A Study of Contemporary College Students' Foreign Language Teaching in the Context of Language Migration

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ABSTRACT

Language migration phenomenon is an important topic in foreign language teaching and research, different language backgrounds will bring great trouble in learning English. In this paper. By Chinese students encountered in learning English language transfer errors can be summed up some countermeasures and suggestions.

KEYWORDS
Language migration, language teaching, college students.

INTRODUCTION

Transfer refers to that the learners apply their learnt language knowledge (especially the native language knowledge) into the second language learning voluntarily and subconsciously in the learning process of second language thus to help themselves for language production. (Li Xiaoguang, 2012) If the rule and target language of the native language are consistent, they will prompt the learning for second language, which is called as positive transfer; on the contrary, they will have negative influence on the learning for second language, which is called as negative transfer. Language transfer also influences the cultural tradition, way of thinking and social history. Some logisticians conduct researches on the cognitive criterion of transfer and find that the restrictive factors of transfer include social factors, markedness, different layers of language, language distance and mental language type, prototypical concept and development factor. (Chen Wei, 2012)

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF LANGUAGE TRANSFER RESEARCH

The language transfer research mainly includes three stages: (1) as the theoretical pillar of researching the learning psychology, the view of behaviorism is accepted by the logisticians. (Yu Lin, 2010) The theory shows that the learners are certain to be disturbed by their native language in the language learning process, and the new language habit formation will be disturbed by the existing language knowledge. When the new language habit is affected by the existing language habit, the language learning will be restricted. Mastering a foreign language is the process replacing the

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old habit by new habit, wherein, the difference of the two kinds of habits in linguistics determines the difficulty in language learning. (2) Criticize the view of behaviourism for language learning and put forward important hypothesis of contrastive analysis, the theory owes the mistakes generated in the language learning process to the disturbing from the native language. However, the linguists further find that the mistakes generated in the language learning process for the learners are not all affected by the native language, while the language mistakes explained in the hypothesis of contrastive analysis don’t appear in most learners. (Zhang Weiwei, 2010) In this stage, the researchers find that the mistakes of the learners cannot be attributed to one factor, which is arbitrary to attribute the mistakes to the disturbing from the native language, because the mistakes of some learners are caused from the general cognition on language rule, while other mistakes are caused from the disturbing of other learnt languages. (3) The second language learning field repeatedly recognizes the role of the native language transfer on the language learning, the language researchers including James start to analyze the language transfer from the perspective of psychology to attract attention. (Guo Hongxia, 2011) The linguists not only conduct analysis on the similarities and differences of the target language and the native language but also no longer consider the language transfer as the mechanical process, but instead, comprehensively explain the role of the language transfer in the second language learning from two perspectives of psychology and sociology. In this stage, cognitive psychology occupies an important position in the linguistics, and comprehensive denying on the comparative analysis theory is wrong.

Based on the achievements of the bilingual mental presentation researches, some scholars begin to investigate the language transfer phenomenon from the interface (conception layer) of the language and cognition, carry out the research on conceptual transfer and put forward the proposition of “the cross-linguistic Influence (language transfer) appears in the conception layer”, which largely promotes the birth of the new research perspective for language transfer.

LANGUAGE TRANSFER PHENOMENON IN ENGLISH LEARNING

In the English learning, the language transfer phenomenon presented by the Chinese students is generally shown in four aspects, including vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation and disclosure.

Vocabulary transfer

In the English vocabulary learning process, many beginners will make the vocabularies corresponding to relevant Chinese characters. But in fact, one word tends to have different meanings, therefore, not each Chinese character will find the relevant word in English. Especially under different semantic occasions, the forms of interlacement, overlapping and vacancy will be presented. If the students pay no attention to it, they are easier to make mistakes. Owing to the disturbing of the native language, the students will make improper collocation. For example, “crowded conditions” will be translated to be “people mountain People Sea”. (Wang Yanqiang, 2011)
Syntax transfer

Chinese belongs to the typical analytic language or isolating language while English belongs to the language having morphologic marker. When the students use the syntactic structure of English, they will spontaneously be disturbed by the syntactic structure of their native language. For example, the verbs in English has changes in tense, voice and grammatical mood and the nouns in English has changes in case and number while Chinese has no such rule, which makes the students easier to form negative transfer. (Yi Li, 2010) It is convenient to take the structure of the native language as the fundamental principle of linguistic organization and treatment, and the practice making use of the syntactic organization rule of the native language and the vocabulary of the target language to establish the grammar of the second language is not always feasible, because Chinese and English exist with many differences. For example, I buy a telephone yesterday, from the perspective of Chinese, this sentence has no change in verb tense, therefore, and the beginners are easier to forget the grammar rule that the verb should be change correspondingly in accordance with the tense.

Pronunciation transfer

There exists with two obvious differences between the Chinese and English pronunciation systems: (1) English is called as intonation language while Chinese had four tones, which is called as tone language; (2) The phonemes of Chinese and English are not completed corresponding, wherein, some phonemes of English don’t exist in Chinese. The Chinese students exist with obvious “Chinese-English pronunciation” under the influence of the Chinese pronunciation and intonation, for example: many students’ poor in English will use Chinese to mark the English pronunciation, such as “three grams of oil” for Thank you. Meanwhile, influenced by the local dialect, such as confusion in “n” and “l”, the students will be confused in light and night, which will make the students form negative transfer in language learning process.

Disclosure transfer

The disclosure transfer is related to the cultural environment of the learners. The difference in the way of thinking will cause the difference of Chinese and English in discourse organization, which is mainly presented in the two aspects, including cohesive device and organization form. For example: one British says one sentence “How beautiful your bride is!” in the wedding of the Chinese friend, while the Chinese friend answers “where? Where?”, and then the British friend relies “Her nose, her face”. It can be seen that disclosure transfer appears owing to the different culture. If the Chinese friend know American culture, he just needs to answer “thanks”. (Yu Liming, 2004)

INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE TRANSFER ON THE WRITING OF CHINESE STUDENTS

The author forms a research group together with 3 special tutors engaging in the writing part for CET-4, and they successively collect the compositions for the final practice test before the CET-4 exam of the sophomore students of recent 5 years as the sample papers. The research team abstracts 20% respectively from the test papers each
year to obtain the 100 composition sample papers, and then the team begins to search for and correct the mistakes of the students, besides, the team classifies the mistakes into two types, including the mistakes generated from disturbing of the native language and the mistakes generated from disturbing of the non-native language (Jarvis 2002), afterwards, the team conducts scientific and effective analysis on the mistakes generated from the disturbing of the native language. The investigation shows that the proportion of the students making mistakes in the target language owing to the disturbing of the native language reaches to 80%. The large number mistakes generated in the English morphology owing to the language difference can be summarized as follows:

**Misuse of article**

There is no article in Chinese, and the Chinese learners cannot form positive transfer in the language learning process, therefore, the above grammar phenomenon disturbs the learners to cause large number of mistakes. For example, adding the article a randomly: friends from different schools a gift given by her friend; omit the in the place where the is needed: a part of (the) boss’s suggestions use (the) law to fight against...

**Transformation of case**

There exists with nominative case, objective case and possessive case as well as the inflection for possessive case formed from the of structure., such as the president of the nation, owing to the difference of English and Chinese in this aspect, the Chinese students cannot avoid making mistakes, such as forgetting ’s or’, such as people right, children safety.

**Ignorance of grammatical tense**

The grammatical tense system of Chinese is different from that of English, and the Chinese verbs have no inflexion, therefore, Chinese is taken as non-tense language, which only present whether the actions have been completed or are being conducted. For example, the completed actions in Chinese are usually presented with “Le” while “Le” refers to the future as well as the past. For example:

1. I will go to school after dinner
2. I saw the film.

Chinese mainly bases on various vocabulary means to present the concepts of various forms while English present directly through tense. Therefore, the Chinese learners cannot avoid making mistakes in the tense:

3. ...we have not seen (saw)her for a long time.
4. ...we have not spoken (spoken) to each other since last year.

**Confusion in comparative degree and superlative degree**

There exists with no grammatical phenomena in Chinese, such as comparative degree or superlative degree for adjective, but instead, Chinese makes use of the vocabularies such as “Bi”, “Jiao”, “Yu” to compare without using the grammatical means. While English usually present the degree difference through adding -er and -est in the suffix. Owing to the different expression modes, the Chinese learners often make the following mistakes. (Odlin 2004, Jarvis 2002)
⑤ The temperature of Nanjing is higher than (that of) Beijing.
⑥ She is higher than any (other) girl in her class.

Disturbing from derivative

Derivation is the common way of word formation in English, which forms the new word through adding affix in the existing word. (Jiang 2004), for example, adding the morpheme -less in the worth to form the adjective worthless. Chinese uses no such means to form new word, because the Chinese vocabulary will generate different word class in different environments, besides, many vocabularies in Chinese can be noun and verb as well under the situation of the same word class, which makes the Chinese learners often make mistake of improper choosing.

⑦...The company loss (lose) its name.
⑧ the boy did excellent (excellently) in the exam.

Disturbing from vocabulary

The disturbing from vocabulary mainly refers to the choosing for vocabulary, which is mainly because of the semantic transfer of the native language, and is mainly reflected in the synonymy of word for word and sentence for sentence translation. (Pavlenko 2011, Jarvis 2002) The assumed synonymy refers to that the learners think one certain word in the target language is completely same to the definition and connotation of the equivalent word in the native language. Many synonyms exist in English, which are same in the meaning but different in the mode of application.

⑨... are useful to (for) personal computer...
...get 50 scores (points) in CET4...
We must know it and (fight) against enemies.
We must study harder than other (others)

Though the Chinese teachers can understand the expressions of the students, the above sentences are not in inconformity with the English grammar, which are all wrong sentences. The Chinese learners not only transfer the morphology and syntactic structure of the native language into the second language learning, but also transfer the meanings related to structure. Because the two kinds of languages exist with peer-peer relationship in partial semantics and structure, which makes the learners think the native language and the second language have absolute congruent relationship. (James 2001)

CONCLUSION

In the language learning process, the learnt native language knowledge of the learners is certain to have positive or negative influence on the learning of target language. With the deepening cognition in language learning and language essence, the influence of the native language on the second language learning cannot be ignored. In addition, the English teachers should enhance the cognition in the transfer phenomenon, analyze the differences between Chinese and English seriously in the teaching as well as scientific and research processes, consciously prompt the students to form positive transfer and make efforts to restrict the negative transfer from the native language thus to realize the teaching effect of half the work with double results.
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