym to use instead of the known word	10.6%	63.9%
to find out about the grammar of the word	10.5%	90.2%
to check on the constraints or register of the word	9.3%	92.1%
to find collocations	8.2%	78.6%
to find a correctly inflected form	5.9%	100.0%

Figure 15: Reasons for and degree of success in looking up words in a dictionary.
(Nation 2001: 283)

When it comes to how dictionary users use the information, Nation (2001: 283) cites the research done by Harvey and Yuill (1997) to give people a clear view about why people use dictionaries and whether the dictionaries fulfill their goals (see Figure 15). In figure 15 above, *to check on spelling* directly shows people's requirement on the word spelling, which accounts for 24.4%; *to confirm the meaning*, *to find a synonymy to use instead of the known word*, and *to find collocations* are related to the word meaning which receives 37.1% of the choices; *to find out about the grammar of the word*, *to check on the constraints or register of the word* and *to find a correctly inflected form* concern the word usage which account for 25.7%. Hence, 24.4% of the reasons of looking up words in a dictionary are related to the word spelling; 37.1% of the reasons concern the word meaning, and 25.7% are about the word usage. The items related to the word usage and the word spelling are relatively high in success rate of the research in the right side column in Figure 13 and account for 90.2%, 92.1%, 100% and 92.8%. However the ones related to the word meaning are considered to be low in success rate with 87.1%, 63.9% and 78.6%, respectively. All in all, the purposes of using dictionaries relate to the word spelling, the word meaning and the word usage, but the users are satisfied with the information of the word spelling and the word usage provided in dictionaries, while they are comparatively not satisfied with the information concerning the word meaning.

Dictionaries can help users to understand and produce text, as well as learn vocabulary (Nation 2001: 283). Nation refers to the study of Luppescu and Day in 1993 about the effect of using bilingual dictionaries on vocabulary learning through reading. The students who use dictionaries gain higher scores on a vocabulary test right after reading than the students who do not use dictionaries (Nation 2001: 283). Similarly, an experiment done by Knight in 1994 reports that the learners who use dictionaries learn more words in immediate and delayed tests compared with the learners who do not use dictionaries (Nation 2001: 284). As a result, using dictionaries can help in learning vocabulary. However, using dictionaries has a drawback. In the study of Luppescu and Day (1993) above, there is another finding which shows that the students who use dictionaries spend twice as much time as the students who do not use dictionaries in reading the passage (Nation 2001: 283). Hence, using dictionaries may take users' time.

There are generally three kinds of dictionaries: monolingual, bilingual and bilingualised dictionaries. The bilingual dictionary involves two languages in that the head word and the examples are in one language and the meaning is in another language (Nation 2001: 288). Nation believes that there are two major advantages of bilingual dictionaries, namely "they provide meanings in a very accessible way, and they can be bi-directional English-first language and first language-English (2001: 290). This means that people of non-English speaking countries may gain a better understanding with the help of their first language in bilingual dictionaries and they could also learn the English word from the first language or the first language word from its counterpart in English. Bilingual dictionaries are criticized by some scholars for their encouragement of meaning translation (Nation 2001: 290). Nation disagrees with the criticism and states his point of view that translation is a common way of meaning communication rather than a bad way (2001: 290). Hence, people need to use translation to communicate as well as explaining the meaning in a foreign language with simple words. Most of the advanced English dictionaries in China are bilingual dictionaries, but they do not only adopt Chinese to explain the meaning of an English entry, but also an English sentence which interprets the meaning in a concise way. Therefore, dictionary users in China may have the options to either adopt the Chinese explanation or the English explanation or both.

2.7 Pop songs and language acquisition

Pop songs or pop music is the commercial record music which is often oriented towards young people and usually consists of relatively short and simple love songs. There is a feature of pop songs, which can be inferred from the name itself, namely that it is popular. Lynch states that music is prevailing in different media such as TV, movie, nightly news and in different occasions such as when people do excise, are at work, play, and worship (Lynch 2005). Because of their popularity, it is beneficial to involve pop songs in language teaching and learning.

The popularity of pop songs ensures that they have the function of motivating students to

learn language. Lightbown and Spada point out two factors of motivation, namely learner's need to communicate and learner's attitude towards the second language community (Lightbown & Spada 2006: 63). That is to say, on the one hand, learners' need to use the language on various occasions in society in order to fulfill their ambitions may affect their motivation to learn the language; on the other hand, their attitude towards the people in the second language community may motivate them to communicate with them in the second language. Though teaching and learning English through pop songs do not motivate students in China to communicate with people of the English community (the majority of English teachers in China are Chinese), it may motivate students' need to use English to fulfill their ambitions. Domoney and Harris argue that the involvement of more time and more attention in the English classroom pop song activity can motivate students since the activity uses their knowledge, their music, and their language (1993: 235). Cheung proclaims that "learning is a goal-oriented activity" (2001: 57). It is believed that pop songs make the teaching and learning activity meaningful and useful and, as a result, students may welcome the involvement of pop songs in English teaching and learning.

Another advantage of using pop songs in language teaching and learning is the involvement of cultural knowledge. Cheung (2001: 56) indicates that nowadays young people are compeletely exposed to popular culture. Youngsters are also easily influenced by the pop culture. Nowadays, Chinese college students are willing to accept western culture. They listen to Grammy songs, watch Hollywood movies and TV series such as Desperate Housewives, play World of Warcraft, and eat KFC and pizza (Li & Yang 2009: 114). English songs "are a rich mine of information about human relations, ethics, customs, history, humor, and regional and cultural differences" (Lems 2001). Therefore, English songs contain much information about the English speaking countries which benefits English language acquisition.

Though few studies have a particular focus on learning vocabulary from pop songs, the effects of pop songs on vocabulary learning are still mentioned in some studies. Lems (2001) states that song lyrics should be focused on since they have common short words, as well as repetition of words and structures which helps learners understand the meaning of words. The

repetition of the same words and structures is a spontaneous enhancement of memorizing the meaning, the pronunciation and the usage of these words and structures. Li and Yang give two examples of learning words and structures from pop songs. The word *seal* is a word required to be learnt in the College English. *Sealed with a Kiss* is a pop song where the phrase *sealed with a kiss* is repeated many times which resonates among the young students and of course the meaning and the usage of *seal* may also be instilled into their minds (Li & Yang 2009: 114). Another example concerns fixed collocations. In one of the CET-4 test, there is a fill-in-blank question, 'I am going to purchase this course, _____'. The answer should be *no matter what sacrifice I am going to make* or *no matter how much I would sacrifice*. There is a pop song by Boyzone named *No Matter What* in which the fixed collocation *no matter what* is repeated dozens of times. Li and Yang (2009: 114) believe that the students who are familiar with this song might get the answer to the item in the CET-4 test spontaneously. Moreover, pop song lyrics are rich in metaphorical use which enables students to learn the metaphorical meaning of words. Zhong (2006: 116) proclaims that the *blind* in Billy Joel's song *Honesty* does not mean 'enable to see' since the song tells that *if you look for truthfulness, you might just as well be blind*. Then the metaphorical meaning of *blind*, namely 'being confused' might be learnt by learners. Furthermore, English songs contain some informal words and shortened forms of words and phrases such as *wanna*, *shan't*, *ain't* and *sayin'*, which provide learners with many informal usages of English words or phrases (Zhong 2006: 116). The use of informal words in English pop songs is helpful for college students to learn the language which they cannot learn from college textbooks.

Lynch cautions that people should be careful to use pop songs as learning and teaching materials. On the one hand, the singers may have some accent or mispronunciation in the song. On the other, pop songs are notoriously loose in grammar and structure (Lynch 2005). Hence, learning English from pop songs may have certain disadvantages unless teachers or learners select the suitable songs.

There are three major findings in previous studies of pop songs and language acquisition. Firstly, most of the studies related to pop songs and language acquisition are reported from

the teacher's perspective. This means that most of them are concerned with how teachers should teach students using pop songs rather than how learners should learn from pop songs. Secondly, most of the studies are not empirically based in that they engage in idle theorizing without any real statistics or teaching and learning experience of pop songs. Finally, most of the studies discuss the benefit of involving English pop songs in the general language teaching rather than focusing on a specific aspect of language teaching or learning.

This study adopts the learning perspective with the authentic statistics collected from students and focuses on the effect of pop songs on vocabulary learning, which make this study different from many other studies.

3. Analysis and discussion

According to the four aspects of learning vocabulary, namely the pronunciation, the spelling, the meaning and the usage, the analysis and discussion section is divided into five subsections. The first subsection consists of general information about learning vocabulary from pop songs. The following four subsections deal with the four aspects mentioned above. In each subsection, the strategies of learning vocabulary from pop songs are revealed, and then the students' opinions about these strategies are presented and analyzed with the theories and the previous studies which uncover whether these strategies are positive or negative. All the graphs in this section are based on the results of the items in the questionnaire.

3.1 General information about learning vocabulary from English songs

Learning vocabulary from English songs may cover many aspects of vocabulary learning such as learning the pronunciation, the spelling, the meaning and the usage. Item 1 is designed to investigate which aspects college students learn from English songs.

Graph 1: (Item 1 in the questionnaire) Which aspects of vocabulary do you learn from English songs? (multiple choices)
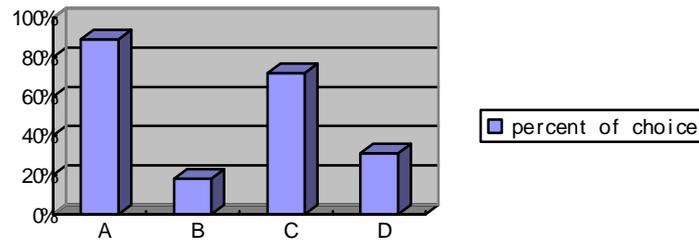

A. word pronunciation   B. word spelling   C. word meaning   D. word usage

In graph 1, option A receives most of the students' choices which indicates that most of them affirm that they learn the pronunciation of words from listening to English songs. There are also many students (72%) who believe that they learn the meaning of words when listening to English songs. Not so many of them, 31%, learn the usage of words, while only 18% of all the students confirm that they learn the spelling of words from English songs. The results are predictable since songs convey information via sound, which of course 'forces' the students to learn the pronunciation of the words. Furthermore, it is difficult to believe that a person who is listening to a song is not eager to know the meaning of it. Then the meanings of words are learnt. Only 31% of the students learn the usage of words which may indicate that they are interested in the information conveyed by English songs rather than how the words are used in English songs. This means that they do not take learning vocabulary from English songs as seriously as learning vocabulary in the classroom. The reason that only 18% of the students learn the spelling of words from English songs might have a connection to their material use, which is the theme of item 2, item 5 and item 3 in the following graphs.

Item 2 reveals one of the primary sources that the students use to learn vocabulary from English songs, namely the song lyrics. Song lyrics contain rich information of vocabulary on word spelling, word meaning and word usage aspects. In the graph below, 75% of the students pay attention to the song lyrics when listening to English songs, which means that they may have a chance to learn the meaning, the spelling and the usage of words in a relatively direct way from a visual material. The result that most of the students use song

lyrics in learning vocabulary is optimistic, since the lyrics can provide more information apart from the English songs themselves. Furthermore, there are 25% of the students who do not use song lyrics which might indicate that the students prefer using audio materials, English songs themselves, to using visual materials, song lyrics. In order to give a clear view of the preference of using audio or visual material, item 5 is presented to provide a comparison with item 2 in the questionnaire.

Graph 2: (Item 2 in the questionnaire) Do you read the song lyrics when listening to English songs?

A. Yes   B. No
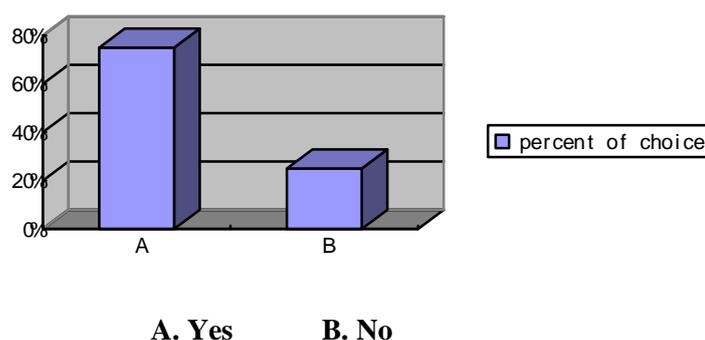
Graph 3: (Item 5 in the questionnaire) Do you usually sing the English songs you like?

A. Yes   B. No
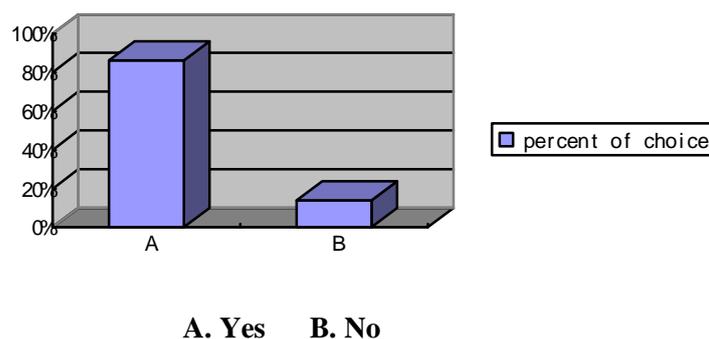
Most of the students (86%) sing the English songs they like, while others (14%) do not sing them out loud. Therefore, singing English songs is the choice which most of the students make after having been familiarized with them. However, in order to make a comparison between item 5 and item 2 and reveal the preferred kind of material, there is something that needs to be identified. Reading song lyrics is used as the input of learning vocabulary, while singing English songs is known as the output of learning vocabulary. Hence, it is necessary to involve an input, namely listening to English songs and an output, namely writing song lyrics.

As to the input, listening to English songs accounts for 100% since all of the students listen to English songs, while there are 75% of the students who read song lyrics. As to the output, singing English songs accounts for 86%, while writing song lyrics receives at most 75% of the choices, which is the same rate as the students who read song lyrics, since reading song lyrics is the precondition of writing song lyrics. Therefore, no matter whether it is from the input aspect or the output aspect, English songs themselves are preferred to song lyrics as the learning material in learning vocabulary from English songs. Coming back to item 5, it is a positive phenomenon that most of the students sing the songs out loud from which it can be inferred that they have the chance to orally use what they learn from English songs.

Apart from the primary material, there are also some secondary materials used in learning vocabulary from English songs. Dictionaries are one of the secondary materials in learning vocabulary from English songs.

Graph 4: (Item 3 in the questionnaire) What kind of dictionary do you usually use to learn words from English songs?
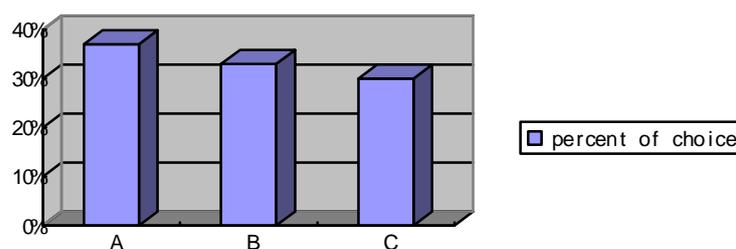
A. English Chinese dictionary (with examples)
B. English Chinese concise dictionary (without examples)
C. I do not use a dictionary

In item 3, the situation is somewhat intricate. There are 37% of the students who use an English Chinese dictionary with examples, while 33% of them, which is slightly less, use an English Chinese concise dictionary. There are also 30% of the students who do not use a dictionary at all. The result is promising that there are altogether 70% of the students who use dictionaries, which is one of the most recommended strategies according to Nation's study (2001: 283-284). However, the differences between an English Chinese dictionary and an

English Chinese concise dictionary may lead to a pessimistic result. Firstly it is helpful to take a look at these differences with an example, namely the adjective entry *singular*.

singular /'si jul / *adj* **1** a singular noun, verb, form etc is used when writing or speaking about one person or thing [noun, and verb] singular: *If the subject is singular, use a singular verb*. (Chinese translation of the example). **2** *formal* very great or very noticeable [formal]prominent, and extrodinary: *a woman of singular beauty* (Chinese translation of the example) *He showed a singular lack of tact in the way he handled the situation*. (Chinese translation of the example). **3** *literary* very unusual or strange [literary] exquisite, and bizarre : *a singular novel by an eccentric writer*. (Chinese translation of the example)

<div align="center">The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2004: 1855)</div>

singular /'si jul / *adj* **1** [grammar] (Chinese meaning of the word): a ~ verb ((Chinese translation of the example). **2** [formal] (a) prominent (b) exquisite; bizarre.

<div align="center">The Concise English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary (2004: 498)</div>

As is expected, the concise dictionary only provides the entry, the phonetic symbol, the part of speech, the Chinese meaning and a very brief example. However in the larger one, more information is provided, such as the English meaning, complete examples with both English and Chinese versions, and the usage in different contexts. This means that using the concise dictionary may have limited information input, while using the larger dictionary can provide rich information, especially in the usage of words. In item 3, 63% (option B + option C) of the students do not have or have limited input from dictionaries, while only 37% of them can get ample information from using dictionaries. The reason why the choice of the three options in item 3 seems to be evenly distributed is investigated further in the interviews (Question 1). Among the 10 interviewees, three users of English Chinese dictionaries believe that the best dictionary is the one with plenty of information. Another three interviewees who use English Chinese concise dictionaries think that the dictionary provides them with what they want to know. The remaining four interviewees do not use dictionaries and think that using dictionaries is not necessary that they can learn vocabulary from the Chinese version of the lyrics.

Graph 5: (Item 4 in the questionnaire) When you look up a word from English songs in a dictionary or electronic dictionary, which of the following do you do? (multiple choices)
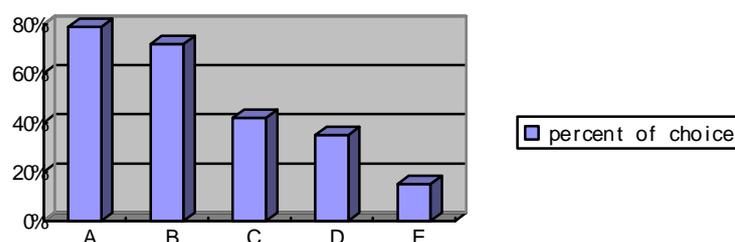

A. look for the meaning
B. look for the pronunciation
C. look for the spelling
D. look for the example given in the dictionary
E. I don't use dictionaries

Since it is clear which kind of material the students prefer, it is time to see how they use their materials to learn vocabulary. In item 4 above, most of the students (79% and 72%) use paper dictionaries or electronic dictionaries to consult the meaning and the pronunciation of words they want to learn from English songs. No more than almost half of the students (42%) look up the spelling from dictionaries and slightly fewer of them (35%) look up the usage or examples in dictionaries. There are also 15% of them who do not use dictionaries at all. The result of this item reveals the role of dictionaries in learning vocabulary from English songs and the learning goals of vocabulary among college students in China. A question concerning this item in the interviews (Question 2) was designed to ask the students to clarify the result. More than half of the interviewees prefer electronic dictionaries to paper dictionaries in order to get the pronunciation and the meaning of words efficiently. Some of the interviewees also give their understanding of the differences between the options they chose. On the one hand, they confirm that dictionaries, no matter whether they are paper or electronic, contain the information about the meaning and the pronunciation of words they need. On the other hand, they believe that they do not need to consult the spelling and the usage of words since the information can be received from the song lyrics.

3.2 Strategies of learning pronunciation

When it comes to the pronunciation of words, the most significant question is how to pronounce an unknown word in English songs which is the question in item 6.

Graph 6: (Item 6 in the questionnaire) When you come across a word you can't pronounce, what do you do?
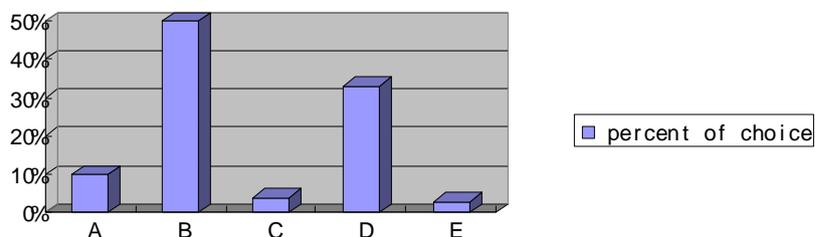

A. consult a paper dictionary
B. consult an electronic or online dictionary with sound
C. ask others
D. imitate the singer
E. other

Not that many students (10%) consult a paper dictionary to get the pronunciation of an unknown word in English songs, while half of them (50%) consult an electronic or online dictionary, which can provide a standard pronunciation with human voices. There are also some students (33%) who imitate the pronunciation of the singers of English songs. Consulting a paper dictionary to learn the pronunciation of words is an inefficient way, since paper dictionaries can only provide the phonetic symbol which is indirect to learning pronunciation and it is also useless when the users are not familiar with the phonetic symbols. This might be the reason why Harvey and Yuill do not include the option of pronunciation in their study of reasons for looking up the word, which is presented in the work of Nation (2001: 283). There are altogether 83% (50% + 33%) of the students who begin to learn the pronunciation of unknown words by the real pronunciation with human voices, which is considered to be an economical and direct way. However the 83% may be split into two groups. The ones who receive human voice pronunciation from electronic or online dictionaries are in the positive group since the pronunciation they receive is standard and with

few mistakes. The ones who receive pronunciation from the singers might have some problems since the singers' accent or mispronunciation, or some intended unusual stress and assimilation, which is compromised by singing techniques, is a negative model for students to learn from.

Item 6 is about knowing the pronunciation of words which refers to short term 'learning'. In item 7, the strategy of long term learning, which refers to learning the pronunciation of words, is investigated.

Graph 7: (Item 7 in the questionnaire) How do you learn the pronunciation of a new word in English songs?
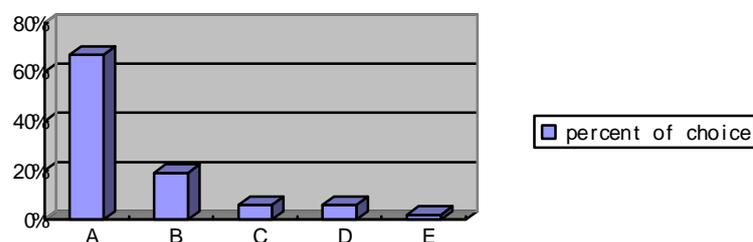

A. imitate the singer and sing the song many times
B. learn the pronunciation by its spelling
C. just memorize it
D. I don't care about the pronunciation
E. other

The majority of the students (67%) imitate the singer and do the repetition of listening to the songs again and again. Another 19% of the students learn the pronunciation by the spelling. There are 6% of them who adopt a traditional strategy of learning the pronunciation just by memorizing. The problem of the learning strategy in item 7 may be similar to but more severe than that in item 6. Similarly, the accent and the problems of mispronunciation by the singers may do harm to the students who imitate their pronunciation. Learning the pronunciation by its spelling seems to be a good way. Nation (2001: 45) recommends that using sound-spelling correspondence may help in both spelling and pronunciation. In the interview (Question 3), some of the students comment on this item of the questionnaire, saying that if they do not imitate the pronunciation or even the mispronunciation, they may feel uncomfortable. There

are also two interviewees who agree with Nation's point of view and learn the pronunciation according to the spelling.

Nation (2001: 28) argues that knowing the pronunciation of a word includes knowing its stress. Therefore learning the stress of a word is of great significance for learning pronunciation.

**Graph 8: (Item 8 in the questionnaire) How do you learn the stress of a word in English songs?**
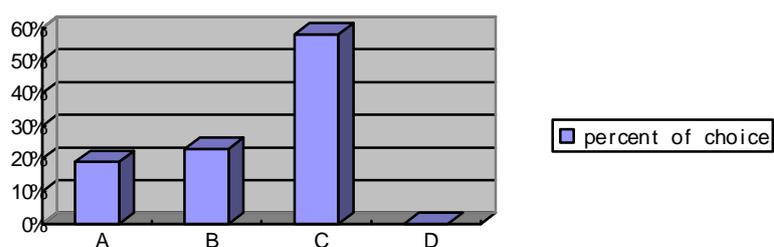
A. according to the common principles and experience based on syllable structure
B. I usually consult a dictionary
C. just imitate the singer
D. other

There are 19% of the students who learn the stress of a word in accordance with the principles and their experience based on syllable structure. Slightly more of them (23%) consult a dictionary and find the small inverted comma above the phonetic symbol. The majority, 58% of the students, imitate the singers, which has been mentioned in the above two items and the result is that it is not a good way of learning pronunciation. The interview question about this item (Question 4) receives unexpected responses. When the interviewees are asked about their understanding of the common principle of stress, none of them can give an answer. When they are asked to describe how the singers show them where the stress is, again no one can answer it. Actually, songs have their own tones and pitches. It is quite difficult to recognize a stressed syllable in a word from English songs. Stressed syllables can be prominent in songs by making them longer and louder (Roach 2000: 94). However this is not part of the students' knowledge since they cannot answer the related questions. In fact, learning the stress of a word has certain principles and many practical phonetic course books

introduce the principle to learners. Roach (2000: 96-100) uses five pages to introduce the placement of stress. Also, students can learn these principles from the English classes they have taken, so their experience of pronunciation based on syllable structure is helpful. Therefore, 19% of the students adopt this positive way of learning the stress of a word and most of the students lack the knowledge of stress.

Stress is part of the pronunciation within a word. There are two kinds of ways which concern the pronunciation of different words in a sentence, namely linking and assimilation.

Graph 9: (Item 9 in the questionnaire) The pronunciation of a new word that you want to learn is affected by linking and assimilation---how do you learn its pronunciation with respect to this?
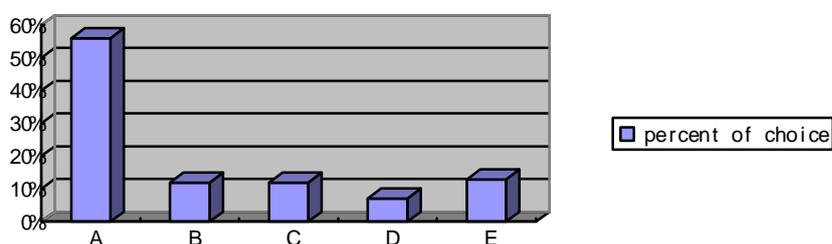

A. pronounce together with the words before or after this word with linking and assimilation
B. come to the written form of the word and pronounce it according to my experience without linking and assimilation
C. consult a dictionary
D. I don't care about the pronunciation
E. I am not aware of assimilation and linking

About half of the students (56%) pronounce neighboring words with linking and assimilation. 12% pronounce the words separately based on their experience of pronunciation. Another 12% look for help from a dictionary, while 13% are not aware of linking and assimilation. Though English song singers are criticized for having mispronunciation problems since they have to make compromise to singing techniques, their pronunciation are coherently, fluently and naturally connected, which conforms to the original purpose of using linking and assimilation. Therefore, those singers may be positive models with respect to this part. Option E can be understood as the students not being aware of linking and assimilation, so that they

just accept it when the singers use linking and assimilation. Hence, there are 69% of the students (option A + option E) who learn linking and assimilation from English songs. Those students (24%) who chose option B and option C learn the pronunciation of the new words separately and they learn the single pronunciation of the words. This item is from the angle of the input of pronunciation. Item 10 below enhances the reliability of this result from the output angle of pronunciation.

Graph 10: (Item 10 in the questionnaire) If your answer to item 5 is 'yes', and when you sing English songs, which of the following do you do?
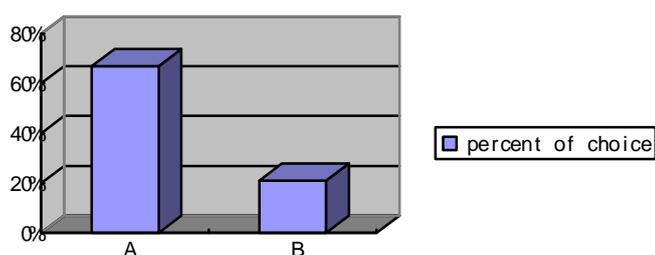
**A. sing like the singer with linking and assimilation of words**
B. pronounce word by word clearly

Item 10 investigates the output of using linking and assimilation. Since this item is not an obligatory one and has a precondition, the total amount of the statistic is 88% (It should be 86% since it is the rate of the students who chose option A in item 5; however the differences may caused by carelessness of some students). There are 67% of the students who sing the songs with linking and assimilation while 21% of them pronounce word by word clearly. Compared with the result of item 9, it is astonishing to find that the results of these two items are quite coincident. From the input angle in item 9, 69% accept linking and assimilation in English songs and 24% receive a separate input. From the output angle in item 10, 67% use linking and assimilation but 21% do not. As a result, those who receive the input with linking and assimilation keep linking and assimilation in the output; those who receive the input without linking and assimilation produce the output in the same way. To be more general, there are about two thirds of the students who learn linking and assimilation from English songs, while one third of the others learn the pronunciation without linking and assimilation.

3.3 Strategies of learning spelling

One of the interview questions (Question 5) which is not based on any particular items in the questionnaire asks "What is your understanding of why most of the students do not learn spelling from English songs". Most interviewees state that they do not need to learn the spelling since they do not always use a written form of English and even if they write something in English, they use Microsoft Word which can correct the misspelled words automatically. Though it is presented in the result of item 1 that learning the spelling of words from English songs is not popular, it is necessary to analyze learning word spelling as well. Item 11 is about how students learn the spelling of a word from English songs.

Graph 11: (Item 11 in the questionnaire) In what way do you learn the spelling of a word in English songs?
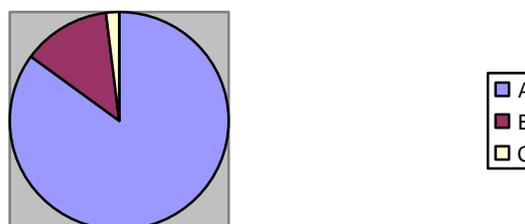

A. according to the pronunciation
B. memorize it from the lyrics
C. other

The majority of the students (85%) adopt sound-spelling correspondence to learn the spelling according to the pronunciation. Only 13% use a comparatively traditional way which is memorizing the spelling from song lyrics. It has been discussed previously that learning spelling with the help of sound-spelling correspondence is believed to be a good strategy of vocabulary learning (Nation 2001). Therefore this item shows that most of the students use a positive strategy in learning spelling.

When a word is inflected, the spelling of this word varies as well. Item 12 below aims at investigating how students learn the original form, namely the lexeme of an inflected word

which appears in English songs.

Graph 12: (Item 12 in the questionnaire) When you come across an inflected new word, what do you do in regard to spelling?
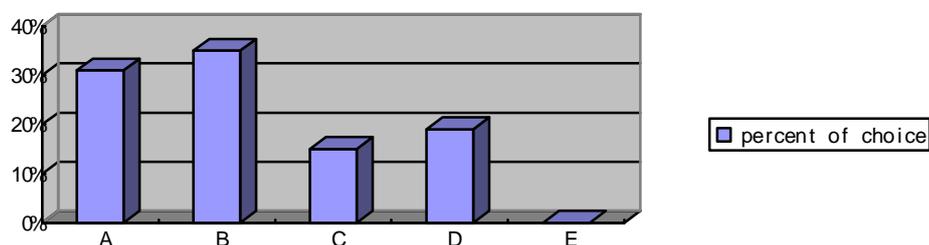
A. consult a dictionary or a electronic dictionary to make sure the spelling of its lexeme
B. guess the lexeme according to the principle of inflection
C. ignore it
**D. I've never experience it before**
E. other

There are 31% of the students who consult a paper dictionary or an electronic dictionary to find the inflected form of its lexeme. Slightly more (35%) guess according to the principles of inflection. There are also 34% (15% + 19%) of the students who do not pay attention to this consciously or deliberately, since no matter what kind of dictionary they use, the dictionary they use does not provide the word entry of the inflected word. Then in order to find the lexeme, students first have to guess the spelling of the lexeme according to the principle of inflection and then use dictionaries to confirm if their guess is right or not. Therefore, all the students who chose option A and option B (66%) guess the spelling of the lexeme according to the principle of inflection. The differences lie in that 31% of the students confirm their guess by consulting dictionaries, while 35% do not validate their guess. However, at least 35% of the students who guess according to the principles of inflection do better in learning process than those 34% who do not pay attention to the inflection.

3.4 Strategies of learning meaning

Learning meaning is the core aspect of learning vocabulary. In order to know how students

learn the meaning of words, we must first be familiar with the characteristic of the material they use. In item 13, the language of the song lyrics is investigated. In China, most of the English songs have two kinds of lyrics, which can be downloaded on the internet and be shown on the screen of the MP3 or MP4. One is the original version, which only uses the English language. Another kind is the English and Chinese lyrics, which means that each sentence is translated into Chinese and the Chinese version is inserted between the lines. There is also a kind of lyrics that contains only the Chinese version which is seldom used.

**Graph 13: (Item 13 in the questionnaire) In what language are the lyrics of your English songs?**
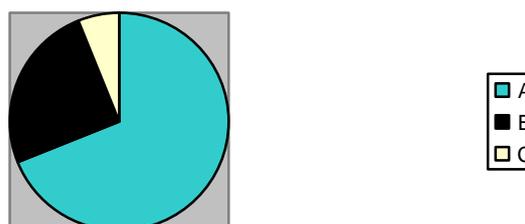
A. only in English
B. English and Chinese
C. only in Chinese

There are 69% of the students who use the original English version of the lyrics while 25% of them use the lyrics in both English and Chinese. From another perspective, 31% (25% + 6%) of the students may have a chance to receive the Chinese lyrics in listening to English songs. In the interview (Question 6), the interviewees are required to give the reason why they use their preferred version of lyrics. Seven of those who chose option A believe that if the song is sung in English, they should use the English lyrics or they may feel uncomfortable if there are Chinese characters in the lyrics. Three other interviewees prefer the English and Chinese version since they think it is better in order to gain the meaning of the song. However, most of the English and Chinese version lyrics do not have the Chinese translation word by word but in a Chinese way. Then from the perspective of learning the meaning of English vocabulary, it is useless to provide the Chinese translation. The lyrics with only English are believed to be a good material combined with some assistant materials such as paper dictionaries and electronic dictionaries. In item 14 below, the different materials of finding the meaning of a

new word are investigated.

Graph 14: (Item 14 in the questionnaire) What do you do when you come across a new word in English songs, in order to get its meaning?
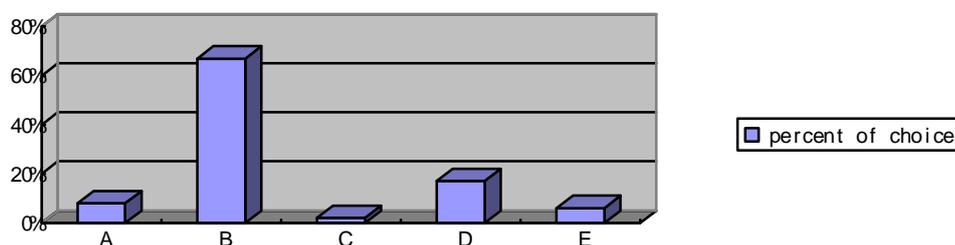
A. **consult a paper dictionary**
B. **consult an electronic dictionary**
C. **ask people**
D. **look up the Chinese version of the lyrics for the counterpart**
E. **other**

Not so many of the students (8%) consult paper dictionaries to get the meaning of a word. Contrarily, most of them (67%) prefer to use electronic dictionaries for the meaning. Another 17% of them look up the Chinese counterpart in the Chinese version, which indicates that they use the English and Chinese lyrics that have been referred to in the above item 13. Firstly, it has been mentioned in item 13 that sometimes there is no Chinese counterpart in the English and Chinese version lyrics. Hence, option D is not a good way to learn the meaning of a new word. Since in the analysis of item 3 in section 3.1, the differences between a common English dictionary and a concise English dictionary have been identified through an example of the adjective entry *singular*, it is convenient to use the same example to see the information provided in an electronic dictionary, named Hao Yitong, in which the data are based on the Oxford English Dictionary.

> **singular** /'si　jul / *adj* **1** [grammar] singular EX　a singular verb (Chinese translation of the example) **2** [formal] a. prominent b. exquisite, and bizarre **singularly** adv [formal] extraordinarily
> 　　　　　Hao Yitong (one of the most popular electronic dictionaries in China)

The information provided in the example word entry in the electronic dictionary is quite

similar to the one in the concise dictionary. The differences between the word meaning in the common paper dictionary and the electronic dictionary is that the common paper dictionary provides more meanings than the electronic one; the common paper one includes the context of using the meanings and the English explanation, which the electronic one does not have. Therefore, consulting a common paper dictionary is the best strategy among all the options in item 14 in order to get the meaning of a word. The result of a question (Question 7) related to this item in the interview also confirms this. Most of the interviewees admit that using a common paper dictionary is a better way than using an electronic dictionary. However, they think that it is time consuming and inconvenient to use a paper dictionary. Finally, they consult an electronic dictionary.

The students who chose option A and option B in item 14 are asked to answer item 15, which means that the total amount of the rates of item 15 should be 75%.

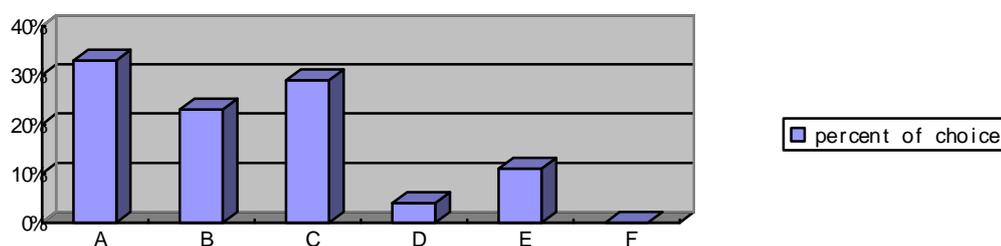**Graph 15: (Item 15 in the questionnaire) If the word you find has many meanings, what do you do?**
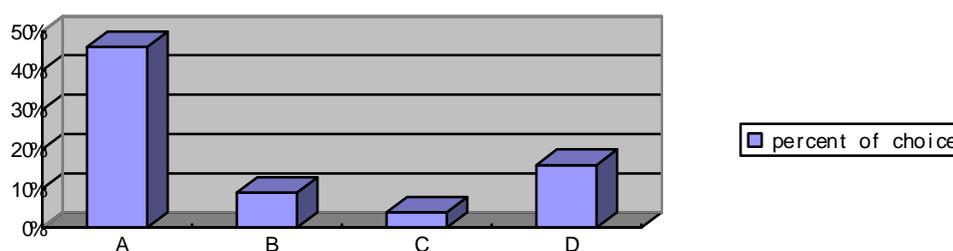
A. choose the one which seems reasonable according to the lyric context as the meaning and learn
B. learn all the meanings of the word according to the examples given in the dictionary
C. try to memorize all the meanings
D. other

Item 15 is about how to deal with the different meanings in one word entry in a dictionary. About half of the students (46%) choose the most reasonable meaning in the dictionary according to the context in the song lyrics. Not many students (9%) learn all the meanings including the one for the lyrics according to the examples provided in the dictionary. Few

students (4%) adopt the most traditional way to memorize the meanings by heart. It is unexpected that there are 16% of the students who chose option D but did not say anything further. Therefore an interview question (Question 8) was designed to reveal what the students think of their options, especially for option D. Fortunately, among the 10 interviewees, there are three who chose this option. One of them states that he usually puts all the meanings in the context of the lyrics and tries to understand them with different interpretations. Another two claim that they have not experienced the situation before. There are another six students who chose option A who believe that their choice is the best way. This item is related to the fuzzy meaning of a word. In section 2.4.1, figure 4, Aitchison (2003: 48) points out that it is not easy to say that the five things in the picture can be called cups, vases or bowls since there are differences in references. However it is reasonable to call them cups, vases or bowls unless they are provided with certain context. Therefore choosing a reasonable meaning of all according to the context is a good way preferred by both the students and recommended by scholars. Though option B seems to be also a good way, it lacks in pertinence and it is highly time-consuming.

Graph 16: (Item 17 in the questionnaire) When you find a word you have learnt before, but which does not seem to have the same meaning as the one you know, what do you do?


A. just accept its new meaning and learn it
B. try to find a similarity between the new meaning and the original meaning I learnt and learn it together with the original meaning
C. try to find a similarity between the new meaning and the original meaning I learnt and learn the whole sentence in the context with the new meaning
D. ignore the new meaning and stick to the meaning I know
E. I've never experience the situation before
F. other

Item 17 above refers to a word which does not have the meaning one has learnt. This can be

caused by two situations. The first one is the fuzzy meaning which has been discussed in item 15 above. The other is caused by meaning change, which most of the time is caused by metaphor and metonymy. The most preferred option is option A (33%), which indicates that the students just accept the new meaning and learn it. Another 23% of the students try to find a similarity between the two meanings and learn them together while slightly more (29%) also try to find a similarity of the two meanings but learn the new meaning in the context. Few (4%) ignore the new meaning while 11% have never experienced this. It is obvious that the most preferred option does not lead to a positive strategy since accepting the new meaning without referring to the original meaning is somewhat negative. The differences between option B and option C lie in that the former is to learn the two meanings together and the latter is to learn the new meaning according to the context. Since there are two situations in this item which are mentioned at the beginning, it is necessary to consider both of them. For the first situation, namely the fuzzy meaning of a word, it has been discussed in relation to item 15 in Aitchson's figure (2003: 48) that under different contexts a word may have different meanings. For the other situation, metaphor and metonymy need a context. The source domain of FIRE in a conceptual metaphor may have the target domain of ANGER when it comes to *you ignite my inflammation*. However in another context the source FIRE may have another target domain of PASSIONATE when it comes to *my love is flame*. Therefore, the context is significant to the use of fuzzy meaning and the use of metaphor and metonymy. As a result, finding a similarity between the new meaning and the original meaning and learning the new meaning in the context provided in the song lyrics is probably the best way of all the options in this item. Item 18 is also related to metaphor and metonymy.

Graph 17: (Item 18 in the questionnaire) When a word is used metaphorically or metonymically, what do you do?
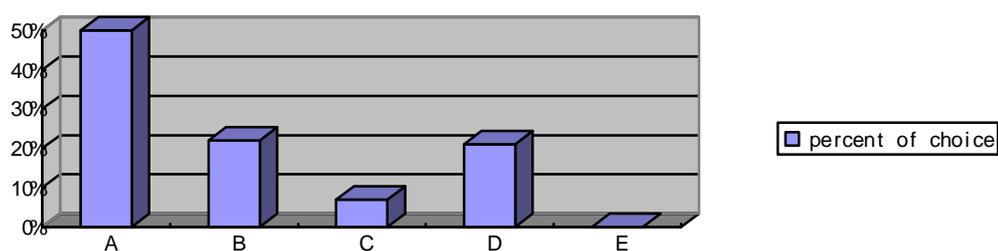
A. just learn the metaphor or the metonymy in this context

B. learn the conceptual metaphor or the conceptual metonymy so that I can use them in a broader way

C. I don't learn metaphor or metonymy

D. I am not aware of metaphor and metonymy

E. other

Since the students might be unfamiliar with the terminologies of metaphor and metonymy, two examples were given after the questions. Half of the students (50%) learn the metaphor or the metonymy, two ways of giving new meaning to words, in the context of the song lyrics, while 22% of the students also learn the conceptual metaphor or the conceptual metonymy, which contain various concrete metaphorical expressions that uncover the existence of the conceptual metaphor or metonymy (Kövecses 2002: 6), in order to use the concepts in other contexts. There are also 21% of the students over time who are not aware of metaphor and metonymy used in the song lyrics and 7% do not learn them at all. It is true that metaphor and metonymy have their particular contexts and in these contexts the metaphor or the metonymy can have the function of changing meanings over time. Therefore, it is not a problem to learn the metaphor or the metonymy in the context of the song lyrics. However, in order to get a deep understanding of these kinds of meaning change, it is better to be familiar with the conceptual metaphor or the conceptual metonymy. Kövecses (2002: 71) provides several metaphorical expressions of the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT such as *boil with anger*, *make one's blood boil*, *be stewing*, *be burned up* and so on. One metaphor belongs to a conceptual metaphor which contains many related metaphors. Though college students are not required to learn conceptual metaphors, which are not easy for them to learn, it is beneficial to learn the conceptual metaphor in order to know more related metaphors. A question in the interview (Question 9) which is related to this item asks the interviewees to describe their understanding of metaphor or metonymy and the strategy of learning metaphor or metonymy. Most of them confirmed that option B, learning the conceptual metaphor or conceptual metonymy, is the best strategy among all the options. Nevertheless, when asked about the understanding of metaphor, the answers show that most of the interviewees show their ignorance of conceptual metaphors. There are two kinds of metaphors, namely conventional metaphor, which is used in everyday conversation and novel metaphor, which is

unconventional and new to most ordinary people (Kövecses 2002: 30, 31). When provided with the conventional metaphor "they are *in* love", most of the students do not consider it as a metaphor since this metaphorical expression is quite conventional and is broadly used in their daily life. However, as for novel metaphor, the situation is different. Almost all of the interviewees' understanding of the novel metaphor is that novel metaphor and simile are in a pair of a trope that *she is a flower* is a metaphor and *she is like a flower* is a simile. They also believe that metaphor is using one object to refer to another object, and that the source and the target of a metaphor and the metaphorical expression must be nouns. Therefore, when provided with the example "His mother was *catty* and loud", of which the metaphorical expression *catty* is not a noun, they failed to recognize it as a metaphor though the conceptual metaphor of it should be HUMAN IS ANIMAL. Similarly, when they were given the example "he *moved quickly into the fast lane* of the society", which belongs to ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION in the Event Structure metaphor, they also refused to admit it as a metaphor. Based on the question in the interview, the students have little knowledge about conceptual metaphor, as well as novel metaphor.

Graph 18: (Item 16 in the questionnaire) Do you learn informal and non-standard words in English songs?
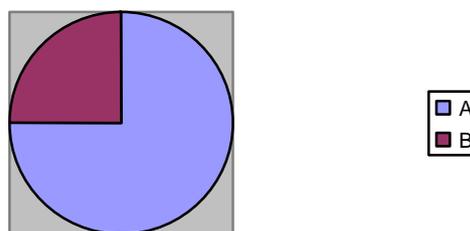
A. Yes   B. No

Item 16 concerns the meaning of the informal and non-standard words. The students are provided with examples of informal and non-standard words such as *wanna*, *sayin'*, and *shan't* so that they know exactly what informal and non-standard words are. Most of the students (75%) learn these informal words in English songs, while others (25%) do not. Lynch (2005) criticizes the loose structure and the informal use of words in pop songs.

However, in the interview question about this item (Question 10), all of the interviewees believe that it is helpful to learn informal and non-standard words since they can see them on websites or online forums and many of them did not know the meanings of these terms before they learnt them from English songs. It is true that there are many informal and non-standard words that appear in the students' daily life, especially on the internet. For example, *wanna* and *an't*, which means *want to* and *are not* respectively, are prevailing on the internet. Since they exist and are popular, it is not negative to learn these informal and non-standard words from English songs which they cannot learn from their formal education.

Item 20 and item 21 concern the mental lexicon and the semantic relations between words, while item 19 can be seen as a precondition for item 20.

Graph 19: (Item 19 in the questionnaire) Do you store the words you have learnt from English songs?
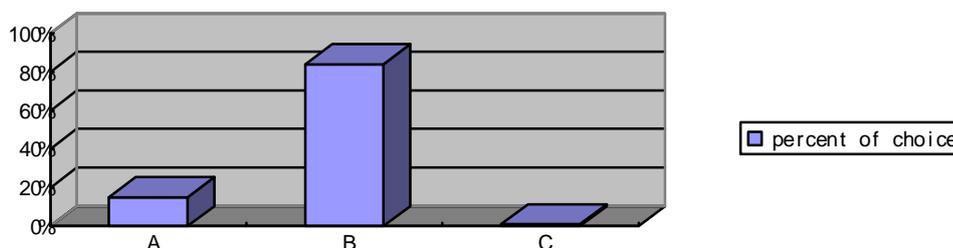
A. Yes. I record them in a file or a notebook
B. No. I do not store them and just learn and go over them when listening to the songs
C. other

When asked whether they store the words which they learn from English songs, there are only 15% of the students who confirm that they record these words in a notebook or a computer file, while most of them (84%) do not. Since the students who chose option A in this item were asked to answer item 20, the total amount of item 20 should be 15% (16% in reality).

Graph 20: (Item 20 in the questionnaire) How do you store the words learnt from English songs?
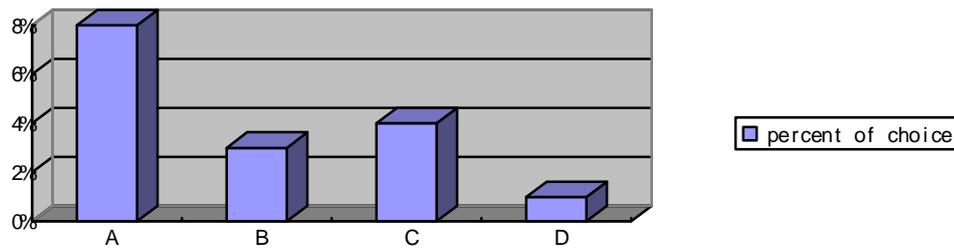

A. I store them randomly or according to learning sequence or alphabetically
B. I store them according to different parts of speech
C. I store them based on meaning relations(coordination, collocation, hyponymy, synonymy)
D. other

About half of the students (8%) answered that they store the words from English songs randomly or according to learning sequence or alphabetically. Another 3% store nouns with nouns and verbs with verbs, while 4% store words based on semantic relations such as coordination, collocation, and so on. If one stores words randomly or according to learning sequence or alphabetically, it has nothing to do with the mental lexicon and does not help in relating different meanings to each other. The same situation occurs when one stores words according to the part of speech, since it is common sense that the verb *think* has a close relationship with the adjective *thinkable* but does not have any obvious relation with the other verb *fasten*. Option C is the recommended strategy for storing words. In the semantic web, which can be seen as a connected graph with lexical items as the nodes and paths connect all the items, collocation and coordination are believed to have strong links while hyponymy and synonymy have certain links but weaker ones (Aitchison 2003: 84, 99). Hence, storing the words in a notebook or a computer file with the same pattern as the mental lexicon may help the students learn the words better.

Item 21 below also relates to the semantic web. There are 85% of the students who learn the collocated words together as a fixed structure while the other 15% learn words separately. It is analyzed in the previous item that collocation is a strong link which connects words together. Furthermore, sometimes fixed collocated words do not have the same meaning as the separate

meaning of each word, since no one would claim that *be used to* obtains its meaning from *be*, *used*, and *to* separately. Consequently, most of the students use a positive way of learning collocated words together.

Graph 21: (Item 21in the questionnaire) Do you learn the collocated words together as a fixed structure?
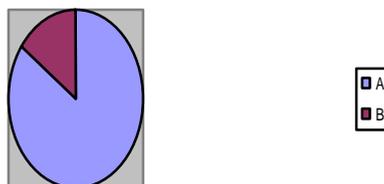
A. Yes, I learn them together as a whole   B. No. I learn the words separately

3.5 Strategies of learning usage

No matter a word is pronounced, spell and what meaning it conveys, it should be used in a sentence to convey the meaning as a whole. This means that the usage of words is important in the English language. Item 22 and item 23 concern the usual word usage and the inflections in the usage of words, respectively.

Graph 22: (Item 22 in the questionnaire) In English songs, when a mass noun is used as a countable noun, or a transitive verb is used as an intransitive one, or the other way round, what do you do?
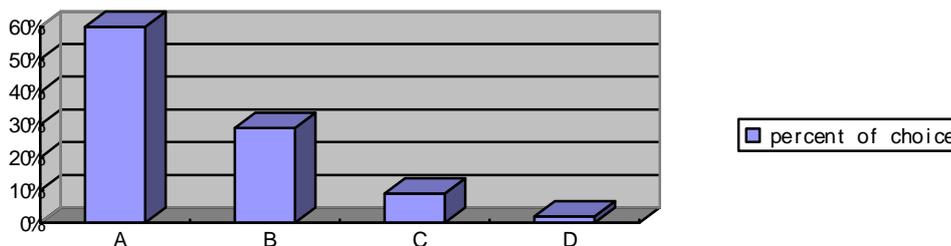
A. I seldom pay attention to these
B. I analyze the context and learn in which context words can be used like that
C. I've never experienced this
D. other

The majority of the students (60%) do not pay attention to the existence of unusual word usage. Not many of them (20%) analyze the context of the song lyrics and learn the unusual usage of words in context. There are also 9% of the students who announce that they have not experienced this before. Since some English pop songs are criticized for having poor grammar (Lynch 2005), the choice of English songs to learn is a crucial factor. Nevertheless, this is not the topic of this study and more importantly, it is impossible to list all the songs that the students have listened to. What is possible to do is asking their opinions about the songs they listen to. An interview question (Question 11) asks the students' opinion of the correctness of the song lyrics they listen to and their further clarification of their choice in item 22. To the first half of the question, most of the students said they believe that the English songs they have chosen are good and free from mistakes in language use. As to the second half, seven of those who chose option A claim that they have their own knowledge of word usage which they have learnt from the classroom and therefore they do not need to pay attention to it in the English songs. Three other interviewees who chose option B argue that there should be a proper context for the unusual word usage and they learn that when listening to the songs. Jackson (1988: 145-147) states that there is always a category of exceptions in nouns, verbs and adjectives. The noun *coffee* is a mass noun on most occasions but it is a countable noun in the sentence *I bought two coffees this morning* (Harley 2006: 213). That is to say, different contexts may have different word usage. Therefore, option B, "analyze the context and learn in which context words can be used like that", is a positive strategy of learning unusual word usage in English songs.

In a dictionary word entry, the inflected form of a word and the derivatives are usually provided to users so that users can learn the usage of the word extensively. Item 23 concerns learning the inflection and the derivatives of the word in English songs. In item 23 below, there are only 10% of the students who confirm that they learn the new word in English songs with its inflected forms and its derivatives. Oppositely, 42% of the students chose to just learn the word itself. Others (48%) usually take a look at the inflected forms and the derivatives. Altogether 90% of the students do not learn the inflected forms and the derivatives of a new word in English songs in a formal and serious-minded way. Needless to say, 'laziness' again

influences the result in that most of the students know it is helpful to learn the inflected forms and the derivatives, but they still do not do that.

Graph 23: (Item 23 in the questionnaire) When you come across a new word in English songs, do you also learn its inflected form and its derivatives?
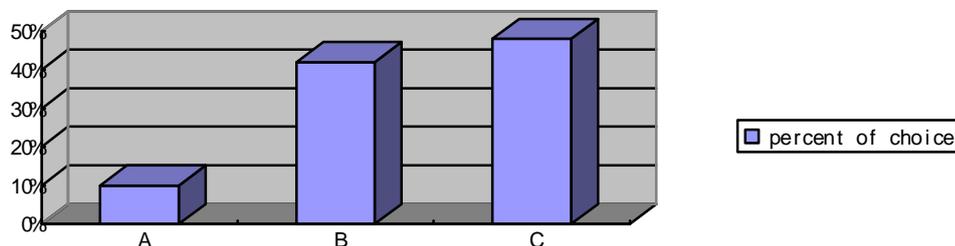
A. Yes
B. No
C. just take a glance at them

3.6 Overall discussion

All the statistics from the questionnaire and the interview are discussed in the above five subsections. In this subsection, a joint discussion is presented with regard to positive and negative strategies which provides an overall view of learning vocabulary from English pop songs based on the results in section 3.

Section 3.1 is about the general information of learning vocabulary from English pop songs. Most of the students learn the pronunciation and the meaning of words since the pronunciation is a part of the input from English songs and the meanings contain the main idea of those English songs. The usage and the spelling of words are not as popular as the other two aspects which indicates that learning vocabulary from English songs is an informal way of learning that the students can choose in order to learn the things they want to learn. As to the primary material they use in the learning process, it is positive that they prefer learning with the song lyrics which is a visual and complementary material to the English song itself, the audio material. They also like to sing the English songs from time to time, which reveals that they are willing to use what they have learnt and the repetition and the revision may also

reinforce their learning. As to the secondary material, which refers to the various kinds of dictionaries, the result is not positive in that the rate of using an English Chinese dictionary, an English Chinese concise dictionary, and not using a dictionary are more or less the same, which confirms that the learning is somewhat informal since dictionaries, especially the large ones, can provide standard information about words. However, for those who consult dictionaries, most of the time they look for the meaning and the pronunciation, which is similar to the statistics of what they learn from English songs. Therefore, using dictionaries can fulfill their goals of learning vocabulary from English songs.

In the analysis of learning pronunciation, the result has both positive and negative aspects. In order to know the pronunciation of a word, most of the students consult the materials with the standard pronunciation in phonetic symbols or in real voice. However when it comes to learning the pronunciation, the majority of the students imitate the singers which may produce mispronunciation and accents (Lynch 2005), and not so many of the students adopt a positive way of learning pronunciation, namely using the sound-spelling correspondence, which is recommended by Nation (2001). The result of learning stress is also worrying. Similarly, a large amount of the students learn the stress of a word by imitating the singers. Singers do not usually identify the word stress since songs have melodies and singers have to compromise to some singing techniques, which means that most of the students who imitate the singers to learn the stress of a word learn nothing about it in fact. One fifth of the students adopt a positive way of learning stress according to the stress placement principle, which is introduced in various phonetics books such as the work of Roach (2000: 96-110), and the experience of the previous stress learning. When it comes to learning linking and assimilation of words, the result is positive. Although there is a small portion of students who are not aware of the use of linking and assimilation, most of the others prefer to use them like the singers and pronounce with linking and assimilation to make the sentence fluent. Not so many of the students learn the pronunciation of words separately. Though learning the pronunciation of words separately is beneficial to learning the single word pronunciation, it may have negative effects when launching long sentences without the help of linking and assimilation.

Word spelling is the most unpopular aspect that the students learn from English songs, but the result of the learning strategies is mostly positive. The majority of the students learn the spelling of words according to their pronunciation, which is a recommended strategy of learning spelling and was also proved to be a good way in a study among English native speakers (Nation 2001: 45). In order to learn the spelling of a lexeme of which the inflected form appears in the song lyrics, most of the students guess the spelling of the lexeme according to the principle of inflection. Among these, about half of the students take further action to consult dictionaries to make sure that their guess is right, which is a positive strategy of learning the spelling of a lexeme from its inflected form.

Learning the meaning of words is the richest aspect of all the four aspects of learning vocabulary. Most of the items receive positive results except for those concerning meaning change and the mental lexicon. As to the song lyrics for learning word meaning, most of the students use the English version, where the word meanings are not affected by the Chinese language. When it comes to the material for retrieving the word meaning, most of the students use electronic dictionaries which may be an easy and convenient way but does not provide as much information as paper dictionaries. A positive strategy is consulting large paper dictionaries to get the meaning as well as in what context it is used. However, it is time consuming and comparatively inconvenient, so that few students adopt this strategy. More than half of the students, who look up word meanings in dictionaries and find polysemy, adopt a positive strategy of choosing the reasonable meaning, putting it into the lyric context, and learning it together with the context. The reason for this is that it is believed that only in different contexts can a word have different meanings (Aitchison 2003). Learning all the meanings of a word may seem to be a good strategy, but may not be highly relative to the meaning in the song lyric context and may also be time consuming. The result of learning the meaning of informal and non-standard words is also positive in that the majority of the students learn words from English songs which they may come across in their daily life and cannot be learnt from the formal education. When the meaning of a word changes in song lyrics, it is comparatively negative to just accept it or learn the new meaning with the original meaning, which most of the students do. Kövecses (2002: 6) uses examples to illustrate that it

49

is the context which provides the access to link between the original meaning and the changed meaning of a word. Therefore, learning the new meaning with the context is a right way. The students have little knowledge about conceptual metaphor and novel metaphor so when novel metaphor or metonymy occurs in song lyrics, half of the students just accept them and learn them without knowing what they are. A positive strategy of learning the meaning of words that are metaphorically or metonymically used is learning the meaning with the conceptual metaphor, which may function as a guide from the original meaning to the metaphorical or metonymical meaning as mappings (Kövecses 2002: 6). As to the storage of the words according to their meanings, most of the students do not store the words they have learnt from English songs. The limited number of students who store them also store the words in an out-of-order sequence rather than storing them according to the semantic relations of the mental lexicon. The only positive result with regard to the mental lexicon is that most of the students learn the collocated words together, which is believed to have a strong and permanent link in the mental lexicon (Aitchison 2003: 99).

The data on learning the usage of words might be the most disappointing among the four aspects of learning vocabulary from English songs. When words in English songs are unconventionally used, most of the students do not pay attention to that. Only about one third of the students try to understand it in the context and learn the unusual usage within the context, which is a recommended strategy of learning the unusual usage. When a new word occurs in English songs, few of the students learn its inflected forms and its derivatives which are believed to have a close relation to the word itself and may help in using the word, which is also the reason why most of dictionaries provide users with the inflected forms and the derivatives of a word (Jackson 1988: 148).

4. Conclusion

This essay has investigated the situation of learning vocabulary from English pop songs consciously among Chinese college students through a questionnaire and an interview based

on the results of the questionnaire. I investigated the statistics from four aspects, namely learning word pronunciation, spelling, meaning and usage. I found out that most of the students learn word pronunciation and word meaning from English pop songs with various materials. Furthermore, I identified some positive and negative strategies of learning the four aspects of words and discussed them in relation to relevant theories and previous studies.

Students do well in using the primary sources. They think that they choose the songs with few grammatical mistakes and correct versions of song lyrics. They also use electronic dictionaries well to search for the information needed in the learning process. They dare to sing the songs out loud which gives them a chance to use their newly learnt words as well as it gives them a chance of revision. They use a positive way to learn both the pronunciation and the spelling with the assistance of the sound-spelling correspondence. They also pronounce words together with linking and assimilation in order to make their speech fluent. They learn the fixed collocated words and the informal and non-standard words which may be useful in their daily life. However, there are some negative strategies which are pointed out for students to avoid and rectify. They show a dispreference to the large paper dictionaries which can provide more information on the word meaning and the word usage than the electronic and concise dictionaries. They over-trust the pop song singers in terms of the pronunciation, which may lead to mispronunciation of words and getting an accent. They do not usually pay attention to the context of words, especially when the meaning of a polysemous word changes according to the context. Furthermore, they do not adopt a positive way of storing the words as the same pattern to the mental lexicon. Moreover, they just focus on the lexeme of a word and ignore the usage of it in terms of the derivatives and the inflected forms.

Though it is an informal way of vocabulary learning, learning vocabulary from English pop songs is popular and has an optimistic future. This essay is a preliminary study of the strategies of learning vocabulary from pop songs. It is expected that more studies can focus on this research topic to various extents so that students can benefit from this learning method and learn vocabulary with more efficient and advantageous strategies.

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Appendix I

Hello! I am a graduate student at Kristianstad University College. I am doing research about learning vocabulary from English pop songs among college students in China. The investigation is anonymous and the result will be used only for the research purpose. Please choose the options which conform to your experience. Thank you for your truthful answer!

1. Which aspects of vocabulary do you learn from English songs? (multiple choices)
   A. word pronunciation   B. word spelling   C. word meaning   D. word usage

2. Do you pay attention to the song lyrics when listening to English songs?
   A. Yes.   B. No.

3. What kind of dictionary do you usually use to learn words from English songs?
   A. English Chinese dictionary (with examples)
   B. English Chinese concise dictionary (without examples)   C. I do not use a dictionary

4. When you look up a word from English songs in a dictionary or electronic dictionary, which of the following do you do? (multiple choices)
   A. look for the meaning   B. look for the pronunciation   C. look for the spelling
   D. look for the example given in the dictionary   E. I don't use dictionaries

5. Do you usually sing the English songs you like?
   A. Yes.   B. No.

6. When you come across a word you can't pronounce, what do you do?
   A. consult a paper dictionary   B. consult an electronic or online dictionary with sound
   C. ask others   D. imitate the singer   E. other _____

7. How do you learn the pronunciation of a new word in English songs?
   A. imitate the singer and sing the song many times
   B. learn the pronunciation by its spelling
   C. just memorize it   D. I don't care about the pronunciation   E. other _____

8. How do you learn the stress of a word in English songs?
   A. according to the common principles and experience based on syllable structure
   B. I usually consult a dictionary   C. just imitate the singer   D. other _____

9. The pronunciation of a new word that you want to learn is affected by linking and assimilation---how do you learn its pronunciation with respect to this?
(Assimilation occurs when a phoneme is pronounced differently with the influence of a neighboring phoneme. For example, Meat pie may be pronounced as [mi:p pai] according to assimilation.)

A. pronounce together with the words before or after this word with linking and assimilation

B. come to the written form of the word and pronounce it according to my experience without linking and assimilation.

C. consult a dictionary   D. I don't care about the pronunciation

E. I am not aware of assimilation and linking

10. If your answer to item 5 is 'yes', and when you sing English songs, which of the following do you do?

A. sing like the singer with linking and assimilation of words

B. pronounce word by word clearly

11. In what way do you learn the spelling of a word in English songs?

A. according to the pronunciation   B. memorize it from the lyrics   C. other _____

12. When you come across an inflected new word, what do you do in regard to spelling?

A. consult a dictionary or a electronic dictionary to make sure the spelling of its lexeme

B. guess the lexeme according to the principle of inflection

C. ignore it   D. I've never experience it before   E. other_____

13. In what language are the lyrics of your English songs?

A. only in English   B. English and Chinese   C. only in Chinese

14. What do you do when you come across a new word in English songs, in order to get its meaning? (if your answer is either A or B, please answer item 15 below. If not, go to item 16)

A. consult a paper dictionary   B. consult an electronic dictionary   C. ask people

D. look up the Chinese version of the lyrics for the counterpart   E. other_____

15. If the word you find has many meanings, what do you do?

A. choose the one which seems reasonable according to the lyric context as the meaning and learn

B. learn all the meanings of the word according to the examples given in the dictionary

C. try to memorize all the meanings   D. other_____

16. Do you learn informal and non-standard words in English songs?

(for example: wanna=want to, sayin'=saying, shan't=shall not)

A. Yes   B. No

17. When you find a word you have learnt before, but which does not seem to have the same meaning as the one you know, what do you do?

A. just accept its new meaning and learn it

B. try to find a similarity between the new meaning and the original meaning I learnt and learn it together with the original meaning

C. try to find a similarity between the new meaning and the original meaning I learnt and learn the whole sentence in the context with the new meaning

D. ignore the new meaning and stick to the meaning I know

E. I've never experience the situation before   F. other_____

18. When a word is used metaphorically or metonymically, what do you do?
   (Example of metaphor: I have a hot temper.
   The word "hot" is used metaphorically and means "easy to be anger". The conceptual metaphor here is HEAT IS ANGER.
   Example of metonymy: The BMW is late.
   The word "BMW" is used metonymically and means "the person who drives the BMW". The conceptual metonymy here is CONTROLLED FOR CONTROLLER.)

   A. just learn the metaphor or the metonymy in this context

   B. learn the conceptual metaphor or the conceptual metonymy so that I can use them in a broader way

   C. I don't learn metaphor or metonymy

   D. I am not aware of metaphor and metonymy   E. other _____

19. Do you store the words you have learnt from English songs?   (if your answer is A, please answer item 20 below. If not, go to item 21)

   A. Yes. I record them in a file or a notebook

   B. No. I do not store them and just learn and go over them when listening to the songs

   C. other _____

20. How do you store the words learnt from English songs?

   A. I store them randomly or according to learning sequence or alphabetically

   B. I store them according to different parts of speech

   C. I store them based on meaning relations(coordination, collocation, hyponymy, synonymy)

   D. Other_____

21. Do you learn the collocated words together as a fixed structure?

   A. Yes, I learn them together as a whole   B. No. I learn the words separately

22. In English songs, when a mass noun is used as a countable noun, or a transitive verb is used as an intransitive one, or the other way round, what do you do?

   A. I seldom pay attention to these

   B. I analyze the context and learn in which context words can be used like that

   C. I've never experienced this   D. other_____

23. When you come across a new word in English songs, do you also learn its inflected form and its derivatives? (ie. If you come across *sink*, do you also learn *sinks, sank, sunk, sinking, sinkable, unsinkable* and so on?)

   A. Yes.   B. No.   C. just take a glance at them

Appendix II

Q 1: (based on item 3) The number of the students who use English Chinese dictionary, English Chinese concise dictionary and do not use dictionaries are more or less the same. What is your choice and can you explain it in your situation?

Q 2: (based on item 4) Can you clarify the choice of item 4 that which do you usually look up in a paper dictionary and an electronic dictionary respectively? And why?

Q 3: (based on item 7) Can you clarify your choice in item 7?

Q 4: (based on item 8) What is the principle of spelling in your opinion? In what way does the singer of English songs present the stress of a word?

Q 5: What is your opinion of why most of the students do not learn spelling from English songs?

Q 6: (based on item 13) According to your choice of item 13, why do you use the lyrics of this kind of version?

Q 7: (based on item 14) Can you explain your choice of item 14 and state your opinion of the differences between a paper dictionary and an electronic dictionary?

Q 8: (based on item 15) What is your choice of item 15 and why do you choose it?

Q 9: (based on item 18) Can you explain your choice of item 18 and your understanding of metaphor?

Q 10: (based on item 16) What is your choice of item 16? Do you think it is necessary to learn the informal and non-standard words?

Q 11: (based on item 22) Can you explain your choice of item 22? Do you think the English songs you listen are grammatically correct?