

L2 Acquisition of English Raising Predicates
by Chinese EFL Learners: An Integrated Parsing Model
of Semantic Bootstrapping and Syntactic Bootstrapping

中国学习者对英语提升谓词的习得： 语义启动和句法启动的综合分析模型

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科学出版社

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谢元花的专著《中国学习者对英语提升谓词的习得：语义启动和句法启动的综合分析模型》十分详尽地描述了中国英语学习者在课堂环境下习得英语提升动词（如 seem、appear、happen 等）的全过程，并通过构建相关的理论模式对所观察到的习得行为进行了解释。这是一本值得二语习得研究者和英语教师认真研读的书。理由有二：其一，与其他类型的动词相比，英语提升动词的语义-句法对应关系十分独特，即动词所在句子的主语在语义上与母句的谓词无关，而与处于低位的不定式小句的动词或形容词有关。由于动词学习并非仅仅涉及掌握词义，而是在于建立该词语义-句法对应的连接规则，这意味着，在学习提升动词时学习者无法像在学其他类型动词那样，可以通过施事、主题或经历者这类语义功能来确定句子主语和母句动词之间的语义关系，而是必须建立全新的连接规则，以适应提升动词句子结构中存在的主语和谓语在语义上的不对称。那么，二语学习者是如何建立这类独特的连接规则的？这一过程受哪些因素的影响？如何解释学习者的习得行为？这些二语习得研究领域亟需解决的重要理论问题在本书中均得到一定程度的回答，填补了二语动词习得研究的一项空白，有助于二语习得研究者更全面地了解动词习得过程中的认知心理过程以及影响这一过程的各种因素。其二，提升动词多属于高频词，初中教材就有介绍，语言输入中也大量存在，学生不可谓不熟悉。但奇怪的是，虽然学生大都对这些词耳熟能详，但却往往容易用错，即使高水平者也不例外。这究竟是因为什么？本书通过实证研究，发现了造成此类动词难学的主要原因，这些发现对于提升动词的课堂教学有重要的启示，值得广大英语教师参考。

除了具有较高的理论价值和实践意义，该书还有以下几个亮点，在阅读过程中应予注意。

第一，研究思路清晰，论证充分。作者采用演绎方法，首先深入分析了英语提升动词的语言特征，并进行了英-汉提升动词跨语言对比分析。在此基础上，发现了可能制约提升动词学习的潜在因素。然后在二

语习得的语义启动和句法启动理论框架内,建立了中国学习者英语提升动词习得路径模式,为其后的实证研究打下了坚实的理论基础。

第二,研究方法得当、严谨,数据可靠有效,调查结果令人信服。作者采用了定量和定性相结合的研究方法,有利于不同类型数据的互相印证。同时,在受试的选择、调查工具的设计、数据收集过程中对无关变量的控制、数据的整理与统计分析等实证研究的重要方面都做得十分规范,使人对调查结果有充分的信心。

第三,作者并不满足于实证研究之前所建立的理论模式,而是在研究新发现的基础之上对模式进行了修正,以更全面地反映外语课堂环境对提升动词习得的独特影响。做过研究的人都知道,要提出新的理论见解,没有全面的专业知识、扎实的学术功底和长期深入的思考是无法完成的,而在同一项研究中不仅构建了新的理论模式,还对其进行了检验,并根据检验结果加以修正,这意味着什么不是不言而喻了吗?

第四,全书结构清晰,文字流畅易懂,集学术性与可读性于一身。相信只要有一定的语言学基础,即使对该研究领域不熟悉也不妨碍对内容的理解。

总之,本书的面世是我国二语习得研究界的幸事,在此特向谢元花表示祝贺,并祝她在今后的学术研究中取得更大的成果。

吴旭东

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2010年2月26日

Acknowledgements

The completion of this book would never have been possible without the help of many other people. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere and heart-felt thanks to my supervisor Professor Wu Xudong, whose constant encouragement and patient guidance kept me moving on and on, and whose timely comments and questions inspired me greatly and helped shape this final version. Without his insightful and stimulating questions, the modified Integrated Parsing Model would not be so revealing and inspiring.

Then I would like to express my thanks to Professor Wang Chuming, by whom I have been tremendously influenced and enlightened at his class and at the seminars he organized, and to Professor Wen Benli, by whom I was greatly inspired by his teaching of syntax and due to whose suggestions the presentation of this book was much improved, and to Professor Dong Yanping, Professor Zheng Chao and Professor Cai Yun for their thought-provoking questions and comments on the modification of this book, and also to many other teachers in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, such as Professor Qian Guanlian, Professor Liu Jianda, Professor Huo Yongshou, Dr. Shen Sanshan for their professional classroom instructions.

I would also like to thank Professor Ouyang Huhua, Dr. Yu Shengming and Dr. Xu Zhanghong for their generous effort to ensure my access to many resources in Hong Kong university libraries, and Misha Karen Becker and Steven Pinker for their timely generosity in sending me their published and unpublished related articles, which are of great assistance to the present research.

I am also indebted to my fellow students, Su Yuanlian, Ma Zhigang and Chen Bin, for their valuable suggestions on my proposal and constant encouragement, and to other friends, Dr. Jiang Lin, Dr. Zhao Chen, Zeng Tao, Wang Qi, Gao Wei, and many others, who have helped me in one way or another.

I'm still very grateful to my foreign friends Mat Horn who participated in and helped me conduct the experiments to English native speakers in Great Britain, and to Alison Roberts, Donald Miles, Christine Woolin, Graham Luff, Richard Hewitt and others, who participated in the experiments of the present investigation. I'm also grateful to my colleagues and friends, Professor Zhao Yilong, Han Hong, Wang Haiying, Fu Jingjing, Li Chen, Zhao Jingping and Hou Zhibin, who offered me the opportunity to conduct experiments in their classes. I'm quite appreciative to all the participants in the empirical study of the present research.

I'm deeply indebted to my husband, Wei Huiliang, who helped me find English native speakers as volunteers, and did some transcription of the recordings and the proofreading before the final version. I'm also deeply indebted to my son, Wei Wei, who helped me with some techniques of using the computer and handling some statistics, and whose diligence and enthusiasm in his study as a high school student drove me on and on in the writing of this book. Both of them have shown their understanding to my negligence of them and shared my joy and difficulties during the present research.

Last but not the least, I thank my parents, my brother and my two sisters, whose love is a constant source of my strength to go further and further in the present research.

前 言

在含有英语提升动词的句子中，提升动词与主语没有语义联系，而与补语动词有语义联系。这种独特的语义-句法连接关系对不同母语背景的学习者在习得英语提升动词时都造成困难。然而，迄今为止，几乎没有人进行实证研究来解释这种造成普遍习得困难的语言现象。作为开拓性的尝试，本书在生成语法的大框架下探讨汉语母语者对英语提升动词的第二语言习得。

本研究的具体步骤如下：(1) 建立旨在解释中国学习者习得英语提升动词行为的理论框架；(2) 系统地描述学习者的习得行为；(3) 检验所建立的理论框架能在多大程度上解释观察到的习得行为。

通过对英语提升动词的语言分析和英汉提升动词跨语言对比分析，确定了本书的核心所在：即英语提升动词习得困难的主要根源在于句子主语和谓语之间语义的不对称。从该核心问题进一步引申出本书的中心问题：有哪些潜在因素使学习者意识到含有提升动词的句子中主语和谓语之间的语义不对称，进而习得提升动词的语义-句法连接规则？为了回答这一问题，我们建立了一个英语提升动词习得的综合分析模型，并基于该模型，提出了 5 个具体假设，对中国学习者的习得路径作出预测。接着采用横断的研究方法，设计了填空题，语法正误判断题和有声思维题，对 145 个分别代表初级、低级、中级、中高级和高级的学习者进行了实证调查。

对填空题和语法正误判断题数据的定量分析显示：(1) 句子主语和谓语之间的语义不对称关系确实是造成中国学习者习得英语提升动词困难的主要原因；(2) 习得英语提升动词有两种不同的路径，即提升动词的知识呈近似线性发展路径和该知识运用能力呈倒 V 字形发展路径；(3) 学习者在上述两方面均未达到英语母语者的水平；(4) 无论是在知识上还是在使用能力上，虚主语 *it* 和 *there* 都是习得中最大的困难所在。

对有声思维数据的定性分析发现,中国学习者在线处理含提升动词的句子时显示以下三个特征。首先,所有水平层次的学习者使用最多的是语义线索和句法线索。直觉的使用到中级水平才开始出现,但一直到高级水平也仍未达到英语母语者的使用水平。其次,除了低水平组外,其他所有受试组使用线索组合多于单个线索,而且线索组合的使用随着水平的提高而增多。最后,尽管各组线索使用的特点不尽相同,但是随着水平的提高,他们在分析过程中线索融合的程度也越高。

将以上发现与研究假设对比可以发现:(1)我们的有关英汉语提升动词相同特征在习得中会产生正迁移(即有助于学习者意识到句子主语和补语动词的语义关系)的预测总体上得到支持;(2)基于所建立的综合分析模型所提出的假设没有全部得到证实;(3)分析实验结果发现,中国学习者在一开始就对提升动词的语义句法特征比较敏感,相比之下,他们对非提升结构中的虚主语 *it* 比对提升结构中的虚主语 *it* 更为敏感,这两个发现是没有预测到的。

对以上发现的深入分析表明:影响汉语环境下习得英语提升动词的潜在因素有以下几点:(1)普遍语法原则在习得提升动词时通过学习者的母语(汉语)起主要作用。当英汉语相似时它们起促进作用,而在不同时起阻碍作用;(2)两种不同习得路径实质上代表习得紧密相关的两个方面:语言能力与语言使用。习得提升动词的困难在这两方面都归因于主语和谓语之间的语义不对称关系;(3)学习者未能完全意识到主语和谓语之间的语义不对称应归因于他们在学习采用的语义分块和过度推广,而这两种学习策略的使用导致虚主语 *it* 和 *there* 的习得困难,最终产生石化。

为了消除模型中的假设与实际观察之间的差距,我们在实证调查发现的基础上对综合分析模型作了修正。修正过的模型既吸纳了语义启动假设和句法启动假设的优点,也融进了实证调查的新发现。因此,它既与普遍语法原则相一致,也更接近语言习得的真实情况。所以,与原来的模型相比,修正过的模型更好地反映了中国学习者习得提升动词的情况。

有关中国学习者在虚主语 *it* 和 *there* 习得过程中出现石化现象这一发现对我们的课堂教学有启示作用。而更为重要的是,有关主语和谓语之间语义不对称对二语习得者造成最大的学习困难这一发现不仅对认识英语提升动词的习得机制有新的启示,而且对认识动词作为一个整体的习得机制有新的启示。

本著作为

广东省“211工程”三期建设项目

《全球化背景下的外国语言文学》子课题

《中国学生的英语动词习得机制研究》(项目编号: GDUFS211-1-045)

研究成果

Abstract

Due to their unique semantics-syntax correspondence, *i.e.*, the predicate is not semantically related to the subject, but to the embedded verb of the sentence, English raising predicates pose learning difficulties to L2 learners, regardless of their L1 backgrounds. However, to date, the empirical studies that seek to account for the difficulties encountered by L2 learners are almost non-existent. As the first attempt to address this issue, the present study investigates, within the framework of the generative approach, the L2 acquisition of English raising predicates by Chinese EFL learners.

To achieve this purpose, three steps are taken: (i) establish a theoretical framework to account for Chinese EFL learners' behaviors in the acquisition of English raising predicates; (ii) systematically describe the acquisitional behaviors; and (iii) examine the extent to which the observed behaviors were explained within the established framework.

The linguistic and cross-linguistic analyses performed within the generative framework lead to the central issue of the present study: the semantic mismatch between the subject and the raising predicate is the major cause of difficulties encountered by L2 learners. This central issue, in turn, leads to the central research question: What are the underlying factors that trigger the recognition of the semantic mismatch in both raising and non-raising constructions and help L2 learners formulate the linking rules in the acquisition of English raising predicates? To address this issue, an *Integrated Parsing Model* is established. On the basis of the model, 5 hypotheses, which predict the developmental route supposed to be followed by Chinese EFL learners in their acquisition of English raising predicates, are put forth.

Then adopting the cross-sectional investigative approach, 145 Chinese EFL learners, who represented five levels of English proficiency (*i.e.*, elementary, low, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced), were recruited to participate in the present investigation. They were required to perform three tasks, *i.e.*, a guided writing production task (GWT), a grammaticality judgment task (GJT), and a think-aloud task (TAT).

The quantitative analyses of the GJT and GWT data yielded the following major findings: (i) the semantic mismatch between the subject and the raising predicate did pose a serious learning problem to Chinese EFL learners in their acquisition of English raising predicates; (ii) two distinct developmental routes of English raising predicate acquisition, *i.e.*, an approximately linear path of development of the knowledge of, and an inverted V-shaped route of their ability to use, raising predicates, were identified; (iii) learners failed to reach the level of native speakers in the acquisition of raising predicates; and (iv) the expletives *there* and *it* pose the greatest difficulty to the learners in the development of both knowledge about and productive control of English raising predicates.

The qualitative analysis of the TAT data reveals that the on-line parsing processes of English raising predicates have the following three features: First, the cues most commonly used by the learners of all proficiency levels are semantic and syntactic cues. The use of intuition begins to appear only when they reach the intermediate level. However, it never reaches the level of native speakers. Second, except the low-level group, all participant groups use cue combinations more often than they use single cues, and the more advanced the proficiency level, the more cue combinations are involved. Third, though the patterns of the cue use sequence vary from group to group, the more advanced the learners' proficiency, the more frequently the integration is employed in their parsing process.

A comparison of the above findings and our research hypotheses shows that (i) the prediction that the similarities between Chinese and English raising predicates can lead to positive transfer in the recognition of the semantic compatibility between the subject of the sentence and the embedded verb is generally borne out by the empirical data; (ii) the hypotheses derived from the *Integrated Parsing Model* are not fully supported, and (iii) the findings that the learners have shown a considerable awareness of all the syntactic and semantic properties of English raising predicates at the beginning stage and that they performed better in GJT on expletive *it* in the non-raising construction than in the raising construction are not predicted.

On the basis of these findings, the underlying factors that constrain the acquisition of English raising predicates in the Chinese context are identified. First, UG principles play a major role, through the learners' L1 (*i.e.*, Chinese), in their acquisition of English raising predicates. Their effect appears to be positive where English and Chinese are similar, but negative where the two languages are different. Second, the observed gap between knowledge and production represents, in essence, two interrelated perspectives of learning: competence and performance. In addition, the difficulty of learning English raising predicates is attributed to the semantic mismatch between the subject and the predicate. Third, the learners' failure to develop awareness of the semantic mismatch is attributed to the learners' chunking strategy and overgeneralization errors, which, in turn, results in their difficulty in learning the expletives *it* and *there*. As a result, fossilization occurs in Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English raising predicates.

Since there were discrepancies between the hypotheses derived from the *Model* and the actual observations, the *Model* was modified on the basis of the empirical findings. The *modified Model* is believed to present a better picture of the acquisition of English raising predicates

by Chinese EFL learners in the sense that it is a combination of the strengths of the Semantic and the Syntactic Bootstrapping Hypotheses and the findings of the empirical study. Thus the *Model* is not only compatible with the UG principles but also closer to the true picture of language acquisition.

The finding that the expletives *it* and *there* are fossilized in Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English raising predicates has its pedagogical implications in the classroom setting. More importantly, the key finding that the semantic mismatch poses the most serious learning problems to L2 learners sheds new light not only on the learning mechanism for English raising predicates, but also on the learning mechanism for all verbs as a whole.

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