中国英语专业学生产出性态度词汇发展研究

A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE ENGLISH MAJORS' PRODUCTIVE ATTITUDINAL LEXIS

·北　京·

Abstract

This dissertation is an attempt to investigate the developmental patterns of attitudinal lexis produced by Chinese English majors. Built on Appraisal Theory, a modified theoretical framework for attitudinal lexis analysis is constructed. According to this framework, attitudinal lexis can be analyzed in terms of type, loading, grammatical realization, source, graduation and intertextual connection. In addition, the methods commonly employed in vocabulary research in general such as lexical richness, lexical sophistication and size are incorporated into the analysis of the special type of vocabulary—attitudinal lexis.

In order to gain a more comprehensive picture of the productive ability of attitudinal lexis of Chinese English majors, the research design is composed of both controlled tasks and argumentative writing. 90 students from grade 1 to grade 3 (30 students for each grade) from a university in Beijing participate in the controlled tasks and 120 students from grade 1 to grade 3 (40 students for each grade) from WECCL are selected as the participants of the argumentative writing.

After a detailed analysis of the data, the following major findings are obtained from the research:

Firstly, it is shown in the controlled tasks that Chinese English majors' development of attitudinal lexis knowledge is closely related to their overall English proficiency level. From grade 1 to grade 3, Chinese English majors' judging lexis and appreciating lexis undergo continual progress in size, lexical richness, LS, semantic richness and

accuracy.

Secondly, a general trend of linear development and moving towards the NS norm in terms of richness, sophistication and density of attitudinal lexis in argumentative writing is detected as Chinese English majors enter a higher grade level. However, in terms of the production of the least frequently used attitudinal lexis and the production of the sophisticated attitudinal lexis, even though learners of grade 3 group have made significant progress, they are still far away from the NS norm.

Thirdly, with the increase of their English language proficiency, Chinese English majors have strategically reduced the use of affective lexis and judging lexis to convey attitudinal evaluation but turn to more appreciating lexis to focus on the evaluation of things in order to achieve the communicative goal of convincing objectively. Statistically, regarding the three types of attitudinal lexis and their respective subcategories there is no significant difference across grades except appreciating lexis and its subcategory composition. Compared with American students, significant underuse of the lexis for composition and the lexis for propriety as well as significant overuse of the lexis for capacity still exist in Chinese English majors' argumentative writing.

Fourthly, positive attitudinal lexis dominates in all the three types of attitudinal lexis across all grade groups, which results in the great disparity from the less unbalanced distribution of positive and negative attitudinal lexis overall and its subcategories in American students' writing. Furthermore, there is no significant improvement found across grades.

Fifthly, a linear increase pattern of development is found for o-

verall attitudinal nouns, judging nouns and appreciating nouns while a linear decrease pattern is discovered for attitudinal verbs and judging verbs from grade 1 to grade 3. Compared with the American students, significant differences exist in all the above aspects.

Sixthly, although the development of the attitudinal lexis coupled with author's explicit presence follows a linear pattern of decrease, Chinese English majors still tend to foreground their presence as the evaluator.

Seventhly, there is a steady increase in the attitudinal lexis graded by graduation resources from grade 1 to grade 3. Chinese English majors are moving towards the NS norm, but in some respects they are far from reaching the norm.

Finally, Chinese English majors tend to increasingly center the attitudinal lexis on the primary targets, thus creating an increasingly dense intertextual connection with the topic in the prompts.

Discussions on the research findings are carried out from various aspects covering learners' awareness of a communicative goal, restricted repertoire of attitudinal lexis, lack of critical thinking and instruction of vocabulary and writing.

This study has a number of important implications in theory, methodology and pedagogy. The present study is, to my knowledge, the first to investigate how the attitudinal lexis produced by L2 learners of English develops across grades, and thus the findings of this study are significant. It provides an insightful understanding of how attitudinal lexis develops in terms of lexical richness and lexical sophistication, type, loading, source and intertexual connection. Methodologically, this study investigates the development of attitudinal lexis more

thoroughly by using controlled tasks and argumentative writing tasks. This study also applies the statistical procedure to seek to test for significance for the differences detected in the descriptive statistics. Pedagogically, instead of primarily focusing on the correctness of grammar use or cohesion, EFL/ESL writing instruction in EFL/ESL context and learning needs to pay more attention to attitudinal lexis and its role in the construction of a text.

Key words: attitudinal lexis; development; Appraisal Theory

摘　　要

　　本研究主要目的在于揭示中国英语专业学生产出性态度词汇的发展模式。在评价理论的基础上,本研究提出了态度词汇研究的理论框架。该框架提出从类型、取向、语法形式、来源、级差和互文性的角度来研究态度词汇。同时结合词汇量、词汇丰富度和词汇复杂度等词汇研究方法来研究态度词汇知识。

　　为了全面了解中国英语专业学生产出性态度词汇能力,本研究从控制性产出和自由产出两个方面来考察态度词汇的发展。来自中国某大学的一至三年级的 90 名学生(每年级 30 名)完成了控制性任务。自由产出语料选自中国英语学习者书面语语料库(WECCL),包括 120 篇由英语专业一至三年级学生写的议论文(每年级 40 篇)。经数据分析后,本研究得出如下结论:

　　第一,对控制性任务分析表明中国英语专业学生态度词汇知识的发展与他们的总体英语水平的发展密切相关。从一年级到三年级,判断词汇和鉴赏词汇在词汇量、词汇丰富度、词汇复杂度及词汇准确度方面都呈现线性上升的趋势。

　　第二,对自由产出任务的分析显示随着学习者英语水平的提高,英语专业学生议论文中态度词汇的密度加大、词汇更丰富并且更复杂,但是在低频词和词汇复杂度方面与英语本族语者仍然存在很大差距。

　　第三,随着中国英语专业学生英语水平的提高,他们逐渐减少情感词汇和判断词汇在其议论文中的使用,而逐渐增加相对客观的、对事物本身进行评价的鉴赏词汇的使用。但是除了鉴赏词汇及其子类构成词汇之外,其他两类词汇及其子类在三个年级间都不存

在显著差异。与本族语者相比,中国英语专业学生仍然过度使用表达能力的词汇,而对表达正当性的词汇和构成性词汇使用不足。

第四,英语专业一至三年级学生议论文中都是以正面态度词汇为主,这与正、负面态度词汇相对平衡的本族语者用法存在很大差距。

第五,英语专业一至三年级学生议论文中态度名词及其子类判断名词和鉴赏名词呈现出线性上升的趋势,而态度动词及其子类判断动词呈下降趋势,但与本族语者用法相比仍然存在差距。

第六,英语专业一至三年级学生议论文中突显作者是显性评价者的态度词汇的使用呈现线性下降的趋势,但是与英语本族语者用法相比,仍然再多。

第七,英语专业一至三年级学生议论文中由级差资源修饰的态度词汇逐渐增加,并且逐渐接近本族语者用法,但是在某些方面仍然存在差距。

最后,英语专业一至三年级学生逐渐增加对作文提示中出现的评价对象进行评价,从而与作文提示中的话题建立起更加紧密的互文性关联。

本研究从不同角度对上述结果进行讨论,包括学习者的策略意识、学习者二语态度词汇局限、学习者批判意识、英语写作和词汇教学的影响等。

本研究具有理论和实践价值。本研究从类型、取向、语法形式、来源、级差和互文性的角度来研究态度词汇,理论框架有别于以往研究,可供借鉴。在研究方法上,从控制性产出和自由产出两个方面考察态度词汇的发展,在一定程度上补充和发展了该领域的研究。实践上,本研究结果对英语写作和词汇教学有一定的指导意义。

关键词:态度词汇;发展模式;评价理论

List of Abbreviations

Adj	adjective
Adv	adverb
Aff	affective lexis
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
App	appreciating lexis
AWL	academic vocabulary level
Author-im	author implicit
Author-ex	author explicit
BNC	British National Corpus
Cap	capacity
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English
Com	composition
Dis/inc	dis/inclination
Dis/sat	dis/satisfaction
In/sec	in/security
Inten	intensification
Jud	judging lexis
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LFP	Lexical Frequency Profile
LOCNESS	Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays
N	noun
Nor	normality
NS	native speaker
PriT	primary target

Pro	propriety
Quan	quantity
Rea	reaction
SecT	secondary target
SWECCL	Spoken and Written English Corpus of English Learners
Ten	tenacity
Un/hap	un/happiness
V	verb
Ver	veracity
WECCL	Written English Corpus of English Learners

Contents

Chapter One   Introduction

1. 1   Background of the study

The importance of vocabulary in general language acquisition and communication is widely accepted. L2 Lexicon is especially crucial to second language learners. The process of L2 vocabulary acquisition begins as soon as the L2 is encountered and continues long after other aspects of the L2 have been mastered. However, little attention has been given to the acquisition of lexicon in the field of second language acquisition until recent years. The past decade has witnessed a noteworthy increase in the study of L2 lexicon. The research can be divided into research on the theoretical construct of vocabulary knowledge including different dimensions of word knowledge, receptive/productive distinction of vocabulary knowledge and the representation of L2 mental lexicon; the empirical research on L2 vocabulary acquisition centering around 3 aspects: order of acquisition of different types of knowledge for each lexical item; order of acquisition of word classes and developmental stages of lexical processing. Research on the development of different types of evaluative lexis is absent in the field.

The choice of evaluative (attitudinal) lexis is based on the following considerations. Firstly, the expression of the writer's or speakers' attitude is an important function of language. The evaluative function of language has been recognized by some influential linguists such as Richards (1926), Jakobson (1960) and Halliday (1994). Evaluation is an important aspect of human life. Our perception and

interpretation of the world around us can never be completely objective, which is clearly reflected by our language. When we describe the state of affairs, we are at the same time expressing our attitudes towards, viewpoints on, or feelings about what we encounter. Evaluation is a strong force that permeates human life and is closely associated with human's system of values, which determines to a large part, whom we are, how we look at the world and which path of life we choose to take.

Furthermore, evaluation is of great importance in discourse. According to Hunston and Thompson (2000:6), evaluation can simultaneously be used to express the writer's opinion and in doing so to reflect the value system of that person and their community, to construct and maintain relations between the speaker/writer and hearer /reader, and to organize the discourse. The interpersonal function of evaluation is especially important, since interpersonal relations can be constructed, maintained and regulated through evaluation. Two persons with similar views of the world and the society are more likely to get along well with each other. In a word, evaluation is pervasive and indispensible in linguistic communication and in our daily life.

Evaluation, however, is an elusive and complicated phenomenon. There are different definitions, categorizations and labellings of evaluation. The three most accepted terms are evaluation (Hunston & Thompson, 2000), stance (Conrad & Biber, 2000) and appraisal (Martin & Rose, 2003). Evaluation is defined by Hunston and Thompson (2000:5) as

the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about. That attitude may relate to certainty or obligation or desirability or any of number of other sets

of values.

Appraisal is defined by Martin and Rose (2003:22) as

is concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negoti-
ated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in
which values are sourced and readers aligned.

Stance is defined by Conrad and Biber (2000:57) as

a cover term for the expression of personal feelings and assessments
in three major domains:

(1) epistemic stance, commenting on the certainty (or doubt), re-
liability, or limitations of a proposition, including comments on the
source of information;

(2) attitudinal stance, covering the speaker's attitude, feelings or
value judgements;

(3) style stance, describing the manner in which the information is
being presented.

It can be seen that although the three definitions have different
emphasis, there is an overlap in them in that they all involve the atti-
tudinal aspect and the epistemic aspect of the phenomenon. In this
dissertation, evaluation is used as an umbrella term to cover the range
of linguistic resources used by the evaluator (a conscious subject) to
express value assessments on the object (participants, behaviors,
things, events, performances, etc.). Appraisal is used to refer to the
Appraisal Theory developed by Martin et al. The focus of study is the
lexis for expressing the kinds of attitudes under the system of Attitude
of Appraisal Theory excluding the lexis for epistemic aspect of certain-
ty or doubt. Due to the complicated nature of evaluation, the manipu-
lation of evaluative language may pose a considerable challenge to
non-native English undergraduates (Hyland, 2004). Attitudinal lex-
is, as a major device of expressing attitude, is a useful and consistent

way to understand inscribed evaluations. Thus this study pursues this line of enquiry with a particular focus on the development of the lexis for expressing attitude (attitudinal lexis).

1. 2　Significance of the study

This study aims at revealing the status quo of the acquisition of attitudinal lexis by Chinese EFL learners at the tertiary level. More specifically, it will explore the developmental patterns of attitudinal lexis produced by Chinese English majors from grade 1 to grade 3 in controlled written production tasks and in free production tasks. This study is significant in the following aspects. Firstly, it extends the research on L2 vocabulary acquisition by focusing on the developmental patterns of a special kind of vocabulary —attitudinal lexis. It provides an insightful understanding of how attitudinal lexis knowledge develops across grades in terms of size, lexical richness and lexical sophistication. Secondly, this study, to my knowledge, is the first to investigate the attitudinal lexis using elicitation tasks. The controlled tasks combined with the corpus data may shed more light on a single phenomenon and more facets of details may be revealed. Thirdly, the study of attitudinal lexis produced in argumentative writing by Chinese English majors is a useful addition to the literature of various applications of Appraisal Theory. It shows that the framework of Appraisal Theory is very effective in analyzing and classifying different types of attitudinal lexis. In addition to the classification of attitudinal lexis in terms of the three subsystems of Attitude, it also looks at the loading of attitudinal lexis, the grammatical realization of attitudinal lexis, the source of attitudinal lexis and the intertexual connection between the attitudinal lexis used in the prompts and that in the argumentative writing scripts. The multiple perspectives provide a more detailed and more

comprehensive framework for gaining a better understanding of attitudinal lexis. Finally, this study shows the feasibility of conducting a quantitative study within the framework of Appraisal Theory. The previous studies under Appraisal Theory have been conducted in a variety of discourse, such as media discourse (Bednarek, 2006; Chen, 2007), legal discourse (Korner, 2000), history discourse (Coffin, 2000) and academic discourse (Hood, 2004). These studies are qualitative-oriented in nature. Different from previous studies, this study applies the statistical procedure to seek to test for significance for the differences detected in the descriptive statistics. The examination of statistical significance allows the description of the development of attitudinal lexis at different stages of learning with more confidence in terms of rapid development (statistical significant difference) or slow development (non-significant difference).

1. 3   Organization of the study

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter One explains some preliminary issues concerning the present study, including the background, the significance and the organization of the study.

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature related to the present study. The review covers different facets of vocabulary knowledge, different measures of productive vocabulary measures, four approaches to study evaluation and the empirical studies on students' writing. The limitations of the previous studies calls for a more thorough and detailed analysis of attitudinal lexis produced by Chinese EFL learners at the university level from a developmental perspective with reference to the NS norm.

Chapter Three introduces the theoretical foundation of this dissertation, Appraisal Theory and intertextuality in detail. It concerns the

historical development of the theory, the three systems and their respective subsystems and the theoretical framework informing this study.

Chapter Four describes the methodology of the present study including research questions, research instruments, participants, procedures for data collection and data analysis as well as annotating and statistical tools used in this dissertation.

Chapter Five and Chapter Six present the major findings of the study. Chapter Five addresses the development of attitudinal lexis from the perspective of lexical richness, LS, density, type, loading, source, grammatical realizations and intertextual connection. The possible factors that may affect the use of attitudinal lexis are also discussed. Chapter Six investigates the development of attitudinal lexis in two controlled tasks. The attitudinal lexis elicited from Task I is examined first in terms of size, lexical richness, LS and semantic richness. Task II is an exploration of the performance of the three grade groups in the mastery of predetermined target attitudinal lexis.

In Chapter Seven, the dissertation is concluded by summarizing the major findings of the current study, points out the implications as well as limitations and suggestions for future research.