

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION
WITH ENGLISH MAJORS:
A Study in the Chinese Context

朱晔 著


外语学习策略培训研究

一项针对英语专业学生的实证研究

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序

建国 60 年来,特别是改革开放后,我国外语学术研究日益受到重视,学术交流活跃,外语学术研究群体不断扩大。中青年外语教师作为这个群体的重要组成部分,正辛勤耕耘在外语教学科研一线,为我国外语教育事业的发展做出了积极的贡献,本书作者就是这个优秀群体中的活跃一员。

随着“以学习者为中心”这一教学理念的不断深入人心,越来越多的外语教学科研人员意识到学习者在整个外语学习过程中发挥着重要作用。指导学习者开展外语学习的语言学习策略研究,也因此成为二语习得研究的一个重要领域。

本书回顾和评述了国外语言学习策略研究及语言学习策略培训研究的相关文献,针对我国高校英语专业学生开展实证研究。研究显示:正确、有效地运用语言学习策略有助于提高英语专业学生的语言学习效率与效果。以此为基础,作者进一步提出了在英语专业学生中开展语言学习策略培训时需要遵循的原则,同时还提供了一个开展语言学习策略培训的样本。本书有以下几个特点:一、清晰梳理了语言学习策略的定义与分类;二、全面归纳了开展语言学习策略研究最常用的研究方法;三、提出了有实践指导意义的语言学习策略培训原则,并提供了有示范效应的培训样本。

作为朱晔的博士生导师,我怀着极大的兴趣阅读了这部《外语学习策略培训研究》书稿。与其他外语学习策略研究不同,本书以外语学习策略培训为研究内容,观点创新、方法务实,有助于开阔我国外语学习策略研究的视角。据我所知,本书可能是国内外语学习策略培训研究领域的第一部专著,为此,我深感欣慰。

当然,本书中的有些观点也许还不成熟,有待进一步研究,但这种不足是探索过程中存在的必然,可谓瑕不掩瑜。值此书出版之际,乐以为序。希望作者继续探索,更上一层楼。

上海外国语大学原校长
教育部高校外语专业教学指导委员会主任委员
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戴炜栋
2010 年 1 月

前 言

语言学习策略,指的是“学习者用来掌握语言的技巧和方法”(Rubin, 1975),是“学习者采取的特别行为,其目的是为了学习变得更为简便、快捷、有趣,让学习者更好地管理自己的学习,使学习更有效且更容易在新环境下发生迁移”(Oxford, 1989),是“指为有效学习(某种语言)所采取的措施”(文秋芳, 2003)。对于外语学习者而言,语言学习策略即外语学习策略。随着人们对外语学习者在外语学习中重要性的认识,外语学习策略研究已成为二语习得研究的重要研究领域之一,正日益受到外语教学、研究人员的关注。

迄今为止,国内外大量语言学习策略研究已经表明:正确运用语言学习策略有助于学习者成功开展语言学习。但是,如何把语言学习策略研究的成果运用到学习者的语言学习实际之中,真正发挥其作用,却有待于我们进一步开展深入研究。如何科学、有效地实施语言学习策略培训,就是这样一个值得外语教学、科研人员进一步研究的课题。本书针对我国高校英语专业学生,开展外语学习策略培训的实证研究,探究是否有必要对这群特定的外语学习者开展外语学习策略培训,如果有必要的话又该如何开展外语学习策略培训。

本研究包括了两个部分:第一部分研究着眼于我国英语专业学生在学习英语时是否存在语言学习策略运用方面的困难和问题,从而为是否有必要在此类学生中开展外语学习策略培训提供依据;第二部分研究以英语专业四级考试(Test for English Majors, Grade Four)为参照,探究考试高分组和低分组两组学生在外语学习策略运用方面的差异,从而寻找对于高分组学生成功的英语学习起关键作用的外语学习策略。

本书共分七章。第一章介绍了本项研究的背景,包括我国高校英语专业教育的概况和英语专业四级考试的基本情况,在此基础上提出了研究目的和预期的研究成果。第二章回顾和评述了国外语言学习策略和语言学习策略培训领域的相关文献,综合介绍并分析了其中主要的十二个语言学习策略定义和五种语言学习策略分类法,从而为本项研究定位。第三章介绍了目前最常用的语言学习策略研究方法,并提出了研究问题、确定了研究方法。第四章介绍了第一部分研究的具体内容。为了解一年级英语专业学生是否能够有效运用语言学习策略及其对语言学习策略培训的态

度,上海外国语大学的125名学生接受了该项研究的问卷调查。研究结果表明:有必要在英语专业学生中开展语言学习策略培训。第五章介绍了第二部分研究的具体内容。根据专业英语四级考试的成绩,23名学生回答了Rebecca Oxford编制的Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)(1990)。研究结果显示:由11人组成的高分组和由12人组成的低分组在语言学习策略的运用方面存在着显著差异,25项语言学习策略的运用对于提高高分组学生的英语水平起到了明显的效果。在总结前两章研究成果的基础上,第六章提出了在我国高校英语专业学生中开展语言学习策略培训时必须遵循的原则,并提供了一个如何开展语言学习策略培训的样本,回答了以下一系列重要问题:培训应该何时开始?需要持续多久?培训的步骤如何?培训内容如何确立?作为全文的最后一章,第七章在总结研究成果和贡献的同时,客观分析了本项研究的局限性,为今后的研究指出了方向。

通过研究,本书得出了以下结论:在我国高校英语专业学生中应该开展科学、高效的外语学习策略培训,因为培训可以帮助他们正确运用语言学习策略来改进英语学习,提高他们的学习效果和英语水平,从而使他们的英语专业学习获得成功。

在本书的撰写过程中,我的博士生导师戴炜栋教授始终给予我悉心指导和关心,没有他的鼓励和帮助,本书是不可能完成的。更令我感动的是,他还在百忙之中抽空为本书作序,令我备受鼓舞。新加坡南洋理工大学国立教育学院的Lawrence Jun Zhang博士、美国马里兰大学的Rebecca Oxford教授和美国明尼苏达大学的Elaine Tarone教授也分别对我进行了指导;Lawrence Jun Zhang博士通过MSN和我对语言学习策略及其培训研究的许多问题进行了广泛深入的讨论,他扎实的专业功底和认真务实的研究作风令我十分钦佩;Rebecca Oxford教授对于我开展文献研究提出了建设性意见;Elaine Tarone教授对本项研究的设计提供了宝贵的建议。此外,我要感谢我在上海外国语大学新闻传播学院的同事们和参与本项研究的学生们,他们的理解、支持和参与使得本项研究得以顺利完成。最后,我还要感谢我的家人给予我的全力支持。本书的出版,得到了上海外国语大学教育发展基金会“海富通教育奖励基金”的资助,在此也表示我衷心的感谢。

本书能让我国从事二语习得研究的教学、科研人员及高校外语专业的研究生把握语言学习策略及培训研究的概要,希望本书的出版能推动我国外语学习策略培训的深入开展。书中如有疏漏和不当之处,谨请专家和同行批评指正。

朱 晔

2010年1月于上海外国语大学

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Chapter 1

BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Few people will deny that it is both time-consuming and painstaking to learn a foreign language, not to mention that the learner is required to have a successful attainment of the language. Therefore, it is normal that Chinese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners will encounter learning difficulties or problems when learning English in the Chinese context. Take myself as an example, I have been working as a college English teacher since 1995 and had learned English from primary school to college for 12 years before 1995. In the past two and a half decades, I have both experienced and observed various English learning difficulties or problems not only from myself but also from my classmates and students. It was such difficulties and problems that have more or less been hindering a more efficient improvement of English proficiency among many foreign language learners.

Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), one of the key universities in China, has won a nationwide acknowledgement for its high-qualified foreign language education over 60 years. Before entering SISU, most, if not all, English majors have proved themselves to be good English learners due to the fact that only those who have done well in the National College Entrance Examinations, especially in its English Examination, will be admitted to the undergraduate English major program at SISU. More importantly, English majors in general are more interested in learning English and therefore have stronger motivations than other English learners in China. But do they have English learning difficulties or problems? From my own teaching experience, I find the answer is “yes”. By discussing with my English major students, I have a brief idea that an inappropriate use or a

lack of appropriate language learning strategies may be a major cause of such difficulties or problems. In fact, my above observation or supposition brings about the present study.

1.2 English Education for Chinese English Majors

China's English educational system, covering primary to tertiary levels, has been established since the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Today the English course is a compulsory subject in primary and middle schools in China. Therefore, all undergraduate English majors have completed their middle-school English study before entering university.

According to China's National Teaching Syllabus for Undergraduate English Majors, the English education for the English majors in China can be divided into two stages: the foundational stage and the advanced stage, each of which lasts two years. The English education for undergraduate English majors at the foundational stage aims at improving students' language skills in English and preparing them to study other courses in English linguistics, literature and culture at the advanced stage. According to the present study, the researcher will discuss the foundational stage of the English education for undergraduate English majors.

During the two-year foundational stage from Semester One to Semester Four in university, the English majors are required to take the Basic English Course (BEC, or the Intensive Reading Course, which is more familiar to most teachers and students), the Listening and Speaking Course (LSC), the Extensive Reading Course (ERC), the Grammar Course (GC) and the Writing Course (WC). The general arrangement for the above courses is listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 English Courses for Chinese English Majors

Semester	Course (lessons per week)				
	BEC	LSC	ERC	GC	WC
One	8	2	2	/	/
Two	8	2	2	/	/

Chapter 1 BACKGROUND

(Continued)

Semester	Course (lessons per week)				
	BEC	LSC	ERC	GC	WC
Three	8	2	2	2	2
Four	8	2	2	2	2

Table 1.1 shows that the English education of the foundational stage centers on the teaching of four language skills to the English majors. The arrangement of English courses has set aside much time and provided many opportunities which are necessary to improve the English language proficiency of the English majors in China.

1.3 The Test for English Majors, Grade Four

The Test for English Majors, Grade Four (TEM-4) made its debut in 1990 and has become a nationwide proficiency test for the English majors at the end of the foundational stage. Candidates, i. e., the English majors from different universities of the country are required to take the examination in the second quarter of each year (It used to be held in May, but now it is held in April annually). It is a compulsory examination for English majors on the completion of their English learning at the foundational stage. Its purpose is to assess students' ability of using the English language and their knowledge of the language, to provide positive backwash effect on classroom teaching and to help evaluate the implementation of the National Teaching Syllabus (Zou, 1997).

TEM-4 consists of six parts and incorporates subjective and objective components. The objective components amount to 65 percent of the total score, with the subjective ones taking up the remaining 35 percent. Most of the test items are of the objective multiple-choice type to facilitate scoring and contribute to its reliability. As to the subjective components, dictation has been shown through research to be good measure of overall proficiency and is included for this reason, while writing has been tested subjectively because as a productive skill, it cannot be adequately tested through the

multiple-choice format, but needs to be tested directly. Table 1.2 gives a brief introduction of the test format of TEM-4^[1].

Table 1.2 Test Format of TEM-4(2004) *

ITEMS	POINTS	PERCENTAGE	DURATION(mins.)
Part I Writing	20	20%	45
Section A	15	15%	35
Section B	5	5%	10
Part II Dictation	15	15%	15
Part III Listening			
Comprehension	25		
Section A	7-9	15%	20
Section B	7-9		
Section C	7-9		
Part IV Cloze	15	10%	15
Part V Grammar & Vocabulary	25	15%	15
Part VI Reading			
Comprehension	25	25%	30
Section A	15	15%	25
Section B	10	10%	5

TEM-4 is welcomed by universities across China as an important means to evaluate tertiary level English language teaching and learning because it is the only national test of its kind. More importantly, being a national test, its content, construct, predictive and concurrent validity and reliability are guaranteed. In recent years, TEM-4 has gained popularity not only among universities which offer English language and literature programs, but also among those that offer English related programs, such as foreign trade, international economics, international accountancy/banking and the like.

* TEM-4 was reformed in 2005 and the test format has been changed since then.

1.4 The Present Study

The present study researches into the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and the success of English study for English majors in China. The subjects of the study will be 125 first-year English majors at the College of Journalism & Communications (CJC), SISU. The purpose is to find out whether it is necessary to implement language learning strategy instruction with Chinese English majors. If the answer is positive, a following research will be conducted to explore what language learning strategies will promote the English study of these learners. The researcher will find out the possible difference in language learning strategy use between two groups of English majors: one group of 11 high TEM-4 score achievers, the English majors who are good at English study, and the other group of 12 low TEM-4 score achievers, the English majors poor at English study. By conducting the research, the researcher expects to work out certain correlation between the language learning strategy use and the success of English study among English majors. If the result shows certain difference in language learning strategy use does exist between the two groups of English majors, a proposal of language learning strategy instruction for English majors will be put forward to improve both the English learning efficiency and language proficiency of more English majors in the Chinese context.

1.5 Study Objectives and Expected Outcome

Two researches are designed to complete the present study. The first research is to investigate whether the Chinese English majors have difficulties or problems in using appropriate language learning strategies when they are learning English. In other words, the researcher intends to find out what general attitude they take towards language learning strategy instruction. The second research attempts to explore whether there is a difference in the use of language learning strategies between the high TEM-4 score achievers and the low TEM-4 score achievers. If the answer is

positive, the researcher will try to answer the question “What strategies have contributed to the success of English study of the high TEM-4 score achievers?”

The researcher has noticed that many first-year English majors are not able to use appropriate language learning strategies to improve their English learning efficiency and English language proficiency. In this case, the researcher hopes that the outcome of the first research will confirm his prediction that language learning strategy instruction is important for and will be welcomed by most first-year English majors. As to the objective of the second research, the researcher expects certain difference in language learning strategy use between the high and low TEM-4 score achieving English majors will be ascertained, which will lay a solid foundation for the researcher to design a pedagogical plan of language learning strategy instruction to the English majors in China.

1.6 Conclusion

The chapter provides important background information for the study. A brief introduction is given on both the English education for the Chinese English majors and the Test for English Majors, Grade Four because the current study intends to research into the relationship between the language learning strategy use and the success of English study of these learners. The researcher expects to find out what attitude the Chinese English majors take towards language learning strategy instruction and whether there exists certain difference in the use of the language learning strategies between the high and low TEM-4 score achieving English majors. A pedagogical plan of language learning strategy instruction to the English majors in China will be an important outcome of the study.