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当代语言学研究文库

语言因素对现在完成体使用的影响

A Corpus-based Research on Present Perfect Use and Multiple Linguistic Factors

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内 容 提 要

本书以中国学习者英语语料库为基础,研究了中国学习者在书面语中现在完成体的使用概况,分析了他们在现在完成体使用中的主要困难及其原因;同时,深入探讨了情状体、动词突显度、句子结构、时间状语和过程类型五个语言因素对现在完成体使用的影响。研究结果对第二语言习得中的变异现象和时体研究具有理论意义,对外语教学实践和时体习得具有实际意义。

序

英语作为一门国际性语言,已成为人们生活中不可缺少的工具。尤其在中国加入 WTO 之后,对英语人才的需求无论在质量上还是在数量上飞速增长。回顾近 20 年中国英语教学的发展,我们已经取得了很大成就:教学大纲日臻完善与成熟,课程设置日趋合理,教材编写发展迅速,呈现一派百花齐放,百家争妍的大好局面。为中国的科学技术、社会经济发展和文化交流培养了大批英语人才。但是"我国目前的外语水平不高,教学方法普遍存在费时较多、收效较低的问题。"(李岚清)需要进一步拓宽我们的研究范围,探索新的研究途径,以提高中国英语学习者的学习效率,满足中国迅猛发展的需要。

长期以来,中国教师所受的培训主要侧重于如何教,教什么,而我们的研究也侧重于各种教学法、具体的教学方法、教材的编写和大纲的设计,而很少从学习的角度去研究中国的英语教学所面临的问题。近年来国际上二语习得研究的发展迅猛,取得了令人瞩目的成果。我国也有越来越多的学者从学生的视角研究中国的英语教学所面临的问题。中国英语学习者的二语习得研究在过去十多年间也得到了迅速的发展。

二语习得领域的研究系统地探索二语习得的本质和习得的过程。其主要任务就是揭示和描述学习者是如何获得第二语言的,并解释为什么学习者能够获得第二语言。Gass 在讨论二语习得的研究范畴时指出:二语习得的研究是对非母语习得的研究,也就是对除母语以外任何语言习得的研究。它研究学习者在有限接触目标语的条件下如何构建新的语言体系。目前,尽管二语习得研究已取得很大成果,我们还远远没有建立起一套完整的二语习得理论。学者们正试图从不同的学科视角来认识和研究二

语习得。因此,二语习得研究与语言学、心理学、心理语言学、社会学、社会语言学、教育学等等有着密切的关系。同时,由于二语习得与这些相邻学科之间的紧密关系,研究者们采用了不同的方法、不同的工具、从不同的学科视角来审视所采集的数据和样本。实际上,不同的方法和不同的学科视角又决定了研究者会采取不同的数据采集方法,运用不同的数据分析工具。因此这也决定了二语习得研究的交叉学科研究的本质。

人类的语言学习可分为母语习得和二语习得,前者指儿童在自己的生活环境中对母语的自然而然的习得。后者指人们习得母语后对第二门语言的学习。目前国外的二语习的研究的对象基本上为在目标语的环境中学习目标语。而中国的英语学习者则是在母语的大环境中学习其他民族的语言。换言之,中国的英语学习者是在课堂上学习英语的。他们是有意识地去学习一门语言,了解其语言结构、语法规则、词汇等等。离开了教室,他们接触目标语的机会非常有限。因此,中国英语学习者习得英语的过程及目标语的发展有可能有其自身的特征。研究中国英语学习者英语习得的过程对促进和提高中国英语教学效率有重要意义。本丛书的研究将涉及中国英语学习者的词汇习得、时体发展、语用能力发展、一语认知资源对二语学习的影响,交际策略的应用等诸多方面,希望能为读者较全面了解中国英语学习者二语发展提供帮助,为其他学者研究二语习得提供一些参考和启示。

这几本著作仅仅是本丛书出版计划的第一批。我们对纳入丛书的著作有着明确的要求:一是入选的著作力求具有相当的理论深度和原创性,能为中国英语学习者二语习得研究和中国英语教学起到推动作用;二是研究力求具有系统性,研究设计合理,研究方法科学,数据翔实,分析可靠,能把握二语习得研究前沿。我们真诚感谢上海交通大学出版社的领导和编辑人员对这套丛书的出版提供的支持和努力。我们也真诚地希望广大研究工作者和研究生提出批评、建议和帮助。

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王同顺

2008 年 10 月

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前　言
Foreword

　　时体,是语言学习过程中最重要、也是较为困难的内容之一。无论是在第一语言习得还是第二语言习得领域,研究者都对此进行了大量的研究。这些研究发现时体习得受到多种因素的影响,其中语言因素的影响尤为显著。因此,作者拟以现在完成体为研究对象,借助中国英语学习者英语语料库中的大规模语料,了解中国学习者在书面语中现在完成体的使用概况,揭示他们在现在完成体使用中的主要困难及其原因,并探讨情状体(lexical aspect)、动词突显度(verb salience)、句子结构(sentence structures)、时间状语(temporal adverbials)和过程类型(process types)五个语言因素对现在完成体使用的影响。

　　本书重点回答了以下四个问题:①中国学习者现在完成体使用的总体情况如何? ②现在完成体的变异对于各个语言因素是否呈现规律性变化? ③五种语言因素对中国学习者使用现在完成体有什么影响? ④中国学习者的现在完成体使用在三个子语料库统作说明中是否表现出发展性特点? 如果有,如何解释这种情况?

　　本书所采用的语料来源于中国学习者英语语料库(Chinese Learner English Corpus)。该语料库分为高中阶段、大学非英语专业阶段和大学英语专业阶段三个子语料库,共计约一百万词。作者选定语料库中所有现在完成体的语境作为分析对象,标记出学习者在该语境中所使用的各种时体形式,并根据所要研究的因素对每个动词进行标记。书中运用 Wordsmith 和 SPSS 工具软件对语料进行处理,使用的统计方法包括卡方检验、交叉表、总体差异性检验等。

　　本书对于第二语言习得和外语学习中的变异现象以及时体

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研究具有较重要的理论意义和启发作用,对于外语教学和时体习得也有重要的实践意义。本书可以增加英语教师对学生使用现在完成体的状况的了解,从而能够在现在完成体的使用上给学生提供更加系统的指导。

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The ability to express temporality plays an important role in communication. Therefore, tense/aspect morphology has been the focus of the curricula of many language programs. However, although the pedagogy of tense and aspect has received great attention, the acquisition of tense/aspect system has been given relatively little concern. This situation remained unchanged until the mid-1980s when the investigation of the acquisition of tense and aspect began to flourish. In the past two decades, this area has not only received extensive linguistic analyses, but also has attracted a large number of empirical studies in which many theoretical explanations have been presented concerning both first and second language acquisition (Li & Shirai, 2000).

According to Li & Shirai (2000), the research on the acquisition of tense/aspect can provide enlightening insights into the understanding of general theoretical issues in language acquisition. From a pedagogical point of view, the study of tense acquisition processes employed by language learners can facilitate the development of more favorable approaches and techniques for L2 teaching (Lee, 2001).

1.2 Motivation

Tense/aspect has received considerable attention in recent decades.

Researchers have carried out a large number of studies from different perspectives and found that a learner's tense/aspect acquisition is affected by a variety of factors.

However, research in second language tense/aspect acquisition has been oriented mainly toward the acquisition of English by speakers of European languages, specifically Germanic and Romance languages. Although researchers have obtained substantial findings of tense/aspect acquisition by speakers of major European languages, there is a lack of knowledge concerning acquisition of tense/aspect by speakers of some languages outside the Indo-European language family. Obviously, including learners with a broader range of language backgrounds helps to test whether the theoretical claims are universal and will undoubtedly expand the understanding of temporal expression (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000). In this regard, this book attempts to examine the variation of English tense-aspect by Chinese-speaking EFL learners in a Chinese context.

Furthermore, a large part of the research so far has investigated the early stages of temporal expression, and studies on the simple past has been the central area of research on tense/aspect acquisition. There is less literature of later-emerging verbal morphology and form-meaning associations. According to Bardovi-Harlig (1999), much is known about the acquisition of the simple past but less about the acquisition of other temporal concepts (e.g. the perfect) or aspectual concepts such as telicity. Therefore, this study targets the present perfect, a tense/aspect form acquired late in tense acquisition. As Bardovi-Harlig (2001: 218) pointed out, "studying later-emerging tense/aspect morphology allows one to consider what adjustments learners must make to their existing IL tense/aspect system to accommodate a new form-meaning association". In addition, the perfect itself is notorious for the amount of time and effort spent on it in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language (Feigenbaum, 1981). Huang & Yang (2001) found that simple past, present perfect and past perfect are among the most difficult types of tense/aspect for

English learners in Hong Kong. Cai's (2002) finding is generally consistent with Huang & Yang, which indicates that simple past, present perfect and past perfect not only have higher error rates, but also show higher occurrences. Therefore, it is of theoretical and practical importance to study the acquisition of the present perfect.

Moreover, most of the previous studies have been largely anecdotal, which are based on the spontaneous production of very few learners (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995). Such kind of data is seen to be not reliable for serious quantitative analysis and tends to bring about inconsistent findings. In recent years, corpus-based approaches to the investigation of interlanguage have attracted more and more interest in linguistic research. Adopting the data provided by learner corpora can alleviate or even remove the inefficiencies of small-scale studies and allow for both qualitative and quantitative analyses on the learner language. Therefore, the author takes a corpus-based approach in the present research.

1.3   Significance of the present study

The present study aims to present a general picture of Chinese learners' use of the present perfect at three proficiency levels, and to investigate the linguistic factors that might influence their present perfect marking. The present study would also endeavor to provide some insight into the theories regarding the variation of the present perfect, and into the acquisition and teaching practice of the present perfect.

1.3.1   Theoretical significance

The present study would enrich the understanding of the characteristics of interlanguage variation, specifically the variation in the use of the present perfect, and contribute to the knowledge of language acquisition.

Dietrich et al. (1995:261) assumed that the process of language acquisition can be characterized by a two-fold systematicity. The first

systematicity refers to that "at each point, the learner's language is not just a random collection of individual forms but a system which shows a number of distinct organizational principles". The second systematicity lies in the fact that the "acquisitional process is a sequence of learner varieties, and this sequence in turn follows certain regularities". These two types of systematicity are constrained by a number of causal factors, such as general cognitive principles, the characteristics of source and target language, and individual and social learning conditions. This study would test this assumption by examining the effects of multiple linguistic factors on the use of the present perfect in the three proficiency groups.

Variation in the learner language has attracted much attention in second-language acquisition research, and many scholars have come to realize that understanding variation is fundamental to understanding acquisition (Bayley, 1994). Although scholars have not reached an agreement on the relationship between studies on variation and theories concerning second language acquisition, they have conducted considerable studies on L2 variation from various perspectives. An enormous number of explanations of observed variation have been proposed. Some of the examples are planning time, L1 transfer, focus of attention, and proposed language universals.

Tarone (1988) has called for a comprehensive theory to explain all known causes of interlanguage variation. However, this is seen to be premature, and as Bayley (1994) has pointed out, the study of interlanguage variation is still at its initial stage. More work is needed to enrich our knowledge about interlanguage variation. Therefore, the present study would explore the nature of interlanguage variation through examining variation in the present perfect and would also attempt to account for the observed variation and identify the influence that various factors might exert on the production of these variable patterns.

1.3.2 Practical significance

The present perfect is claimed to be among the most difficult

types of tense/aspect for Chinese learners, therefore it seems necessary to make an investigation into the patterns of the students' use of the present perfect so as to facilitate their learning practice.

The present study would attempt to identify the patterns of the students' use of the present perfect in their written production, therefore the findings of the present study could offer help to both teachers and learners. It could present information about where students tend to mark verbs for the present perfect correctly and where they are more likely to leave them unmarked or mark them wrongly. In addition, the factors that would affect the students' marking for the present perfect will be disclosed. Therefore, the teacher could identify the area in which the students most possibly find difficulties when using the present perfect, and call it to their attention in advance. The findings may also help teachers to prepare teaching materials or design exercises about the use of the present perfect. What's more, the learners themselves could also refer to these patterns to better understand the use of the present perfect and watch out for the problems identified.

1.4 Research questions

The present study intends to investigate the effects of linguistic factors on the use of the present perfect through examining written production of Chinese learners. In the obligatory contexts for the present perfect, learners may use various tense/aspect forms to express the meaning of present perfect, including using the present perfect itself, and this is called the present perfect variation. Previous studies have revealed that such variation is constrained by a variety of linguistic factors and an exploration into the effects of the linguistic factors on the use of the present perfect can enrich the understanding of the present perfect variation. The present study examines the possible influence of five linguistic factors. They are lexical aspect, verb salience, sentence structures, temporal adverbials and process types.

The research questions to be addressed are listed as follows:

Question 1: How do Chinese students use the present perfect in the written production?

1) What are the general present perfect tense marking rate and accuracy rate of verbs in obligatory contexts for the present perfect at the three proficiency levels?

2) What errors have the students committed? What are the possible reasons for these errors?

Question 2: Is the present perfect variation systematic with regard to some of the following factors?

1) lexical aspect,

2) verb salience,

3) sentence structures,

4) temporal adverbials,

5) process types.

Question 3: What effects do the five linguistic factors exert on the use of the present perfect?

Question 4: Are there any developmental features in the use the present perfect? If certain developmental features emerge in the acquisition process, what general explanatory principles may account for the development observed?

1.5　Outline of the book

　　This book consists of five parts. The first part, Chapter 1, entitled Introduction, provides the background and sets forth the purpose of the present study.

　　Part two, which consists of two chapters, Chapters 2 and 3, is a review of the past literature and presents the theoretical and empirical

background of the present research. Chapter 2 provides an account of the corpus linguistic approach, a survey of interlanguage studies and a discussion of some of the issues in learner corpora, the joining of corpus linguistics and interlanguage research. Chapter 3 begins with an introduction to the basic theory of tense/aspect and then reviews the conceptual, theoretical, and practical issues concerning the five linguistic factors under investigation.

Part three, Methodology, contains only one chapter, Chapter 4, which is devoted to research design. It begins with an explanation of the corpus data to be used in the research, and then it describes in detail the procedures of coding and analyzing the data for investigation.

Part four, Results and Discussion, which consists of two chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, reports and discusses the results obtained in the present study.

Chapter 5 firstly examines all the tense errors identified in CLEC and makes an analysis of the tense/aspect involved for their variation patterns. Because the use of the present perfect is the focus of the present study, this chapter then presents a detailed examination of the various tense/aspect forms of the present perfect variation. Finally, the five linguistic factors (see, 1.4 Question 2) are analyzed intensively for their effects on the present perfect variation.

Chapter 6 suggests appropriate interpretations for the results obtained in the last chapter corresponding to the research questions. It proposes the semantic interpretation of variation in the use of the present perfect and then discusses how and why the five linguistic factors in question affect the present perfect use.

Part five, the final chapter, Chapter 7, entitled Conclusion, is a summary of the major findings obtained in the present study, and the pedagogical implications are suggested with regard to the teaching of the present perfect and language learning in general. Finally, directions for future research are pointed out in the end.

CHAPTER 2

Corpus linguistics and interlanguage studies

2.1 Corpus linguistics

In recent decades, the use of corpus for linguistic analysis and description has become one of the most important and fast-developing areas of activity in linguistic studies. Corpus, defined by Barnbrook (1996:24), is "a sample of a larger collection of language [that] is intended to allow conclusions to be drawn about this larger body". Corpus linguistics is "the study of language based on examples of 'real life' language use" (McEnery and Wilson, 1996:1). The effect of corpus linguistics is widely recognized in the field of linguistic studies and other relevant areas, because it has opened the way for a large amount of new investigations of language use.

2.1.1 Development of corpus linguistics

The history of modern corpus linguistics, according to Leech (1991: 8), can be traced back to "the era of Post-Bloomfieldian structural linguistics" before the late 1950s. It was used in a wide range of areas such as language acquisition, language pedagogy, syntax and semantics. However, corpus linguistics in the early period had one serious problem concerning the way of processing data for corpus research. The so-called corpora at that time were not machine-readable, and to analyze them manually was the only method available to handle corpus