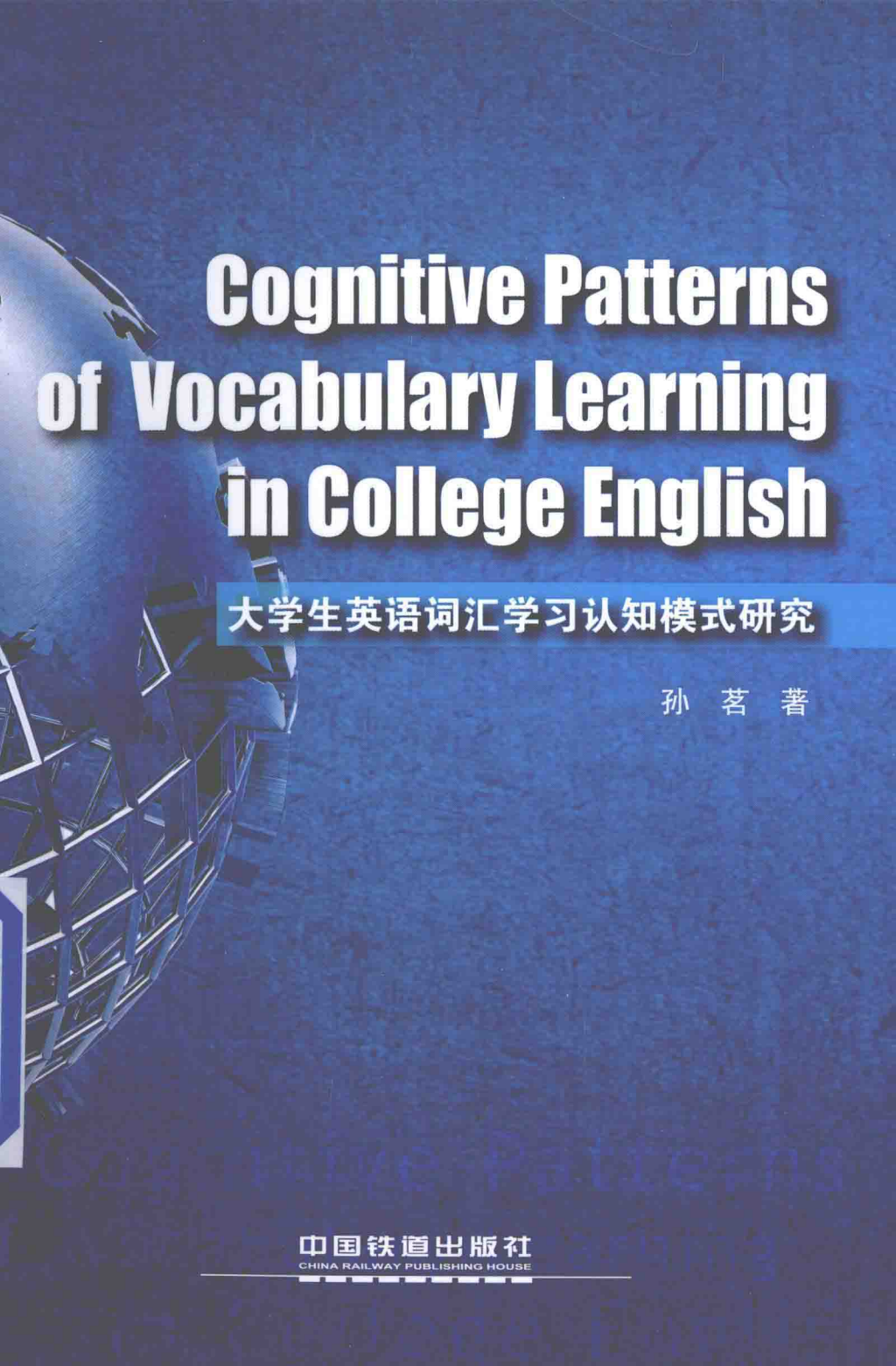

Cognitive Patterns of Vocabulary Learning in College English

大学生英语词汇学习认知模式研究

孙茗 著

中国铁道出版社
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encouragement, it would have been impossible for me to complete this book. Many thanks to my lovely daughter, with the laugh shared with her, the process of my study and writing is full of happiness.

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Preface

Based on the theories and achievements of the cognitive psychology, this book aims to study the important role that "noticing" plays in the process of second language vocabulary acquisition. The noticing hypothesis claims that the salience, the instruction and task demands are the key factors that influence what will be noticed in the process of language learning. Taking these influences into consideration, the author designs a vocabulary teaching model that embodies the cognitive features, and adopts it to an educational experimental research.

This study takes 87 non-English major freshmen from the Taiyuan University of Technology, Yangquan College in Shanxi province as subjects. They are divided into the control group and the experimental group in this experimental research. After the carrying out of the questionnaire and the pretest, the experimental group adopts the vocabulary teaching model based on the noticing hypothesis, while the control group adopts the model of grammar translation. At the end of one semester's educational experiment, the author gives the subjects the posttest. The results are analyzed through the usage of the software SPSS. The independent sample t-test indicates that there is a significant difference of the two groups' achievements. Moreover, the mean of the experimental group is higher than that of the control group.

In this case, the effectiveness of the cognitive approach of vocabulary teaching and learning in the process of English vocabulary learning has been proved.

After the analysis, it has been found that the cognitive approach of vocabulary teaching and learning based on noticing hypothesis can activate "noticing" efficiently in the process of teaching and learning. The key point of this approach is that the teacher should instruct students about the deep processing of vocabulary, and help them build up their mental lexicon network. In the educational research, this study has explored the design of inside and outside classroom tasks in accordance with the cognitive regulations, and how to apply the principle of "meaningful learning" to the vocabulary teaching and learning of the college English.

This study explores the important implications of theories of cognitive psychology to vocabulary teaching and learning, testifies their functions in arousing students' interest in vocabulary learning and reinforcing students' ability of self-access. It also provides the reference for English teachers to reinforce the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching, and provides valuable evidence for promoting the process of vocabulary teaching and learning.

Sun Ming
August, 2013

前 言

本书运用认知心理学的理论及其研究成果，探讨了“注意”在英语词汇学习过程中所发挥的重要作用。注意假说理论提出突显性、教师讲解和对学生进行任务要求是语言学习过程中影响“注意”的重要因素。基于对这些因素的考虑，作者设计了体现认知特点的词汇教学模式，并将其应用于教学实验研究。

本研究选取山西省太原理工大学阳泉学院的 87 名非英语专业大学一年级学生作为研究对象，并分为控制组和实验组进行实验研究。在问卷调查及前测后，实验组采用基于注意假说理论的词汇教学模式，控制组采用语法翻译教学模式。经过一个学期的教学实验，作者对研究对象进行了后测，并运用 SPSS 软件分析其结果。独立样本 t 检验显示：两组的成绩存在显著差异，且实验组的平均成绩高于控制组，从而证明了词汇教学认知模式在英语词汇学习过程中的有效性。

分析后发现，注意假说理论指导下的词汇教学认知模式在教学过程中能够对“注意”有效激活，进而提高词汇记忆效果。词汇教学认知模式的关键在于教师要指导学生对词汇进行深加工，帮助学生构建词汇网络。在实验教学中，本研究还探索出了符合认知规律的课堂和课后活动设计方法，以及如何将“有意义的学习”原则贯彻于大学英语词汇教学。

本研究揭示了认知心理学的原理对词汇教学的重要启示，验证了其激发学习者对英语词汇学习的兴趣、增强学习者自主学习能力的功能，为英语教师加强词汇教学的有效性提供了参考，也为促进英语词汇教学进程提供了有价值的依据。

孙茗

2013 年 8 月

Lists

List of Abbreviations

CG	Control Group
EFL	English as Foreign Language
EG	Experimental Group
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
VTL	Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

List of Tables

Table 3.1	Lesson plan—Unit one	64
Table 4.1	The percentage of the subjects' choice for each question	74
Table 4.2	Result of the pretest (Group statistics)	80
Table 4.3	Result of the pretest (Independent samples t-test)	81
Table 4.4	Result of the posttest (Group statistics)	83

Table 4.5	Result of the posttest (Independent samples t-test)	84
Table 4.6	Statistic results of the pretest and posttest	85
Table 4.7	Lesson plan—Unit two	98
Table 4.8	Lesson plan—Unit three	104
Table 4.9	Lesson plan—Unit four	109
Table 4.10	Lesson plan—Unit five	114
Table 4.11	Lesson plan—Unit six	119
Table 4.12	Lesson plan—Unit seven	124
Table 4.13	Lesson plan—Unit eight	129

List of Figures

Figure 3.1	Stages of the experiment	60

CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

1.1 Needs for the Present Research 1

1.2 The Objectives of the Research 3

1.3 Methodology Used in the Research 4

1.4 The Organization of the Book 5

Chapter 2 Vocabulary and Cognitive Psychology 7

2.1 What is Vocabulary 7

2.1.1 Features of English vocabulary 8

2.1.2 Vocabulary knowledge 9

2.1.3 The characteristics of word meaning 11

2.2 An Overview of the VTL Research 15

2.3 The Principles of Vocabulary Teaching 24

2.4 Cognitive Psychology 27

2.4.1 The experiential view 32

2.4.2 The prominence view 34

2.4.3 The attentional view 34

2.4.4 Information processing 35

2.5 The Application of Cognitive Psychology in SLA 38

2.5.1 Input processing theory 38

2.5.2 Noticing hypothesis 42

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com

Chapter 3 Research Design 53

3.1 Research Questions 53

3.2 Rationale of the Method 54

3.3 Subjects, Instruments and Data Collection.... 57

3.4 Stages of the Research 60

Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Discussion.....71

4.1 Data Analysis 71

4.1.1 Analysis of results of the questionnaire 72

4.1.2 Analysis of results of the pretest 78

4.1.3 Analysis of results of the posttest 82

4.2 Discussion 86

4.2.1 The principles of cognitive approach to VTL.....87

4.2.2 The advantages of cognitive approach to VTL.....93

4.3 Summary 97

Chapter 5 Conclusion 134

5.1 Findings and Implications of the Research.... 134

5.2 Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for FurtherResearches..... 136

Appendix Ⅰ 139

Appendix Ⅱ 141

Appendix Ⅲ.....144

References.....147

Chapter 1 Introduction

After decades of neglect, vocabulary is now recognized as central to any language acquisition process. It is regarded as the most important part of learning the second language (L2) and a foreign language. This book studies the vocabulary teaching and learning (VTL) from the perspective of cognitive psychology by conducting an experimental research.

1.1 Needs for the Present Research

It is known that vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in individuals' language proficiency. Without adequate vocabulary at the early stage of L2 learning, learners are not able to comprehend and correspond in L2. In other words, vocabulary is shown to be the best predictor of comprehension in L2. Therefore, it correlates highly with general language acquisition quality and with global language proficiency. It is believed that the "lexicon may be the most important component for learners" (Gass & Selinker, 1994:270). Under the circumstance, the teacher is facing the challenge of how to help

students store, retrieve and acquire words of the foreign language in the best way. However, lesson plans that are prepared by English teachers give little attention to techniques or strategies for helping students store vocabulary.

Many teachers now exclude purely structural practice from their repertoire, in favor of the fixed forms. Nonetheless, we are still too ignorant about the basic processes of language learning to be able to state dogmatically what can and cannot contribute to them. Structural practice may still be a useful tool, especially when the teacher wishes to focus attention sharply and unambiguously on an important feature of the structural system.

It is necessary to discuss about which may be a practical way to teach the vocabulary by considering different affects in this process. Individual words can mean more than one thing, for example, book (= something to read, to reserve, a list of bets, etc), pulse (of music/ a heart) and can (= ability, permission, probability and a container made of aluminum). Notice that, in these examples, not only can the same form have many meanings, but it can also be different parts of speech.

With so many available meanings for words and grammatical forms, it is the content the word occurs in which determines which of these meanings is being referred to. One form can have many meanings; therefore, it is also true that a meaning or concept can be expressed in many different ways. What is clear is that students and teachers need to be aware of the fact that form does not equal meaning and vice-versa. Even where two different forms appear to have the same meaning, you will usually find a difference in those meanings somewhere.

It is cognitive psychology that provides a new viewpoint to analyze the norms of many subjects as well as the pedagogy of vocabulary. There are a great number of researches on the application of cognitive psychology to language teaching (e.g., Allen, 2005; Robinson, 2003; Searle, 2002; Gui, 2005). However, few of them concerned the combination of cognitive psychology and VTL. Based on the theories and achievements of the cognitive psychology, this book aims to study the important role that "noticing" plays in the process of second language vocabulary acquisition.

1.2 The Objectives of the Research

The cognitive psychology of language deals with the mental processes that are involved in language acquisition. Cognitive psychologists focusing on the cognitive information processing of human learning and performance tend to regard second language acquisition (SLA) as building up knowledge systems that can finally be called on automatically for understanding certain incoming stimuli. The input processing theory focuses on the cognitive processing of the input stimuli. It is one of the essential skills that teachers need to help learners develop, while the noticing hypothesis may help teachers have positive influences on individuals' comprehension, production, and acquisition of the vocabulary. The noticing hypothesis claims that the salience, the instruction and task demands are the key factors that influence what will be noticed in the process of language learning. Taking these influences into consideration, the author designs a

vocabulary teaching model that embodies the cognitive features, and adopts it to an educational experimental research.

The objectives of the book lie in the exploration of the following two points:

(1) To design classroom teaching model of the vocabulary on the basis of the theories and achievements of cognitive psychology.

(2) To testify whether this new cognitive approach of vocabulary teaching is effective or not based on an experimental research.

1.3 Methodology Used in the Research

This book adopts the experimental research to vocabulary teaching. Experimental research is an attempt by the researcher to maintain control over factors that may affect the results of an experiment. By doing this, the researcher attempts to predict what may occur. The benefit of experimental research is the ability to control variables. It allows researchers to gain insight into the relationships that they believe exist. The educational experimental research aims at combining the theory, research, and practice. Researchers attempt to establish models of teaching practice, learning styles, curriculum development, and other educational issues. The goal is to "improve our understanding of education and to strive to find ways to have understanding contribute to the improvement of practice" (Floden, 1996:195). So in an educational research, experimental results can provide a starting point for further study.

The subjects in this study are eighty-seven non-English major

freshmen from the Taiyuan University of Technology, Yangquan College. They are from two natural classes of the economy and management department. The accounting class is the control group (CG) which has forty-three students, while the management class is the experimental group (EG) that has forty-four students. The cognitive approach of vocabulary teaching is used in the EG, while the CG follows the traditional grammar translation method. A detailed procedure of the experiment is designed by the author. The instruments used in this study are a questionnaire and a pretest at the beginning and a posttest in the end. The collected data are analyzed and compared through the usage of Statistical Package for Social Science version 15.0 (SPSS 15.0).

1.4 The Organization of the Book

The book consists of five parts, including the introduction. The first part is the introduction, which presents briefly the research background of cognitive psychology and VTL. It also introduces the need for the present study and the research questions. Part two reviews the relevant literature of vocabulary teaching and talks about the research gap, then the theories of input processing and noticing are presented, and based on these theories, a new approach of vocabulary teaching is hypothesized. In part three, the methodology of the research is stated. The research questions, the rationale of the method and its boundaries, the subjects, data collection and instruments, and detailed stages of the research are all included. Part four is the main part of this

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