

中国高校 英语专业学生 二语词汇知识 发展研究

**Development of L2 Word Knowledge
of Chinese Tertiary-Level
English Majors**

张文红 著



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前 言

二语词汇在二语学习与教学中起着至关重要的作用。本文作者聚焦某一特定学习者群体,即中国高校的英语专业学生,对他们在外语课堂环境下,在大学的四个学习阶段中的英语词汇广度与深度知识的发展做了调查研究,以期找出其发展特征及规律,从而对外语课堂环境下的二语词汇知识的习得和发展有更全面和深入的理解,并对促进课堂环境下的二语词汇学习与教学带来启示。

本研究基于 Richards, Nation 及 Laufer 提出的词汇知识理论框架。此理论框架突出词汇知识的多面性,强调了解一个词意味着了解目标词汇的不同层面的相关知识,比如目标词汇的发音、书面拼写形式、意义、句法特征、与相关词汇的关联等等。本研究重点考察了词汇知识的四个关键层面,即基本意义、多义词、派生词以及近义词知识。围绕这四个层面的词汇知识,本研究旨在回答四个方面的问题,即中国高校英语专业学生,在大学的四个学习阶段,其二语词汇广度知识的发展呈现出怎样的特征和规律?其二语词汇深度知识(包括多义词、派生词和近义词知识)的发展呈现出怎样的特征和规律?所考察的不同词汇知识之间的相关关系如何?不同层次中国高校的英语专业学生在二语词汇广度和深度知识发展方面所呈现出的特点及规律有何异同?

本研究的调查对象共三百余人,分别来自中国某省三所不同层次的高校,其中一所为国家重点院校,一所为省级重点院校,另一所为省内普通院校。调查对象均为三所院校中的英语专业一至四年级学生。本研究采取横断面的研究方法,四个年级的学生分别代表处于四个不同学习阶段的学习者。为保证测试词汇的数量及所测词汇知识的针对性,本研究运用了宏观及多次测试的方法,通过对现有的英语词汇知识(包括词汇量和词汇深

度知识) 测试形式及测试工具的缜密考察, 采用了Nation和 Beglar 近年研发的词汇量测试工具(VST)及 Ishii 和 Schmitt 研发的英语广度与深度知识测试系列中的多义词、派生词和近义词的测试工具, 并通过两次先导研究, 对原有工具的内容与形式进行了一定程度的改进, 使之更适合本研究的研究目的。数据的收集大体同一时间在三校英语专业四个年级中分别进行(由于客观原因, 其中一所省级重点院校的四年级学生的数据收集晚于其他学校和年级两个月)。所有调查对象在正常的课堂时间内一次性完成所有测试, 所用时间约为1小时。最后运用 SPSS 软件包对所得数据进行了统计分析。

调查结果表明, 中国高校英语专业学生在四个学习阶段中, 其英语词汇广度与深度知识的发展呈现非线性的特点。本研究发现: (1) 英语专业学生从大学一年级至三年级阶段, 其英语词汇广度知识呈现出线性发展趋势, 但从三年级至四年级阶段, 词汇广度知识的发展停滞不前, 甚至出现下滑; (2) 不同词汇知识的发展规律及路径不同, 表明二语词汇广度与深度知识的发展不同步; (3) 与基本意义(词汇量)、多义词及派生词知识的发展不同, 英语专业学生在四个学习阶段中, 其近义词知识的发展均呈现出停滞或僵化状态; (4) 四种词汇知识之间呈现显著的正相关关系, 但相关强度不同; (5) 来自中国不同层次高校的英语专业学生, 在四种词汇知识的发展特点和规律上, 既存在相似点, 也呈现出明显差异。同时, 尽管在大学初始阶段, 不同层次高校的英语专业学生的词汇知识呈现显著差异, 但到了大学高年级阶段, 这些差异逐渐消失; (6) 来自普通院校的英语专业学生比来自重点院校的英语专业学生, 其词汇知识的发展在四个学习阶段呈现出更加显著的动态性特征。

本研究的结果对理解和考察课堂环境下二语词汇知识的习得与发展具有重要启示。首先从理论上讲, 本研究验证了 Schmitt、Larsen-Freeman 等语言学家所强调的课堂环境下词汇习得的累积性和动态性。词汇知识的发展并非总是线性的, 期间还会出现词汇知识的停滞、僵化抑或磨蚀, 因此在试图建立二语词汇习得的理论模型时, 应该把这些现象考虑进去。在这一点上, 本研究也为 Meara 提出的词汇习得的多态模式(multistate model)提供了实证数据的支持。同时, 本研究发现不同的词汇知识呈现出不同的

发展特征，因此传统的针对某一方面的词汇知识进行微观的和细致的研究仍然十分必要。在研究方法上，本研究也表明了由 Meara 和 Laufer 提出的、并被一些研究者所运用的宏观和多次测试方法的有效性。除此之外，本研究还为二语词汇的教学带来有益启示，如注重二语词汇网络的建立、提高词族的观念及克服二语语义知识的僵化和词汇知识的磨蚀等。本研究在研究方法及研究工具方面仍然存在不足，由此作者建议将来针对二语词汇知识发展的研究能够采取跟踪研究的方法，并涉及更多的目标群体，同时对影响二语词汇习得的因素进行更加细致的考察，从而使我们对外语课堂环境下二语词汇的习得与词汇知识的发展有一个更全面和客观的认识。

张文红

2015 年 5 月 15 日



List of Abbreviations

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AWL	Academic Word List
BNC	British National Corpus
DF	Derivative Forms
DST	Dynamic System Theory
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EVST	Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Test
GSL	General Service List
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MM	Multiple Meanings
NS	Near-Synonyms
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPSS	Statistical Product and Service Solutions (also known as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)
TDF	Test of Derivative Forms
TL	Target Language
TLC	Test of Lexical Choice
TMM	Test of Multiple Meanings
TNS	Test of Near-Synonyms
UWL	University Word List
VLT	Vocabulary Levels Test
VS	Vocabulary Size
VST	Vocabulary Size Test

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

The past decade has witnessed a boom of L2 vocabulary research in the field of second language acquisition. Researchers have attempted to measure the dimensions of L2 word knowledge and track the development of L2 vocabulary knowledge in the foreign language classroom settings. This research is an attempt in the exploration of the development of L2 vocabulary knowledge in the classroom setting in Chinese context. The motivation for the present research derives from two aspects: teaching experience and the literature reading.

Long years of English teaching experience at a college enable me to observe the L2 learning process of the Chinese English learners in the classroom. Both these teaching experiences and further reading of the literature on L2 vocabulary research have indicated the importance of vocabulary in second language learning and the necessity for carrying out further research on the development of L2 word knowledge in classroom settings.

1.1.1 Importance of vocabulary in L2 learning

It is widely acknowledged that vocabulary plays a crucial role in language learning. Both language learners and researchers consider vocabulary as an important component, if not the most important one in language learning, and many of the difficulties that learners face in their receptive or productive language use result from an inadequate vocabulary (Nation, 1990). When explaining why he has constant interest in the research of L2 vocabulary learning and teaching,

McCarthy (1990, p. viii) notes that “No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way”.

English learners' performance on vocabulary has a close relationship with their performance on reading, listening comprehension and other forms of language proficiency tests (Nation & Meara, 2008). Especially in reading tests, vocabulary has been found to be the most important predictor (Nation & Coady, 1988).

In her study on the correlation between vocabulary size and reading comprehension in the case of Arabic learners of English, Laufer (1992) has found that subjects' scores on the two vocabulary size tests and their reading comprehension scores on two standardized tests correlate highly. Laufer (1992) also suggests that the 3000 word level is a basic threshold for reading ability in English. Schmitt (2000) holds that a size of 5,000 word families should enable learners to read authentic L2 texts and infer meaning of many of the novel words from context, while Nation and Beglar (2007) argue that in order to accomplish a series of tasks like reading authentic literary works, learners need to have a vocabulary of around 8,000 word families. All these suggestions underline the fact that vocabulary size and reading ability are closely related in L2 learning.

Research on L2 vocabulary also shows that not only vocabulary size, but also the quality of vocabulary knowledge correlates with reading comprehension. The study of Nassaji (2004) indicates a significant correlation between depth of vocabulary knowledge and the degree and type of strategy use and success in reading comprehension activity. Qian (1999, 2002) has investigated the roles of breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension in academic settings and found that dimension of vocabulary depth is as important as the dimension of vocabulary size in predicting performance on academic reading, and he thus argues for the recognition of the importance of improving depth of vocabulary knowledge in learners' ESL learning processes.

Apart from reading, L2 vocabulary is evidently related to other language skills such as writing. Raimes (as cited in Nation, 1990, p.147) stresses the need for an adequate vocabulary if learners are going to generate, develop, and present ideas in their writing. Schmitt (2000) points out that though many teachers focus on grammatical rules in teaching writing, it seems that lexis may be the element requiring more attention, as lexical errors tend to impede comprehension more than grammatical errors and lexical errors tend to be relatively frequent. Analysis of the English writings produced by adult learners reveals that a large proportion of errors observed are lexical errors (e. g. He, 2009). Whitley (2004, p.163) emphasizes that it is lexicon—words and their meanings—where learner's errors are most numerous and also most disruptive and irritating to L1 readers. Therefore, it makes sense for us to believe that “adequate knowledge of words is a prerequisite for effective language use” (Read, 2000, p.83).

1.1.2 Research of L2 vocabulary acquisition and major findings

Because of the crucial part of vocabulary in L2 learning, vocabulary acquisition has attracted great attention in ESL research in recent years. Consequently, a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the role vocabulary plays in L2 learning and how L2 vocabulary is acquired has been achieved. Related literature reveals that researchers approach L2 vocabulary mainly from the following angles: (1) methods to count “words” in certain texts; (2) the different dimensions of vocabulary knowledge; (3) ways to measure vocabulary size and depth; (4) the relationship between vocabulary and the development of language skills, such as reading, listening, speaking and writing; (5) the model and pattern of L2 vocabulary acquisition and the representation of word knowledge in the mental lexicon. Some of the major findings resulting from such research by now might be summarized as follows: (1) The number of words that a learner knows is closely related to his language skills; (2) Word knowledge contains different dimensions and indicates different degrees, rather than implies a dichotomous known/unknown matter; (3) Acquisition of a word is by nature an incremental process