Researching L2 Word Knowledge Development

LIU Shaolong

英语词汇学习与发展模式研究

刘绍龙 著

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内 容 提 要

本书依据词汇发展的深度理论和实证调查揭示了我国大学课堂环境下英语词汇知识发展的基本规律和效率模式。本研究的动机源于对传统的外语词汇学习观（“记住一个单词的意义就意味着对这个单词的掌握”）的反思或再认识。我国外语学习的高投入和低效率使越来越多的人意识到，外语词汇的学习和发展是一个多维、渐进的系统工程，常用词汇的学习和掌握更是如此。基于这一理念，本书作者把英语常用词汇中的意义、前后缀、词性和搭配的“深度”发展和“渐进”过程作为研究的重点对象。通过对研究数据的定量、定性分析，作者首次发现了我国（中学至大学的）英语学习者词汇发展的基本规律和（由高至低的）习得效率模式：1）词性 → 词义 → 词缀 → 搭配（接受性知识）；2）词义 → 词性 → 词缀 → 搭配（产出性知识）；3）接受性词汇知识习得效率明显高于产出性词汇知识，且两者的完全对应发展是极其困难的；4）英语母语者的（产出性）词汇搭配知识远远超过我国英语学习者。

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序（Preface）

在第二语言习得研究领域中，对词汇能力发展的研究一直是个热点。总的来说，这类研究主要从三个不同的角度来进行：一是从心理语言学的角度，探讨二语学习者在不同水平阶段心理词库表征的特点；二是从认知心理的角度，考察不同的语言环境因素，如词的出现频数、上下文、学习任务类型等，对词汇学习（尤其是伴随性词汇学习）的认知过程及结果的影响；三是从语言教学的角度出发，探讨不同词汇教学方法（如“关键词”法）对提高词汇学习效率的作用。经过几十年的努力，人们对外语词汇学习过程的心理认知特点，以及影响外语词汇学习的诸多因素已经有了相当深入的了解，并且在某种程度上利用这些知识为提高词汇能力测量和课堂词汇教学的水平进行了有益的尝试。

尽管对二语词汇习得的研究已取得了长足的进步，但在不少方面仍存在不足，其中最明显的，就是对词汇学习结果的测量。绝大部分的研究或只考虑结果“量”的方面（即词汇量的大小），或只考虑结果“质”的某个方面（如对词形的辨认，或对某词义项的理解）。考虑到词汇知识和词汇运用涉及语言系统、心理认知和交际场合等诸多方面这一事实，这种测量方法的缺陷是显而易见的：无法全面描写二语词汇能力的发展，而这恰恰是揭示二语词汇习得本质的前提之一。由此可见，当下最需要的，是在词汇知识和运用的理论框架内对二语词汇能力的发展路径进行全面细致

刘绍龙博士的论文较好地达到了上述要求。虽然在他之前国内外均有类似的调查，但无论在广度和深度上，均不如他的研究。据我所知，这是迄今为止对二语词汇知识“深度”习得所进行的最为全面、深入的调查。从研究设计角度看，该文有以下突出特点：

（1）受试样本大（100名），且覆盖了从初学者（高二学生）到高级学习者（英语专业硕士研究生）所有英语水平发展阶段，这既有利于对词

汇能力发展的路径进行完整的描述，又能保证调查结果具有较大的外推性。

（2）与相关研究选择低频词作为研究的起始点不同，该研究所使用测试词均为最为常见、常用的高频词（属头一千高频词）。这一变化的长处在于：可以有效利用横断调查法（cross-sectional method）涵盖学习时间长（从高中到研究生将近8年）的优势，充分考察受试词汇“深度”知识和运用能力发展的全过程，这样获得的数据比通过纵深法（longitudinal method）（通常持续一年左右）获得的更为可靠有效，因为在调查词汇能力这种个体差异十分明显的现象时，时间跨度越大，无关因素引起的行为变化就越容易判断。

（3）与相关研究只关注动词和名词的习得不同，该研究增加了形容词。由于形容词历来是外语学习者的薄弱环节，将该词类列入考察范围有助于对二语词汇能力发展的特征作出更为准确的描写。

研究获得了大量十分珍贵的数据，全方位描述了我国英语学习者词汇能力的发展，作出了许多有意思的发现。虽然有的发现与人们平时的感觉是一致的，如接受性词汇知识在各语言水平阶段均比产出性词汇知识丰富，但更多的是以前人们尚未知晓的现象：如在产出性运用时词义知识与词性知识存在密切相关，但与词缀知识之间的关系就不那么密切了；中国学生对词性的掌握比对词义的掌握更好；词汇知识类型、语言水平和词汇知识运用能力三个变量之间存在十分复杂的相互关系；各类词汇知识之间的差异并未随着语言水平的提高而完全消除；在某些情形中，产出性知识超出接受性知识等。尽管有些现象（如产出性知识有时超出接受性知识）目前尚难以解释，但这往往蕴含了在一个研究领域做出重大突破的契机，只要进一步分析这些现象所涉及的因素以及它们之间潜在的关系，大胆提出假设，并通过严谨的研究手段加以检验，相信总有一天会搞清事情的来龙去脉的。实际上，刘绍龙已经朝这个方向努力了：他并不只满足于对现象的描述，而是对外语课堂环境下词汇“深度”知识发展的认知机制和发展路径进行更为深入的分析，并提出了理论模式，为将来的研究指明了方向。考虑到此课题的前沿性（此项目开题时国内外只有两项相关研究），收集和分析数据的艰巨和复杂（每个受试必须参加5次测试，累计

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耗时约7个小时，分析数据历时近半年），以及时间的紧迫（最多只有四年时间），能完整描述所观察到的现象已实属不易，而刘绍龙不仅做到了，并且在描述的基础上进行了颇有见地的理论构建，其中所付出的辛劳不难想象。

虽然该研究在二语词汇能力发展这一领域做了开拓性的工作，但要完全揭示二语词汇习得的奥秘还有漫长的路要走。作为导师，我希望刘绍龙能在这一领域继续耕耘，为我国的二语习得研究和外语教学事业做出更大的贡献。

吴旭东

2005年12月15日

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Abstract

L2 vocabulary learning in the classroom setting in China belongs in one of the major aspects of foreign language learning. Research into L2 vocabulary acquisition usually follows two lines of research: one looking into the expansion of vocabulary size, and the other, the development of receptive and productive knowledge about individual words. The former has received a lot of attention and witnessed great achievements in the past few decades, whereas the latter has so far been little studied in the field of second language acquisition research. This study investigated, within a single theoretical framework, the English vocabulary development with respect to the receptive and productive mastery of four types of knowledge about individual words.

Some current theories of L2 vocabulary acquisition were examined, and then based on these representative theories, a tentative conceptual framework was first established which identified three relevant factors and the relationship among these factors.

To explore the developmental pattern of L2 word knowledge across learners of different English proficiency, the data for this study were collected in three-month period from 100 students of English. Among them 75 were university students majoring in English, and 25 were senior high school students. In addition, 22 native speakers of English were used as a control group. The primary data consisted of two parts: (a) participants' performance on a receptive knowledge test, and (b) participants' performance on a productive knowledge test.

Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the collected data yield the

following major findings. First, regarding receptive mastery of word knowledge, the route of development followed by the Chinese participants is *word class* → *meaning* → *affix* → *collocation*, but regarding productive mastery of word knowledge, the route of development followed by Chinese participants is *meaning* → *word class* → *affix* → *collocation*, while the route followed by native speakers of English is *meaning* → *affix/collocation* → *word class*. Second, the Chinese participants appeared to have a better mastery of receptive word knowledge than productive word knowledge, and the gap remained despite the improvement of participants' L2 proficiency. Third, native speaker participants exhibited an exclusive superiority over Chinese participants in the productive mastery of collocation, while Chinese participants' superiority manifested in both receptive and productive mastery of word class. Fourth, receptive ability to use word knowledge failed to turn into corresponding productive ability for the Chinese participants at all proficiency levels, and the dual mastery of both receptive and productive word meaning appeared to be mostly incomplete. The above findings are discussed by drawing on the theory of language processing and the salient features of the English teaching and learning in China. Two conceptual frameworks are finally proposed as an attempt to theorize the acquisition of word knowledge in the classroom setting.

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