外语课堂教学中的否定反馈

Negative Feedback
in
Chinese EFL Classrooms

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序　言

外语学习过程中不可避免会出现各类语言错误,这些错误的存在给学习者造成了很大的困扰,尤其是内向、自信心弱、学习水平较低的学生。作为一名具有高度责任感的外语教师,作者最初关注否定反馈问题就是源于对这一点的认识。在大量阅读国内外学术期刊相关文章的基础上,作者曾进行小范围的实证研究,并在国内核心期刊上发表了研究结果。而本书在作者的博士论文基础上修订而成的,内容涉及面更广、更深入,研究设计更新、更全面,统计数据分析更透彻,具有创新性,对改进外语教学具有很好的指导作用。

本书具有以下特点:

1. 内容丰富

作者在阅读大量相关资料的基础上对现有文献中错误的定义、分类、成因、评定标准以及否定反馈的必要性、作用和决定因素等问题进行了深入分析,根据二语习得理论提出了更合理的想法,接着对作者的研究对象、方法、数据搜集和分析结果进行了详细阐述,本书科学运用了注意假设、语言发展阶段假设、输入说、输出说、技能习得等二语习得理论对语言学习的各种现象和过程进行了剖析,同时运用了认知心理学、社会心理学、人格心理学和教育心理学分析学生的需求和个体差异,探讨否定反馈的实用性和适用性问题。

2. 视角独特

笔者通过大范围的实证研究,对于外语学习环境中教师提供否定反馈的情况进行了深入系统的调查分析,详细对比了教师的纠错行为与学生需求的差异,这在二语习得领域尚属首次。还有一些外语课堂教学中被忽略的重要问题,如小组活动中的同伴反馈问题、

学习者的学习水平、性格、自信心强弱、第二课堂焦虑感强弱等在否定反馈方面的不同需求等问题,在本书中也进行了详细分析和讨论。

3. 指导实践

本书作者对于错误和否定反馈相关问题的想法能够帮助学者们运用新视角、从不同的角度看问题,有利于拓宽视野、增进认识。而本次实证研究的独特设计,尤其是第二语言自信心、第二语言焦虑感、冒险性等个体差异问题与否定反馈相关性的研究,将给学者们以新的启示,激发其研究兴趣,有利于促进二语习得研究,尤其是学习者心理研究的发展。就研究结果而言,本书的详细分析有利于教师了解学生的学习心理和不同需求、了解同伴反馈情况、发现教学中的不足之处,从而改善教学,调整和丰富教学手段和方法,使学生从外语课堂的否定反馈中最大程度受益。这对于实现高等学校的教学目标、培养高水平的复合型外语人才有积极作用。

希望本书的出版能增进外语教学研究者和工作者对否定反馈和语言学习过程的认识,进一步促进我国的外语教学。

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摘　　要

　　外语学习过程中,由于学习者缺乏语言知识或缺少可以随时正确运用的程序化知识,语言错误不可避免。过去行为主义学派认为,外语学习就是形成新的语言习惯,而错误被看做失败的标志,逢错必究。随着认知主义理论的发展和人们对语言学习过程的了解不断深入,语言错误不再被看做洪水猛兽,而成为促进语言学习的工具。研究表明,只提供肯定反馈会导致一些错误的语言形式长时间存在于中介语中,产生石化,致使学习者到达某一发展阶段后无法进一步提高。事实上,纠正语言错误不仅必需,而且有很大的促进作用。它能帮助学习者进行认知对比、调整假设、加速语言规则和知识的吸收。对于我国的大学生来说,课堂教学是学习和提高语言能力的主要途径,教师的课堂纠错行为对学生中介语的形成和发展有重要影响。然而,就目前情况来看,否定反馈方面的研究多集中于外语学习者与本国语者的对话和沉浸式教学,虽然有学者已开始进行英语作为外语(EFL)的课堂教学调查,但对于教师在外语课堂的纠错行为、学生在小组活动中的同伴反馈和学生个体差异我们知之甚少。本书作者旨在通过实证研究,对外语环境中课堂否定反馈情况进行深入了解和分析,以求找到更有效的教学方法提高教学水平,改善外语教学。

　　本书共分为五章。

　　第一章简要介绍了写作背景、写作目的和篇章结构。

　　第二章详细阐述了以往否定反馈研究中语言错误的定义、类型、成因、评定标准以及人们对待语言错误的态度和错误严重性的评估标准。总体而言,语言错误可根据三方面进行判断:形式是否

正确、上下文是否合适以及是否有可接受性。母语干扰、语内迁移、误导性教学和交际技巧的运用等原因会导致语言能力错误出现,而语言使用错误的出现可能由于学习者认知和心理方面的局限所致。

第三章是关于否定反馈问题,分为四节,即否定反馈的定义、必要性和作用、决定因素以及研究综述。否定反馈也称为"否定输入"、"纠正性反馈"、"反馈",给予否定反馈时应考虑多方面因素,如活动的目标、与标准语的偏离度、语义清晰度、出现频率、学习者语言水平、情感因素、性格因素等。现有的文献可从错误反馈频率、反馈错误类型、反馈方式、反馈时间和反馈者等五方面进行分析。

第四章阐述了本次实证研究的目的、方法、结果,就反馈频率、纠错类型、反馈方式等问题进行讨论。研究对象包括五所大学352名一年级学生和十二所大学80位外语教师,研究结果如下:

1. 教师的纠错频率不高,纠正最多的是表达错误,其次是语法错误和语音错误。教师采用最多的纠错方式是重述和启发。有部分教师使用非语言方式提供否定反馈。大多数情况下教师在学生结束表达后提供反馈。全班性课堂活动和小组讨论及两人活动时教师的纠错行为有所不同。

2. 英专教师和非英专教师纠错行为的不同之处表现在:1)英专教师的纠错频率较非英专教师低;2)相对而言,英专教师纠正学生的表达错误更多,而非英专教师纠正语法错误和语音错误更多;3)英专教师更常采用要求说明的纠错方式,而非英专教师更常采用明确纠正和元语言反馈。

3. 大多数教师在纠错时考虑到了学生个体差异。对于低水平学生、女同学、缺乏自信心的学生、冒险性差的学生和焦虑感强的学生教师的纠错频率相对较低。对于内向和外向学生、较高水平的学生和较低水平的学生、自信心强和自信心弱的学生、冒险性强和冒险性弱的学生以及焦虑感强和焦虑感弱的学生教师采取

的纠错方式有所不同。

4. 学生对语言错误和教师纠错持肯定态度,但不希望教师过于频繁地纠错。他们认为最有必要得到纠正的是语音错误和表达错误,希望教师提供机会给他们自己纠正错误,特别是英专学生。大多数学生希望教师在他们表达结束后纠正错误。他们赞成教师在全班性课堂活动和小组活动或两人活动时采用不同的纠错方式。总的来说,教师的纠错行为符合学生的要求。

5. 较高水平的学生、自信心强的学生、冒险性强的学生和第二语言信心强的学生希望教师采用能让他们自纠的纠错方式。较低水平的学生、冒险性弱的学生和焦虑感强的学生和第二语言信心弱的学生最喜欢的纠错方式是重述。

6. 学生对于同伴纠错持肯定态度。他们在小组讨论和两人活动时不常相互纠错。他们纠正同伴最多的是语音错误,最常采用的同伴纠错方式是重述。

7. 较高水平的学生、外向学生、自信心强的学生、冒险性强的学生、焦虑感弱的学生和第二语言信心强的学生更常提供机会让同伴自己纠错。较低水平的学生和自信心弱的学生常采用重述纠正同伴的错误。冒险性弱的学生和第二语言自信心弱的学生喜欢明确纠正同伴的错误。

8. 相对于低水平学生、内向学生和冒险性弱的学生而言,高水平学生、外向学生和冒险性强的学生更喜欢能让他们自纠的同伴纠错方式。焦虑感强的学生最喜欢重述的纠错方式,焦虑感弱的学生最喜欢明确纠正。第二语言信心弱的学生喜欢明确纠正,第二语言信心强的学生喜欢重述。

本书第五章再次总结了研究结果,进一步阐述了该研究对于改进外语教学的作用和意义,探讨了如何就外语课堂否定反馈问题进行深层次调查研究。

Abstract

In the course of language learning, learners inevitably commit all kinds of errors for lack of linguistic knowledge and lack of proceduralized knowledge ready to be employed in performance. According to behaviorists, language learning is a process of habit formation. As symptoms of failure, errors are supposed to be eliminated from the classroom altogether. With the development of cognitive theories and deeper understanding of the learning process, errors begin to be viewed as tools facilitative to learning. Research findings have indicated that provision of positive feedback only will cause some erroneous forms to exist in interlanguage lastingly, thus resulting in fossilization. This suggests the importance of negative feedback. Actually negative feedback is not only necessary but also effective in that it can help learners make cognitive comparisons, adjust their hypotheses and hasten the speed of second language incorporation.

To millions of Chinese university students, instruction is the major means to improve language proficiency. Therefore, teachers' corrective behavior has considerable impact on their interlanguage development. However, with most of research focusing on negative feedback in NS-NNS interactions and immersion classrooms, we have little knowledge of how negative feedback is provided in foreign language learning context. This book represents an attempt to discover teachers' corrective behavior in classrooms, individual students' needs and individual students' feedback provision in group discussions.

This book consists of five chapters.

Chapter One introduces briefly the research background and purpose of writing.

Chapter Two is about definition of errors, attitudes towards errors, evaluation of errors, judgment of error gravity, types of errors and causes of errors. Judgment of errors can be based on three criteria: correctness, appropriateness and acceptability. The causes of errors of competence include interference of L1, intralingual transfer, misconception – including teaching and use of communicative strategies. On the other hand, the occurrence of errors of performance results from cognitive and psychological restrictions.

Chapter Three addresses such questions as definition of negative feedback, the necessity and effect of giving negative feedback and factors taken into account in error treatment, followed by a literature review of empirical studies investigating error treatment. Purpose of the activity, grammaticality of the learners' expressions, clarity of meaning, frequency of the occurrence of errors, language level of the students, their personality and affective needs are factors that count much when a teacher considers whether to give negative feedback or not.

Chapter Four states the purpose of the study and methodology employed, reports findings and discusses how often, what, how, when and who to treat errors in teacher-student interactions and student-student interactions. The subjects included eighty teachers from twelve universities and three hundred and fifty-two freshmen from five higher learning institutes. Data were collected by the administration of questionnaires and interviews. Findings were as follows:

1. Teachers did not over-react to students' errors. The type of errors they treated most frequently was expression errors. Next were grammatical errors and pronunciation errors. The techniques employed most by teachers were recast and elicitation. Some teachers made use of non-verbal means in providing negative feedback. Most of the teachers corrected student errors after the students finished with their expressions. Teachers' corrective behavior differed when students were engaged in teacher-centered activities and pair/group work.

2. The difference between EM teacher group and NEM teacher group mainly consisted in: 1) EM teachers corrected their students less often than NEM teachers. 2) EM teachers treated expression errors more than NEM teachers, while NEM teachers treated grammatical and pronunciation errors more. 3) EM teachers used clarification request more than NEM teachers, while NEM teachers used explicit correction and metalinguistic feedback more.

3. A majority of teachers did take individual differences into account in providing corrective feedback. They corrected LP students, female students, students with low self-esteem, low risk-takers and students with high level of language anxiety less often. They employed different means of correction to extroverts and introverts, HP students and LP students, students with high self-esteem and students with low self-esteem, high risk-takers and low risk-takers and students with high level of language anxiety and students with low level of language anxiety.

4. The students held a positive attitude towards errors and error correction. However, they did not want error to be corrected too frequently. Two types of errors put at the top of their priority list, which were worth great attention in error treatment, were pronunciation errors and expression errors. The students preferred corrective techniques leading to self-repair. English majors had a stronger desire to be offered the opportunities to correct errors by themselves. Students wanted their teachers to correct their errors upon their completion of expression. They approved of their teachers' different way of treating errors in whole-class activities and pair/group work. On the whole, teachers' corrective behavior could meet the students' needs.

5. The preferred corrective techniques of HP students, students with high self-esteem, high risk-takers and students with high L2 confidence were those leading to self-repair. For LP students, low risk-takers, students with high language anxiety level and students with low L2 confidence, their favorite corrective technique was recast.

6. Students' attitude toward peer correction was positive. They did not treat peers' errors frequently. They corrected their peers' pronunciation errors most often and recast erroneous expressions most often in peer correction.

7. HP students, extroverts, students with high self-esteem, high risk-takers, students with low language anxiety level and students with high L2 confidence tended to provide their peers with more opportunities for self-repair. LP students and students with low self-esteem often used recast. Low risk-takers and students with low L2 confidence liked to correct peers' errors explicitly.

8. In pair/group work HP students, extroverts and high risk-takers preferred corrective techniques leading to self-repair more than LP students, introverts and low risk-takers. Students with high language anxiety level were fond of recast, while students with low language anxiety level liked explicit correction best. Students with low L2 confidence preferred explicit correction, while students with high L2 confidence were in favor of recast.

Chapter Five is the conclusion part. Major findings are summarized. Included in this chapter are also pedagogical implications and limitations of the study.

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Chapter One   Introduction

The beginning of the twenty-first century sees the great advancement of global economy. The close cooperation between countries in trade and culture entails the use of a second language as an effective means of communication. As is known to all, to get a good command of a foreign language requires not only one's determination and strong will to overcome various kinds of difficulties in the course of learning, but also optimal facilitative learning environment and conditions. When someone lives in a country where the second language is spoken, wide exposure to the target language and abundant opportunities to contact native-speakers will enable him to gain linguistic knowledge and improve language skills in everyday life without much difficulty. However, for an overwhelming majority of people, especially Chinese, they are not so lucky to get access to the ideal learning environment. Instruction, therefore, turns out to be crucial for their language learning. Such factors as teaching materials, means of instruction, importance attached to the accuracy and fluency of language use and theoretical basis of instruction all lead to different outcome of learning.

In the course of moving forward through developmental stages, language learners inevitably commit various kinds of linguistic errors in an attempt to use the target language. Since instructors are facilitators of the learning process, their belief in language learning and teaching will have profound influence on their attitude toward learners' errors and thus affect their "corrective reactions" (Chaudron 1986). It has been widely accepted that errors play a significant role in the language learning

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process, as Corder pointed out more than three decades ago. They are indicators suggesting to what extent the language learners have grasped the target language system and in what aspects they are in need of help (Corder 1967). Upon the occurrence of linguistic errors, the appropriate way of treating them will greatly facilitate learning. Up to now, however, no deep-probing investigation as to how errors are treated in the foreign language context has been carried out. Hopefully, my research will provide the instructors in China with a clear picture of how negative feedback is given in EFL classrooms and what are the students' needs and wants. With this in mind, we can take effective measures to improve teaching quality. For the sake of limited time and space, I will confine my report to treatment of linguistic errors made in classroom interactions, including conversations between teacher and students and discussions among students in doing pair work or group work.

This book consists of five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction part. Chapter Two is about definition of errors, attitudes towards errors, evaluation of errors, judgment of error gravity, types of errors and causes of errors. Chapter Three addresses such questions as definition of negative feedback, the necessity and effect of giving negative feedback and factors taken into account in, followed by a literature review of empirical studies providing negative feedback. Chapter Four states the purpose of the study and methodology employed, reports findings and discusses how often, what, how, when and who to treat errors in teacher-student interactions and student-student interactions. Instructive suggestions are made on these questions. Chapter Five is the conclusion part. Major findings are summarized. Included in this chapter are also pedagogical implications and limitations of the study.