FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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外语教学与语言研究
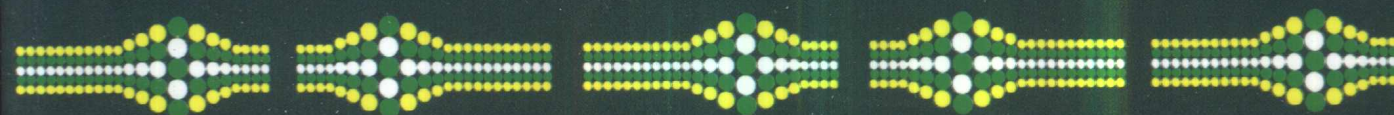
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前　言

　　《外语教学与语言研究》是一本集理论探索与教学实践成果为一体的综合性论文集,收录了我国外语界广大师生在语言学领域的微观研究、中外语言文化对比、外语教学理论与实践、翻译理论与技巧、文学评论等多方面的研究成果,从不同层次、不同角度反映了我国近年来外语教学与语言研究的现状。

　　随着我国经济与文化科技事业的迅猛发展,现代外语教学的重点已转向学生实际语言教学能力的培养,新的教学目标要求我们对当前大、中学外语教学课程的设置、教学法的改进以及考试制度的改革都提出了更高更新的要求。广大外语教育工作者在辛勤耕耘于教学课堂的同时,也积极从事着语言、教学理论方面的探索与研究,以科研推动教学的进步。

　　本论文集作为全国性的外语教学论坛,为这些外语教学工作者提供了一个积累思想、交流科研成果的领地,我们希望将有越来越多的外语界人士加入这一讨论与探索,也希望通过该论文集的出版发行促进各校间的互相学习与交流,为深化外语教学改革、提高教学质量祈祷积极的推动作用。

　　在此谨向所有积极为本论文集撰稿、并取得丰硕教学成果的教师表示衷心的感谢与祝贺!

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编　者

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语言学研究

试析英、汉语模糊性和不合逻辑性

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摘　要　本文分析了英、汉语模糊性和不合逻辑性现象和存在的方式,着重从形式与意义的关系的角度论述了模糊性和不合逻辑性对语义的理解以及英、汉互译的影响。

关键词　模糊性(fuzziness)　不合逻辑性(illogicality)　歧义(ambiguity)　无标志(unmarked)

人们在实际使用语言时,所使用的语言材料常常是不精确的、含混不清、或定义不明的。这些表达法的不精确性丝毫不影响它们的表达功能,不妨碍实现交际目的,有时还是相当必要的。例如,在描绘一个人的长相时,说他"高鼻梁,大眼睛,中等个头"。但是,如果鼻梁高度,眼睛大小都用精确数据来表示,可能反而不如用模糊的语言更清楚。语言中有时虽然使用了精确的语言材料,但读者和听众仍然用理解模糊语言的方式来理解它们,从中获取模糊的意义。如,当我们说"上海有一千六百万人"时,听话者肯定不会认为上海的人口是一千六百万整数。语言无论在形式上还是在所表达的信息上都存在一定的模糊性。由于这种特性在不同的语言中有不同的表现场合和表现形式,因此对于把该语言当作外语而学习的人来说,这就会造成问题,比如,一个中国孩子不可能说"我妈妈是一个女工人",而当他把"My mother is an actress"翻译成汉语时,译文很可能就是"我妈妈是一个女演员"。其实,这里的"女"字是多余的。英语中的 actress 体现了性别,而汉语的"演员"一词在性别上是模糊的。

一、几种模糊性与不合逻辑性现象

自然语言的不合逻辑性是指语言中的这样一种现象,即在客观世界中本来存在理念逻辑关系的事物之间的这种关系在表达它们的语言材料中得不到体现,或是由于表现本来不存在这种理念逻辑关系的事物之间的语言材料体现了这种关系。

1. 正反关系的谬误　语言中有这样的现象,本来明白无误的一对反义词,在有些场合它们意思却完全一样。如"大胜"与"打败"在以下两句话中实为同义:"上海中远队 6 比 1 大败四川绵阳队","上海中远队 6 比 1 大胜四川绵阳队"。另外,"我没来上海之前就能听懂上海话了"的意思实际也就是"我来上海之前就能听懂上海话了"。这里的"来上海之前"和"没来上海之前"也完全相同。英语中的双重及多重否定也属于这种现象,如:

There aren't no trains now. (= There aren't trains now.)

They don't seem hardly able to help it. (= They seem hardly able to understand it.)

还有一个有趣的现象,在一个人去世之后,人们在提及他去世之前的某个时间时用"他生前……"的说法。而从逻辑上讲,这里应该用"死前"才对。但当一个人仍然活着的时候,指这段时间无论用"生前"还是用"死前"都是不妥当的。

2. 形式对应的语言材料不存在　意思的模糊性也可能因为本应存在对应关系的事物在语言里缺乏同样能体现这种对应关系的语言材料或形式。英语中 child 和 children 存在单数与复数的对应关系,而这种关系在汉语里就没有词汇来体现。如果说"他有孩子了",听话人就无从知道"他"到底有一个孩子还是有多个孩子。再

如,汉语有"弟弟、妹妹,哥哥、姐姐,爸爸、妈妈,爷爷、奶奶,外公、外婆",这些词汇所表示的亲属关系的阴阳性对应是清楚的。而有些方言却用"太太"一词来表示"曾祖父或曾祖母"[1],因此,其表达的性别意思是模糊的。英语中的"cousin"也属于同类情况。汉语中本不相同的亲属成员"叔叔、伯伯、舅舅、姑父、姨夫"在英文中只有uncle一词来指称。正是由于这种由笼统所造成的模糊性,人们很难精确地将 one of her uncles 翻译成中文。

3.无标志单位的使用而造成的不合逻辑现象　语言中存在大量的表示模糊概念的词汇,如"深"与"浅"、"高"与"矮(或低)"、"老"与"小"、"快"与"慢"、"宽"与"窄"等。那些表示高程度的词可以用来表示程度低的词。现代结构主义语言学将这批本用于表示程度高的词称为无标志(unmarked)单位。例如,old 可以包括 young。因此,说话者可以指着一个婴儿问别人"How old is he/she?"。语言中表示对立的两个单位之间,有标志单位所表示的实在意义范围小,因此使用机会少,而无标志单位所表示的实在意义范围大,因此使用机会多,伍铁平教授将此称为"有趣的现象"[3]。这种有趣的现象使得许多无标志词的意思模糊起来。这种模糊性还有一定的不可推延性。我们可以说"How old is he?"来打听一个婴儿的年龄,可以说"How tall is he?"来询问一个矮个子人的身高,可以说"How heavy is it?"来打听一个很轻的物体的重量;可以说"How wide is it?"来了解一条很窄的道路的宽度,等等。但是,我们不能用"How fat is he?"来询问一个瘦人的胖瘦程度,也不能用"How rich is he?"来打听某人的贫富程度。这种不可推延性也是语言与思维的模糊关系的一种体现。

4.借代修辞法所产生的不合逻辑现象及语义模糊性　两个事物由于存在某种共同点,人们用其中的一个来指称另一个,或者用经常被用来表示其中一个事物的词汇来表示另一个,这就叫借代或称提喻(metonymy)。借代修辞法也是生成新词汇的方式,如"电脑"、"机器人"、"纸老虎"等。但是,这也造成了一定程度的模糊性。一个外国人学汉语时很难一下子了解"电灯"是灯,而"电脑"不是"脑","木头人(wooden head)"是人而不是木头,"稻草人"是草而不是人,"金鱼"、"银鱼"是鱼,而木鱼却不是鱼,"布鞋"是鞋,而"布衣"却可以不是衣(平民百姓)。汉语里利用借代手段而产生的偏正修饰关系带

有相当的随意性,这种随意性所产生的模糊性会给语言翻译造成一定的困难。如将"铁姑娘"译成"iron girl",意思可以明白,而将"铁公鸡"译成"iron cock"就没有翻出意思来,"铁饼(discus)"因其形状而得名,"铁蚕豆(roasted broad bean)"因其坚硬的属性而得名,"铁树(sago cycas)"因其难得开花而得名.但这些事物的属性在英语对该事物的命名上却没有发生作用,因此将"铁树开花"译成"the iron tree in blossom[4]"恐怕有些不明不白了。

二、模糊性的存在方式

英、汉语言所具有的模糊性一般都体现在其词汇意义的不明确性、所使用的语言形式与要表达的语义内容的关系的模糊性,即语言形式可能是模糊的,但所要表达的意义却是明确的;或语言形式是确切的、而语义内容可能是模糊的。

1.模糊形式,确切的意思　语言形式模糊指使用的词本身意义就不明确、甚至连其形式都模糊的语言材料,但在该使用场合其所指的意义是明确的。如"Her big eyes deeply impressed me"。此句中的 eyes 是复数形式,即 eye 的数量可能是大于"1"的任何一个数,所以属于模糊的形式。但实际上这里的意思是确切的,即只能是两只眼睛。又如:adult 一词指"成人",意思似乎明确,但到达什么样的年纪才算是成人? 英美国家有十六岁,十八岁和二十一岁之说[5],因此,adult film, adult bookstore 算是比较模糊的语言形式。但在此,它们的意思却是相对明确的,分别指"含有色情内容的电影"和"销售含有色情内容的书籍、杂志、录像带的店铺"[5]。

2.确定的形式,模糊的意思　在英、汉语中,表层信息与深层的话语意思不完全吻合的情况是很多的。有时,表层信息是精确的,而深层的话语意思是模糊的,数词的用法就是一个典型的例子。确切的数量词失去其明确的数量意义而带有比较模糊意思的用法在英、汉语都是非常普遍的。汉语中很多含有"一"字的词语中的数量尽管是确切的,但其所表达的信息的数量却都是模糊的。如:"一尘不染"、"一点儿"、"一股劲"、"一晃(读上声)儿就不见了"、"一晃(读去声)就是五年"、"一来二去"、"一溜烟"、"一五一十"、"一泻千里"、"一知半解"等。其他数词词语也有类似用法,如:"过两天再说"、"值俩(读上声)钱儿","一男半女"、"一时半会

儿"、"一星半点儿"、"五百年前是一家"、"得寸进尺"、"寸金难买寸光阴"、"三三两两"、"三个臭皮匠，赛过诸葛亮"等。另外，汉语的"二百五"几乎完全失去了表示数量的用法，而成为"有些傻气，做事卤莽的人"的代名词[1]。这种语言形式明确而意思却相对模糊的情况英语中也有大量存在。如：a minute，a moment，a moment or two。half 一词在以下词组中的用法：That's a book and a half（那时一本非常精彩的书），half under（喝醉），by half（大大地），half back（前卫）。由 hundred 组成的词组很多也是这种情况：a hundred and one（很多，大量），如：in a hundred and one ways（千方百计地），reply to somebody's a hundred and one questions（回答某人许多问题）；a hundred percent（完好的，健康的）。

3. 内容与形式的关系模糊　语言形式模糊还指表达同样意思的语言形式无固定规律，内容决定形式的决定因素模糊，有相当的随意性。英语的大小写规则可以看做这一情况的典型的例子。英语中 universe（宇宙）的首字母不要大写，而 the Galaxy（银河系）却要大写；the solar system（太阳系）却又不大写；在太阳系中，除地球之外所有的行星首字母都要大写，如：Mercury（水星）、Venus（金星）、Mars（火星）、Jupiter（木星）、Saturn（土星）、Uranus（天王星）、Neptune（海王星）和 Pluto（冥王星）的首字母都要大写，尽管某一词是否要大写是明确的，但决定这一规则的因素却是比较模糊性的，具有一定的随意性。

三、结论

语言的模糊性和非逻辑性体现在语义的模糊性和语言形式的模糊性以及形式与意义的之间的关系的模糊性，但由于"模糊"一词本身就具有模糊性，所以这一研究也难免存在如[6]所说的遗憾：研究在很大程度上罗列了一些具有模糊特性的语言材料，"不能按照合理的方式高度有机地把它们结合在一起，形成完整的系统"。

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Pragmatics in the World of International Business Agreement

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Abstract: This paper attempts to integrate pragmatics with international business, and observe how speakers use the sentences of a language to effect successful communication in the field, it also hopes to contribute to integration of linguistics and international business.

Keywords Pragmatics　Illocutionary speech act　International business agreement

Introduction

In 1915, Saussure published his *Course in General Linguistics*, which symbolizes the beginning of Modern Linguistic studies. Since then, remarkable progress has been made in the field of modern linguistics. The scholars from different countries have made arduous efforts in the study of languages from different perspectives, at different levels, and in different methods, and have contributed a large amount of linguistic literature. With further exploration on language study, linguistics tends to be integrated with other subjects, such as Psychology, sociology and philosophy, therefore, linguistics has involved into a cross-discipline and frontier science. This paper, integrating John Searle's classification of illocutionary speech with business agreement, intends to prove the intertwined and complementary relationship between linguistics and international business, in other words, it focuses on how pragmatics makes itself felt in international business.

John Searle's classification of illocutionary speech acts and the applications in the field of International business

John Searle, the prominent linguist, makes great contribution to the development of pragmatics by his classification of five general types of illocutionary speech acts, namely (1) representatives, (2) directives, (3) commissives, (4) expressives, (5) declarations. The international business agreement consists of two parts, one is the part of technical information, and the other is that of trade. The five illocutionary speech acts can be felt in Agreement.

(1) The illocutionary point of the representatives is to commit the speaker to the something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition. In other words, when performing an illocutionary act of representative, the speaker is making a statement or giving a description. With a view to forms of writing, the descriptive form is frequently used in Agreement as is seen in the part of technical information describing a process, the size, shape and feature of a machine. The technical information in Agreement is to explain the nature of the things. Based on the theoretical statements, technical information concerned with Agreement is presented here A) Raw material formalin (55wt.% HCHO) is fed to the First-stage Concentrator to concentrate to 60% ~ 70%. Continuing through the Polymerizer for stabilizing, concentrated formalin is supplied to the Second-stage Concentrator to further concentrate to 80 – 85wt.%.

These concentrators use a vacuum method.

This piece of information, served as speech act, is to provide process and procedures to be taken for the purpose of manufacturing of paraformaldehyde.

B) The lathe is used for cutting metal from the surface of a round work fastened between the two lathe centers and turning around its axis. In turning the work, a cutter moves in the direction parallel to the axis of rotation of the work or at an angle to this axis, cutting off the metal form the surface of the work. This movement of the cutter is called the feed. The cutter is clamped in the tool post which is mounted on the carriage. The carriage is the mechanism feeding the cutter in the needed direction. The lathe hand may feed the cutter by hand or make it be fed automatically by means of special gears.

This paragraph tends to describe the parts of a turning machine. Representative serves as a major part

in technical information description of Agreement.

(2) Directives are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. Inviting, suggesting, requesting, advising, warning, threatening, ordering are all specific instances of this class. According to this hypothesis, an article in terms of trade in Agreement is adopted as evidence.

Notwithstanding any other provisions to the contrary in this Agreement or in the Appendices hereto, if licensee shall fail or refuse to perform any of its material obligations under this Agreement, Licensor may give written notice to licensee specifying the particulars of such failure or refusal, and in the event licensee shall not have rectified such as failure or refusal with twenty (20) days after the date of such notice, Licensor may immediately stop providing any of the Technical Information or other services under this Article, without accepting any responsibility or incurring any liability therefrom until such default shall be cured to Licensor's satisfaction.

In this article, the licensor issues warning and threatening signals to the licensee.

(3) Commisives are those illocutionary acts whose point is to commit the speaker to some future course of action, i.e. when speaking the speaker puts himself under obligation. Promising, undertaking, vowing are the most typical cases. As for this point, the article of Indemnification and Total liability in Agreement is the convincing example:

If the Test Run(s) is (are) not fulfilled due to reasons solely attributable to Licensor, Licensor shall correct the defeat at Licensor's expense, however, only up to the extent set forth below in this Article and report the Test Run(s). If and only when all or any part of the Test Run (s) is (are) not successful within three (3) months or six (6) or for any postponement mutually agreed upon by the parties as the case may be under Article 9.10. hereof from the (respective)Date of Start-up due to reasons solely attributable to licensor, licensor shall indemnify licensee for liquidated damages.

In this article, the licensor grants the licensee the promises and obligations. (4) The illocutionary point of expressives is to express the psychological state specified in the prepositional content The speaker is expressing his feeling or attitudes towards on existing state of affairs. Here is an example:

Whereas, licensee is desirous of obtaining, and licensor is willing to grant to licensee, the right and license to utilize the Technology and the Process(es) solely for the manufacture, use and sale of the Products.

This article shows the attitudes and willingness to undertake this project.

(5) The last class "declaration" has the characteristic that the successful performance of an act of this type brings about the correspondence between the prepositional content and reality. Based on the statement, here is an article abstracted from Grant of License:

Subject to the terms and condition hereof, licensor hereby grants to Licensee a non-exclusive, non-sublicensable and non-transferable right and license to use the Technology solely to manufacture the product (s)at the Plant(s) and to use and sell the Product(s) throughout the world except Japan.

The prepositional content of an utterance is constituted by what object is being referred to in the utterance and what action is predicted about the object. The article of Grant of license declares its grant to licensee the right to use its technology know-how after the concerned terms and conditions are fulfilled.

According to the nature of linguistic communication, we are performing various kinds of acts when we are speaking, which are the most prominent feature of business agreement.

Misunderstanding or failure to undertake any of the articles in Agreement means loss of interest.

Conclusion

The linguistics study tends to permeate into different disciplines and contributes to the study of the various subjects. During this process, it is inevitable to find that language itself is not adequate to explain or interpret the intentions or ideas of speeches. This is why linguistics study switches from sentence meaning to utterance meaning, that is, from semantics to pragmatics, or from linguistic context to extro-linguistic context. At this stage, a problem arises as Dai weidong points out: "To understand the two utterances in each of the two exchanges in each of the exchanges as forming a coherent, meaningful stretch of language, we need to make certain inferences based on the

knowledge assumed to be shared by the two speakers. And these are also the Speaker A has to make in order to interpret what Speaker B says as adequate response to what he has said." To some extent, whether we succeed or not in integration of international business practice and pragmatics depends on our background knowledge.

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Committing Errors
—An Essential Stage in English Learning

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Abstract: A man during his life cannot avoid making mistakes. Some mistakes may even cause great damage to human society at large, and as a result, cause lifelong regret for the man himself; while other mistakes are of little consequence and may even help people to be smarter. In the teaching of English, two different opinions exist among linguists and language teachers on how to treat the errors that students make in their studies. Some people insist that a teacher should correct students' errors extensively and immediately before they become habits; others emphasize that errors are unavoidable in the process of language learning. Errors do not necessarily mean failure on the part of the students, on the contrary, they prove that the student who commits errors is using his mind to think in the target language. Therefore, errors exhibit the students' learning process to the linguists and teachers. This kind of error is not only a "developmental error" but also a "progressive error". The errors will be sure to disappear gradually in the end when students have a good command of the target language.

This paper consists of five parts. The first part is a description of the purpose of writing the paper. The second part briefly reviews the exposition of some well-known linguists on error. The theories of error analysis by Corder are mentioned quite a few times. The third part analyzes the causes of error with the help of theories mentioned in part two and the typical errors that students make in their essays. Part four points out students' errors are signs of learning and signs of progress in learning the target language. Part five concludes that committing errors in an essential learning stage in English language learning so language teachers should take positive attitudes toward errors made by students.

1. Introduction

Although most of the students can pass the college entrance examination after studying English for six or eight years, they still find themselves not quite confident of using English and they are still quite afraid of committing errors in oral and written English.

When students write compositions, ill-formed and ungrammatical sentences often appear in their written English. When they communicate with foreigners, they use inappropriate words in the spoken English. For instance, when students are asked to translate the sentence：世界上，不同的人对待失败会有不同的态度. Many students may do it like this: "There are different people have different attitudes toward failure." They will spend a lot of time thinking over how to spell the word "attitude", and they do not know they can use "idea, view, opinion" to express the same meaning. They seldom ask themselves: "Is it an acceptable and appropriate sentence?" Apart from erroneous pattern, there are a lot of lexical problems for Chinese students. The examples are: Chinese people say "大雨"，"大雾"，"结婚照"，"结婚礼物"，"成功会带给商人名利。"a literal translation of these would be "big rain", "big fog", "marriage photograph", "marriage gift" "Success world bring business men fame and interests". However, in English, "big" is never used to modify "雨"，"雾"，"marriage" does not modify "photograph" or "gift". "名利" should be translated into "fame and fortune". The students who make the errors follow their own ways (the first language interference) in English writing and speaking, so that errors must occur when two languages totally differ in their expression. Students are always complaining "English is too difficult for me to learn".

No matter how hard both language teachers and students work, errors occur almost everywhere in the learning process. The issue of how to look at these errors, therefore, has been troubling everyone who engages in linguistic researching, language teaching and learning.

It is these problems existing in English learning that provide me with a background for drawing up the pa-

per———Committing Errors Is an Essential Learning Stage in English Language Learning.

2. Review of Literature

My aim in this part is to set up a more detailed theoretical framework to support the rationale of the study. There are many theories of error analysis that linguists have mentioned. We will only touch on some of them.

Common Features of Error

Corder has pointed out that sentences containing errors would be characterized by systematic deviancy. While the learner's correct sentences do not necessarily give evidence of the rules the learner is using or of the hypotheses he is testing, his errors suggest the strategies he employs to work out the rules of the new language and the rules he has developed at given stages of his language development. (Error Analysis, p.125)

Steve, (1969) one of the famous linguists, has quite similar ideas about error and hypothesized that errors should not be viewed as problems to be overcome, but rather as normal and inevitable features indicating the strategies that learners use. (Error Analysis, p.18)

Interlanguage

The concept of interlangauge can be understood as a continuum between the L1 and L2 which all learners traverse. At any point along the continuum, the learner's language is systematic, i.e. rule-governed, and common to all learners' any differences being explicable by differences in their learning experience. (An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research, p.60)

Interlanguange

Language 1   Language 2
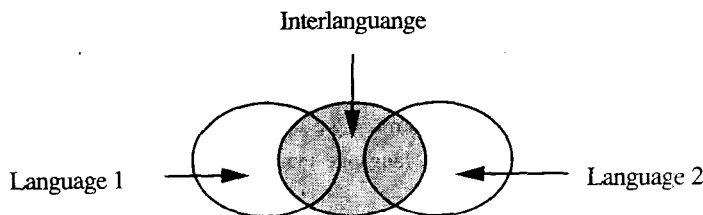
The above diagram can give us a clear picture of the relationship between interlingual and language 1, language 2. At first sight, language one and language two are quite different languages. Actually, the shaded circle links up both languages and there is naturally some overlap.

Language Transfer

Linguist Lado viewed second language learning as overcoming differences between native language and target language, as primarily a process whereby 'habits' from the native language are systematically replaced by 'habits' from the target language. In the learning situation, learners use previous linguistic knowledge interacting with the target language.

Language One and Language Two

One may suppose that the first language learner has an unlimited number of hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning which must be tested (although strong reasons have been put forward for doubting this). The only hypotheses he needs to test are: "Are the systems of the new language the same as, or different from, the native language I know? And if different, what is the nature of these difference?" The evidence for the difference is that a large number of errors are related to the systems of the student's mother tongue.

Intralingual Interference

This is the term given by Richards (1970), referred to items produced by the learner that reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. Like first language learners, the second language learner tries to derive the rules behind the data to which he has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor target language.

In reviewing the theories about the error, we have come to know how the learner develops his language and

what processes are involved in language learning.

3. Writing Sample

So far the discussion has been concerned with theories on the study of error. No matter whence the source of errors, committing errors implies progress in learning and supplies information as to the extent of a learner's language competence. This part focuses on data supplied by our university students.

The university students were requested to write short compositions in 30 minutes. The writing sections were arranged in a classroom on the campus. The students were not allowed to bring dictionaries to the writing class and they were encouraged to ensure that they used sufficient knowledge of English in their writing. The purpose of doing so was to explore the most commonly featured errors and real difficulties in their essays.

Sample 1

In this 30 minutes, students were allowed to write a composition entitled "My Ideal Job" in three paragraphs. The students' composition should have been based on the following outline: (about 150 words)

a. Why do different people have different views of their ideal jobs?

b. What kind of job is your ideal job? Why?

c. In order to have an ideal job in the future, what should you do at present?

There are different people have different view of his ideal job. Because has his own interestings and hobbies. He likes doing things about the interest and hobby. And the interests and hobbies are different because of different people. And everyone's ideal job is relevant with his interest and hobby. So the ideal job are different.

My ideal job is to be a teacher. Because I like children. I like teaching children and living with them. And I like to see the students to become brighter and brighter. The teaching job also can make me wiser. And staying with children, I can feel younger and happier. So I want to be a teacher in the future.

In order to have a ideal job in the future, I should study hard at the present. I should learn as many as I can. And I should make the best of the time to grasp the skill of my ideal job. I will must try my best to make it become true.

In the composition above there are a number of errors that are underlined. Many errors made by Chinese students in English writing are article and grammatical errors. Article error is a special headache for most Chinese students, as there is no article feature in their mother tongue. The article errors suggest in this composition that the learner has uncertainty and confusion with articles. Language teachers and researchers do not pay much attention to the error because they think it does not interfere with language learning and communication. In fact, it is a very serious problem for language learners, especially for us Chinese learners.

The confusion with the usage of countable and uncountable nouns is another problem, which really does exist in Chinese.

Some adverbial clauses 'because···' are used instead of main clauses, which look like language transfer from the native language. We have noticed that a great number of student errors could possibly be traced to their L1. It is the case that language transfer is a significant factor in language learning.

Some ill-formed, misused construction and incorrect verb phrases clearly demonstrate errors of interlanguage, language transfer, the first language interference and intralingual interference. It seems the student needs more practice in correct expression and clarity.

Sample 2

In this composition section, students were allowed 30 minutes to write a composition of no less than 100 words "On Change in People's Diet". It was suggested that students study the following table carefully and their compositions must be based on the information given in the table. Write three paragraphs to:

A. State the changes in people's diet in the past five years;

B. Give possible reasons for the changes;

C. Draw your own conclusions.

Students should quote as few figures as possible.

Year Food	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Grain	49%	47%	46.5%	45%	45%
Milk	10%	11%	11%	12%	13%
Meat, Fruit	17%	20%	22.5%	23%	21%
Vegetable	24%	22%	20%	20%	21%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

It can been seen from the table that there are some changes in people's diet in the past five years from 1986 to 1990. Grain, our main food, the demand of which has decreased with 4 percents from 49% to 45%; the needs of milk, fruit and meat have risen; The rate of vegetable has almost remained at the same level these years. A little lower than that of 1986.

Why has the change taken place? One reason is that people's living conditions is improving. We have more money in choosing more, mutrious food for everyday life. In addition to that, people receive and accept some opinions in changing their eating habit. They prefer more reasonable food structure.

I think it is a good phenomena to see these changes. It will make people healthier than before. Maybe more beautiful. Those different choices on food will prompt the development of our economics. So I consider the changes a symbol of our developing country.

This composition is written by one of my students whose writing ability is below the average in the class. It seems to readers that some sentences are not in logical and relevant order. First of all, I would like to point out it is a Chinese-English composition, as the sentences in the composition seem to be translated from Chinese into English. Any language teachers are bound to be confronted with the question of how to cope with one of language learners' most persistent difficulties, that is the interference of L1. Secondly, the explanation between "healthy" and "healthful" and "requirement" and "need" is necessary for the student. Sentence structures and confused sentence tenses must be corrected. Coherence is another serious problem in the composition. Teachers should emphasize to the student that each sentence in a paragraph leads naturally and logically to the next in supporting the main idea. Thirdly, a number of the misused words and phrases "... decreased with 4 percents—decreased by 4 percent, rate—ratio, everyday life—daily life, phenomena—phenomenon, prompt—promote, consider...of...— consider...as..." are mixture of developmental errors, over-generalization errors, ignorance of rule restriction errors, incomplete application of rule errors and false hypothesis errors.

In this part, we have found that errors are neither bad habits nor merely signs of failure. They are real reflections of students' underlying grammatical system, from which we can infer their learning process.

4. Attitudes towards Errors

A Sign of Learning

Error is a sign of learning. Corder views errors as a "window" to the learner's underlying system. As a matter of fact, errors are the most important sources of information about the learner's linguistic development, providing an account of the built-in syllabus. In order to make it clear, it is necessary to examine the errors made by a child. When a small baby produces an utterance such as "This my dad book." We do not usually consider it deviant, ill-formed, faulty, incorrect. We do not think it as an error in any sense at all, but rather as a normal childlike speech which provides evidence of the state of his linguistic development at that stage. Our response to the adults' errors should be taken just as the same as the attitude that we take to the child.

When the sentence "There are two very good news I have heard." appears in learners' writing, we understand that the erroneous sentence has arisen from mother tongue interference, where false analogies are carried

over from the speaker's native language to the target language. Sometimes learners might know some rules but over-generalize, just as children do in their mother tongue. For example, if they have learnt the regular past simple ending "ed", they might write "you writed" or "I teached". It will be evident learners use their unique way to learn T2. In the process of learning, errors in second language learning are a common-sense fact that is universally recognized. Finally they will come to the second language. As Corder points out (1973) "A learner makes systematic mistakes in a particular area for a limited time. He eventually gets the thing right. But the transition from wrong to right is not a sudden one. It takes time." At present, it is difficult to foresee the exact length of the process. So errors are expected in the process of learning. Our study is to try to find out the characteristics of some of these difficulties and the 'length' of mastering L2 in the learning process.

A Sign of Progress

There is a Chinese proverb: "Failure is the mother of success." All learners make various errors and error makers certainly learn lessons from their failure and become wise eventually. This is not only restricted to language learning. Corder expounds the view that making errors as a strategy is 'indispensable' to the learning of a language. Making of the errors can be regarded "as a device the learner uses in order to learn". Errors can be regarded as an indication of how learning is progressing. When an ill-formed, ungrammatical or inappropriate sentence is made, it can indicate language teachers and researchers something about the learner's learning process, what kind of certain hypotheses the learner is making about the language and how the human brain is dealing with and storing the language information. Only through making and self-improving the learner's own hypotheses, does he make the progress from ignorance to the efficient command of the second language after sufficient exposure to the L2.

5. Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be well illustrated that language learning is more than a simple matter of habit-formation. It is a real reflection of the students' underlying grammatical system, from which we can infer their learning process. We have seen the evidence that second language learners use creative strategies which are not dissimilar from those used by first language learners. The major task for linguistic researchers and language teachers is to try to understand the learning process sufficiently well to be able to suggest which strategy is most likely to be applied at a particular stage in a particular domain of language.

To Summarize, viewing the students' errors, we come to the conclusion that errors are necessary stages in the gradual acquisition of the target language and they may help language teachers reach a deeper understanding of language learning in general and adopt a more humane approach to language teaching.

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