Appendix (A)

Passages for Think-aloud Protocol analysis

Passage 1.
From: Gothic Literature 1764 to 1820
By: Franz Potter

The Gothic Canon

_These walls,_' said he, _'were once the seat of luxury and vice. They exhibited a singular instance of the retribution of Heaven, and were from that period forsaken, and abandoned to decay.' His words excited my curiosity, and I enquired further concerning their meaning._

Ann Radcliffe, _A Sicilian Romance_

Often criticized for its sensationalism, melodramatic qualities, and its play on the supernatural, the Gothic novel dominated English literature from its conception in 1764 with the publication of The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole to its 'supposed' demise in 1820. The genre drew many of its intense images from the graveyard poets intermingling a landscape of vast dark forest with vegetation that bordered on excessive, concealed ruins with horrific rooms, monasteries and a forlorn character who excels at the melancholy.

A fabled spectre or perhaps a bleeding Nun were images often sought after by those who fell victim to the supernatural influences of these books. Gothic literature as a movement was a disappointment to the idealistic romantic poets for the sentimental character idealized by Ann Radcliffe could not transcend into reality.

The modern critical view of the Gothic canon limits it to a set of high reaching artistic achievements: Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764), Ann Radcliffe's The Italian; or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents (1797), Mary Shelley's Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus (1818) and Charles Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) are cited as the defining parameters of the genre.
Although the Gothic novel influenced many of the emerging genres, like romanticism, the outpouring of Gothic novels started to ease by 1815 and with the publication of Charles Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer in 1820, the genre began to fade. The Gothic novel had come full circle, from rebellion to the Age of Reason's order, to its encompassing and incorporation of Reason as derived from terror. The influence of the Gothic novel is felt today in the portrayal of the alluring antagonist, whose evil characteristics appeal to one's sense of awe, or the melodramatic aspects of romance, or more specifically in the Gothic motif of a persecuted maiden forced apart from a true love.

The Gothic genre today has remained an elusive minor literary upheaval that has had immense influence on genres today. Literary critics though, have been slow to accept Gothic literature as a valuable genre. The first critics to examine the Gothic, approached it reverently with historical interest. They tried to rescue it, to revive the dead and obscure genre. These critics looked at the presence of the text by examining it within a historical context. The original critical approach of historical interpretation allowed the text to validate the text, as it was a reaction to the age of reason, order, and politics of Eighteenth century England.

The development of the Gothic Novel from the melancholy overtures of sentimental literature to the rise of the sublime in the graveyard poets had a profound impact on the budding Romantic movement from Wordsworth to Shelley. The astounding features and use of the sublime and the overt use of the supernatural, profoundly influenced the style and material of the emerging romantics. Gothic Novels such as The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole, The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom by Tobias Smollett, Longsword, Earl of Salisbury by Thomas Leland, The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story by Clara Reeve and Vathek: An Arabian Tale by William Beckford led Coleridge to write a Gothic drama, Shelley to write two Gothic Novels and Byron to write Manfred.

The effects of the Gothic still reverberate though modern literature from Joyce Carol Oats to Ann Rice. The literary motifs set forth by Horace Walpole can be found scattered throughout all forms of literature, yet the Gothic Novel has been
left to molder in libraries in obscurity and except in rare instances, the novel has all but vanished from the canon of western literature.
TO THE READER

If thou beest more, thou art an understander, and then I trust thee. If thou art one that takest up, and but a pretender, beware of what hands thou receivest thy commodity; for thou wert never more fair in the way to be cozened, than in this age, in poetry, especially in plays: wherein, now the concupiscence of dances and of antics so reigneth, as to run away from nature, and be afraid of her, is the only point of art that tickles the spectators. But how out of purpose, and place, do I name art? When the professors are grown so obstinate contemners of it, and presumers on their own naturals, as they are deriders of all diligence that way, and, by simple mocking at the terms, when they understand not the things, think to get off wittily with their ignorance. Nay, they are esteemed the more learned, and sufficient for this, by the many, through their excellent vice of judgment. For they commend writers, as they do fencers or wrestlers; who if they come in robustuously, and put for it with a great deal of violence, are received for the braver fellows: when many times their own rudeness is the cause of their disgrace, and a little touch of their adversary gives all that boisterous force the foil. I deny not, but that these men, who always seek to do more than enough, may sometime happen on some thing that is good, and great; but very seldom; and when it comes it doth not recompense the rest of their ill. It sticks out, perhaps, and is more eminent, because all is sordid and
vile about it: as lights are more discerned in a thick darkness, than a faint shadow. I speak not this, out of a hope to do good to any man against his will; for I know, if it were put to the question of theirs and mine, the worse would find more suffrages: because the most favor common errors. But I give thee this warning, that there is a great difference between those, that, to gain the opinion of copy, utter all they can, however unfitly; and those that use election and a mean. For it is only the disease of the unskilful, to think rude things greater than polished; or scattered more numerous than composed.
Middle English Literature:
*Fabliau*, Lyric,
Dream Allegory, Ballad

The courtly French romance, as we have seen, drew its ideals partly from feudal notions of service and honor, sometimes (as in many of the Arthurian stories) oddly combined with more specifically Christian virtues; and when it was rendered into English much of the courtliness was lost and interest centered on physical adventures. Not all mediaeval French narrative was “polite”; however, from France also came a type of short narrative poem, realistic, humorous, often coarse, known as the *fabliau*, and *fabliau* and romance existed side by side. The *fabliau* is associated with the new middle class who slowly grew in importance as the feudal system developed only to decay. If romance began in France as entertainment of a feudal aristocracy, *fabliau* is the product of the class which was eventually to destroy feudalism. The development of money economy out of a natural economy, hastened both by the communication of different kinds of feudal service to money payments and the growth of towns with their trading communities, gradually took away the very basis of the feudal system by encouraging the growth of a class that had no place in it. This new class, town dwellers who carried on commercial activity of one kind or another, traders and artisans who no longer lived on the land but who obtained their food and their raw materials by selling to the peasants the goods they manufactured, were less impressed by courtly notions of love and honor than the more conservative feudal land owners; realistic, iconoclastic, priding themselves on knowing life as it
really is and on refusing to look at it through the rose colored spectacles of sentimental idealists, they sponsored a boisterous, satirical kind of narrative which was, as it were, the antitype of idealizing vision of courtly night or pious churchman.

This middle class challenge of the nightly ideal was but one phase of a significant movement in the history of European culture. The heroic age, reflected in the Germanic epic had given way to the feudal age, with its own concept of the hero; when a more commercial civilization develops, the whole possibility of heroism in the modern world is reexamined. We are approaching Don Quixote, the knightly as fool, and Don Quixote, who though a fool is also in an oblique way admirable, is a sign on the road which in England comes at last to Robinson Crusoe, the hero as prudential merchant who, even when cast away on a desert island spends his time recreating as best he can the urban business world he left behind. When prudence and self-interest become the chief motive power of the hero, a reaction sets in, led by those who deplore the loss of the "crowded hour of glorious life." Prudential morality is examined ironically (as in Fielding or Thackeray) or is reluctantly conceded to be a condition of progress by a novelist such as Scott who is in his best novels weighs the competing claims of commercial progress and heroic traditions, of Baillie Nicol Jarvie and Rob Roy, to conclude that while the future lies with the former the latter is more attractive and its loss a bitter price to pay for material advancement. The fate of the hero in the English literature will emerge more clearly in subsequent pages of this history; here we pause to remark only that the fabliau represents the first real challenge in European literature to the notion of heroic idealism as a way of life and that challenge can be traced in its influential course from Cervantes to Evelyn Waugh.
Is English Degenerating

The charge that English is degenerating into a sloppy and ungrammatical language is not new. Although this charge has been made since the 17th century, English is still strong and growing. English was never perfect, and it never followed unchanging rules.

Alarmists often cite the use of slang and euphemisms as proof that the English language is degenerating. These people claim that the use of slang words instead of “standard” words and the use of euphemisms instead of more “exact” phrases cause English users to speak and write unclearly. Also these people argue that the “incorrect” grammar of many English speakers and writers proves that the language is degenerating; they believe that if speakers do not express themselves in “standard” English, they will not be understood by others. They believe that unclear thinking and a world where people cannot understand each other will be two bad consequences of this degeneration.

In reality, word usage and grammar have changed over the centuries but this does not mean that the English language is degenerating. Shakespeare himself used slang and euphemisms, and used other words in ways that they are not used today. For instance he used “pneumonia” to mean “head cold” and “nice” to mean “lewd.” Grammatical rules have also changed over the centuries. The word “the” once at least fifteen different forms, depending on where it appeared in the sentence. Modern English has not been damaged because there is now only one form of “the,” and it will not be damaged because the distinction between “fewer” and “less” is fading. Thus, yesterday’s slang is today’s Standard English, and today’s “bad” grammar is tomorrow’s acceptable English.
Without a doubt, changes in grammar, meaning and usage will continue as long as people use the language. In the future these changes could cause English to break up into several different languages; more likely, however, is that English will become almost universal as a world-wide second language. Regardless of which direction English takes, it will develop rather than degenerate.

Comprehension Questions
1. Based on the author’s point of view, is English degenerating? What is the author’s position?
2. What is the author’s idea of English?
3. What do those who say English is changing but not degenerating believe?
4. What has happened to English since the 17th century?
5. Based on the text, is it true that English could break up into several languages?
6. What do people who say that English is degenerating believe is happening?
7. Are any changes taking place in English? If yes, what?