

This revision is of the first sentence of the Introduction to chapter 2 of the dissertation of a Chinese-speaking student of electronic engineering (as it happens, the same student who appears in Kibbitzer 5).

| Original                                                                                                                                                                    | Revision                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| Since considerable efforts have been directed to characterise superconductors, a number of theories have been developed to get a better understanding of superconductivity. | <b>As part of the</b> considerable efforts <b>that</b> have been directed <b>towards characterising</b> superconductors, a number of theories have been developed to get a better understanding of superconductivity. |

The "secondary" point here is the substitution of 'directed towards characterising' for 'directed to characterise'. To justify the substitution we obtained a rapid concordance as follows:

1 ded that management effort "is being directed towards integrating acquisitions and intro  
2 olicy community activities are to be directed towards supporting this aim," the German  
3 e money supply, his efforts had been directed towards raising the knowledge supply. His  
4 rifting. Part of our current work is directed towards reconstructing this complex evolut  
5 a significant part of the revenue be directed towards improving public transport service  
6 sion recommends that control is best directed towards preventing bark-stripping damage a  
7 projects whose orientation was more directed towards finding out about the paranormal w  
8 power output, the training has to be directed towards increasing the percentage of `slo  
9 y opportunity, their whole effort is directed towards creating "The Magic". That depends  
10 observed15. Therefore, attention was directed towards developing base pairs (Fig. 1) for

The most important point, however, was that it was difficult to tell exactly what the sentence meant as a whole. My first idea was to propose a drastic simplification: "A number of theories have been developed to get a better understanding of superconductivity.' The sentence would have linked well to the one following ("However, it is clear that none of the proposed theories can account for superconductivity completely'), and it seemed that little would be lost by the truncation. However, such a Draconian approach may give the student too little opportunity to explore how the idea he or she had in mind might be expressed in English. Here, the student was clearly trying to say something about the connexion between the characterisation of superconductors, and the development of theories about superconductivity, and it seemed worth exploring what that connexion might be.

At this point it became important to discover whether **since** was intended to show **time** or **reason**. The time interpretation seemed plausible in view of the use of the Present Perfect in the main clause, and it would not have required much in the way of re-drafting to make this reading of the sentence unambiguous. For example:

Since considerable efforts **were first** directed towards characterising superconductors, a number of theories have been developed to get a better understanding of superconductivity.

However, the student said that he had intended the since-clause to give the **reason** for the following statement - and it proved considerably more difficult to revise the sentence to show that meaning unambiguously. The more we looked at it, the more it appeared that this was not a true Reason-result situation. Certainly, the efforts directed towards characterising superconductors were the **background** to the development of theories about superconductivity, but those efforts were not the **reason for** the development

of those theories: rather, the development of such theories was **part of** the work put into characterising superconductors. Once we had decided that the Part-whole connexion best represented the way in which science goes forward, redrafting the sentence became relatively simple.

As a final footnote it might be mentioned that the student said that he thought Chinese students find it particularly difficult to distinguish Reason-result from Part-whole. My response was that I thought the same was true for students from a number of language backgrounds: indeed, I myself found it difficult to distinguish them in certain situations. A topic for further research, perhaps.

(Footnote: December 1997). The following citation and correction are from an essay by a Chinese-speaking student of education (much material irrelevant to the present discussion corrected)

| Original                                                                                                                                                                                        | Revision                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| The situation is comparable to that in the traditional Chinese family, where parents prefer boys to girls, because boys have greater responsibilities and more rights in the family than girls. | The situation is comparable to that in the traditional Chinese family, where parents prefer boys to girls, as shown by the greater responsibilities and more rights given to boys than girls. |

In the one-to-one session we discussed at some length the reasons why **parents** might prefer boys to girls (boys may be expected to earn more money than girls: girls will require dowries when they marry, etc. etc.). For me, the greater responsibilities and rights of boys sit rather strangely among those reasons (though they are, no doubt, reasons why **boys** prefer to be boys!). It seemed more natural to think of the greater responsibilities as being a **result** of the preference for boys, or, better, as something which **shows** the preference for boys, as in the suggested revision. It is still not clear to me how far my suggested revision is influenced by my own Western 'individualistic' cultural background (distinguishing the preferences of the parents from those of the children) in comparison with the 'community-orientation' of Chinese society, which may tend not to separate out preferences in this way.