


二语习得中的形式与意义联结

Connecting Forms and Meanings
in Acquiring a Second Language


杨滢滢 著

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序

二语习得中的形式意义联结理论渗透于二语习得研究的各个方面,为理解第二语言学习者的语言习得过程提供了理论依据。本书从中国学习者的时态使用研究入手,考察中国学习者在英语时态习得过程中的形式和意义联结情况。在第二语言学习者语言能力发展的过程中,动词时态的正确应用是衡量学习者语言水平的重要特征之一。对于中国学习者而言,英语的时态多是在语法功能形式上的,汉语中的时间表达多是使用词汇手段,两种语言在时态体系方面的巨大差异,对学习者的时态习得构成了较大困难和挑战。众所周知,在实际教学中,我们会发现中国学习者对英语动词时态的应用呈现出不稳定性和模糊性。英语动词屈折变化涵盖了丰富的时间表达信息,本族语者可以轻而易举感知这些,但课堂教学环境下的二语/外语学习者却并非如此。事实表明,即便高水平的中国学习者其英语时态使用仍然较为混乱、模糊不清,而这主要表现为学习者对英语时态使用的形式和意义上的错误匹配。这种情况势必影响交流过程中信息传达的有效性。因此,如何能够在外语课堂教学环境下提高学习者的时态使用能力、促进语言交流的有效性就成了一个很现实的问题。

二语习得领域相关学者普遍认同,以-ed 结尾的一般过去时对于二语学习者尤其难以习得(Bardovi-Harlig, 2000)。对于中国学习者而言也同样如此。该论著因此也集中研究了中国学习者一般过去时使用情况,一方面考察中国学习者对该时态的形式和意义联结建立的情况;另一方面深入探讨了影响该联结建立的因素。

值得一提的是,杨滢滢博士在读博期间曾经获得中美富布赖特项目联合培养博士生项目奖学金,并赴美国密歇根大学访学,师从著名的心理认知语言学家 Nick Ellis 教授。在美国访学期间,她潜心攻读诸多论著,广泛搜集资料,并在 Nick Ellis 教授的指导下对该研究进行调整和补充。因此,她的这篇论著也主要从心理和认知的角度深入分析了中国学习者时态形式和意义联结过程中的影响因素。这在以往的相

关研究中是不多见的。此外,杨滢滢博士还虚心请教了各领域的诸多著名研究学者,请他们对自己的研究从不同角度提出宝贵的意见,如 John Swales 教授、Diane Larsen-Freeman 教授、Dr. Ute Römer 和 Dr. Matt O'Donnell 等。这些支持都丰富和完善了她的相关研究。

杨滢滢博士在硕士阶段就开始对中国英语专业学习者的时态使用情况进行相关实证研究,这种浓厚的兴趣一直延续到博士阶段甚至今天。她还参与了中国高校外语专业多语种语料库建设与研究——英语语料库的建设(2007 年度国家社会科学基金项目 No. 07BYY037),负责语料的输入、标注和校对工作。她的后续时态研究都是基于这种大规模语料库进行的。她精心选取一定规模和数量的语料进行分析,为了确保研究的代表性和全面性,这些语料涵盖了中国英语专业学习者的考试语料、平时练习语料、写作语料、翻译语料;学习者层次也横跨英语专业一、二、三、四各年级,以此进行横向和纵向对比,考察学习者的时态应用能力的发展过程和面貌特征。

总而言之,该论著的相关研究是结合了二语习得、认知心理学和语料库语言学的跨领域研究,这种新的视角相信对该领域的研究会是有力的补充。该论著研究方法科学、中心突出、结构严谨、逻辑思维紧密、论证有力充分、语言表达流畅准确,条理清晰、层次分明,为外语学习环境下的英语教学提供了理论支持和教学启示。

《国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要(2010~2020 年)》中对于高等教育的定位做了明确的规定:“高等教育承担着培养高级专门人才、发展科学技术文化、促进现代化建设的重大任务”。在这一时代背景下,我国当前高校外语专业如何改革创新、持续发展已成为高等教育亟待解决的问题之一。我们必须看到,外语专业教育 60 年来取得了辉煌成就的同时也面临一些问题。胡文仲教授(2008)认为我国外语教育尚缺乏真正高水平的外语人才。我也曾指出外语专业学生知识结构/专业能力尚需规范提升是我国外语专业教育所面临的问题之一。这些不足和问题在微观上主要表现为学习者在语言能力发展过程中所遇到的一些瓶颈和听说读写译基本功还不够扎实等方面。显然,中国学习者对时态使用的不确定性和模糊性也正是其主要表现之一。该论著从二语习得、认知心理语言学和语料库语言学相结合的视角对学习者的语言能力发展制约因素做多维度分析,这将有助于进一步揭示具有中国特色的英语和英语学习特征,也为我国高等院校英语教学大纲的制定、课程设置、教材编写、教学方法、课堂教学实施以及英语测试的科学性等提供更科学有力的依据。同时,我们也希望该研究可以引起更多研究人员、英语教师和学习者的注意,把相关研究成果引入英语教学环节。例如,可以利用本族语语料库和学习者语料库做对比,积极进行英语教学

课件、软件和教学资源的设计和开发,逐步引导学习者对相关语言特征进行归纳和推理,以提高英语教与学的效率。这也将对切实提高学习者语言能力发展、深化外语教育改革及实现我国现阶段培养高水平外语人才的目标起到促进作用。

戴炜栋

2013 年春

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This book is the fruit of years of research in form—meaning connections in Second Language Acquisition, with special regard to the evidence from the studies in Chinese learners' use of English tense and aspect. Writing this book definitely involves a long period of much generous help from many teachers and friends as well as substantial love and support from my family.

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Abstract

The tense and aspect system in English plays an essential role in English language to express temporality; it is also one of the core tasks of English learning. Tenses in general are a “traditional stumbling-block for learners” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 62). As opposed to children who eventually acquire all of these constructions for expressing time with their first language, adult Second Language (L2) learners naturalistically usually do not (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Noyau, Klein, & Dietrich, 1995; Perdue, 1993; Schumann, 1987; VanPatten, 1996). In particular, the simple past morphological inflection —*ed* is notoriously difficult for learners to acquire (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000). For adult L2 learners, the difficulty of acquiring the tense and aspect system is mainly represented by the incorrect or inappropriate mapping of the forms and their corresponding meanings within a certain context.

Usage-based SLA theories hold that the acquisition of grammar is the “piece-meal learning of many thousands of constructions and the frequency-biased abstraction of regularities within them” (N. C. Ellis, 2003, p.67). Constructions are the basic units of language representation, and they are form-meaning associations. The process of learning the tense and aspect system in English, therefore, is a course of establishing the form-meaning connections of the system.

Form-meaning connections have been an integral component of SLA, and have long occupied the interest of SLA researchers. This research adopts VanPatten, Williams, & Rott’s (2004) synthesis of FMCs in second language acquisition to elucidate this issue with regard to the definition, features, and stages involved in the process; additionally, the affecting factors from both conventional and psycholinguistic perspectives are compared as well. Since constructivists maintain that simple learning mechanisms operate in the same way across human systems for perception,

motor action, and cognition; language learning is no exception. Associative learning theory is applicable to all learning mechanisms; therefore, it can also be viewed as the psychological learning mechanism underpinning the acquisition of constructions. Furthermore, factors that might affect this information processing mechanism are identified so as to better understand and improve the form-meaning associations in language learning, such as frequency, contingency, cue competition, salience, overshadowing and blocking, cross linguistic transfer and attention, etc. As these determinants suggest that second language adult learners may have selective and biased attention toward their L2 learning resulting from their entrenchment in their L1 convention, additional attentional resources are needed for noticing the gap between the interlanguage and the target language as the stimuli for further learning. This naturally necessitates explicit learning for a comprehensive and native-like FMCs for adult L2 learners. Following this argument, implicit leaning/knowledge and explicit learning/knowledge and their interface issue are discussed. Generally, despite the controversy over the interface issue, it is agreed that explicit learning can assist in the acquisition of language. Based on the above proposed theoretical framework, the research questions are then formulated as:

(1) To what extent do Chinese learners acquire English simple past tense and establish the form-meaning connections?

(2) What are the determinants affecting the simple past tense form-meaning association? Is implicit learning sufficient for the establishment of form-meaning connections?

(3) If implicit learning alone cannot guarantee the full Form-meaning Connections of the simple past tense, what role does explicit learning play in improving the FMCs of the simple past tense?

This research thus focuses on the investigation of how to make form-meaning connections in SLA and the determinants in the process, especially from psycholinguistic and cognitive perspectives, with the evidence from Chinese learners' use of the simple past tense. Two lines of enquiry are involved in the research:

First, to what extent have Chinese learners established the form-meaning connections of the simple past tense, and what are the factors determining this estab-

lishment process? This line answers the first two research questions by presenting the current studies in the book with one corpus-based study and one supplementary empirical study; both quantitative and qualitative approaches are adopted to process the research. Both studies employed translation (from Chinese into English) as the measurement, and two tenses are involved in the translated passage: the simple past and simple present. Furthermore, both the incorrect and correct uses of the tenses are annotated with the occurrence of different types of time expressions as well. The research has found that to some degree, the Chinese learners established form-meaning connections for the prototypical use of the simple past tense, but not in a complete, robust, and target-like way because there was some mismatching of the forms onto the meanings which were displayed by inappropriate tense choices, tense disagreement, tense-related incorrect verb forms, and subject-verb disagreement. Likewise, in translating, the Chinese learners tended to make more meaning-related tense errors than form-related errors, and this echoes with one of the findings in the two corpus-based preliminary studies. They adopted more a sentence-level approach than a discourse approach in making tense choices, “without paying attention to the surrounding context” (Granger, 1998, p.197). Following these research results, such determinants that may affect their learning are specified in terms of the actual FMCs of the simple past tense reflected by the Chinese learners’ use as input frequency, cue competition, salience, blocking and learned attention, L1 influence, etc. Apparently, there are many constraints on Chinese learners’ establishing the FMCs of the simple past tense, which also indicates that the acquisition of an L2 as a whole is quite a complex, adaptive, and dynamic course. These results attest to the fact that without additional attentional resources, implicit learning alone may not guarantee successfully establishing FMCs of a certain linguistic feature, which makes explicit learning a great necessity in order to raise learners’ consciousness and enable them to notice the gap between their production and the target language features.

Second, as indicated above, for adult second language learners, since implicit learning alone is insufficient for making the FMCs of the simple past tense, what is the role of explicit learning in the process? This line attempts to provide the answer

to the third research question with a tentative study by examining the role of metalinguistic cue in direct focused written corrective feedback as negative evidence in explicit learning of an L2. This study is also a follow-up study from the perspective of language pedagogy with both quantitative and qualitative data as well. Corrective feedback (abbreviated as “CF” below), as negative evidence, helps learners to notice the gap between interlanguage forms and target forms (Schmidt, 1990; 1995). Using a pretest, posttest and delayed posttest design, the study compared 4 treatment groups (focused CF + metalinguistic cue; focused—metalinguistic cue; unfocused + metalinguistic cue; unfocused—metalinguistic cue) and 1 control group in their picture writing tests; the results indicate that explicit written CF could assist learners’ improvement of the simple past tense use, although no differential effect was found among the various types of direct CF in this research. In particular, the group of direct focused CF with metalinguistic cue not only outperformed the other three experimental groups and the Control group, but also had some continuous effect. Explicit learning is necessary both theoretically and pedagogically. Teachers need to provide explicit explanations to learners for the purpose of raising more consciousness of a certain linguistic feature and making it more obtrusive, and learners also expect teachers to clearly demonstrate the rules, or clarify their errors; plus, this type of CF was well received and commented on by the participants involved, as the summary of the questionnaire indicates. However, the non-linear pattern of the results from the three tests also suggests the repetition and even some regression in this regard, which indicates that it takes more time and efforts to raise learners’ attention to the associations between the less salient linguistic forms as cues and their corresponding interpretations as outcomes, for “attempting to establish a direct relationship between corrective feedback and successful acquisition of a form is, therefore, over-simplistic and highly problematic” (K. Hyland & F. Hyland, 2006, p. 84).

Based on the findings involved with the research, some teaching implications are proposed in tense teaching and learning, which should be context, genre, and culture specific due to the complexity, the similarities and differences in temporality expressions in English and Chinese, and there is no simple one to one mapping

between the forms and meanings. In addition, research evaluations and future research directions are suggested as well.

Key words: form-meaning connections; determinants; the simple past tense; implicit learning; explicit learning; written corrective feedback; metalinguistic cue

摘 要

时体系统在英语语言表达时间概念方面发挥了重要作用,也是英语学习中的核心任务之一。总体来说,时态是“学习者长期以来的绊脚石”(McCarthy, 1991, p.62)。儿童在学习母语的过程中最终能够习得所有表达时间概念的结构;但是第二语言成年学习者却显然并非如此(Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Noyau, Klein, & Dietrich, 1995; Perdue, 1993; Schumann, 1987; Van Patten, 1996);对于第二语言成年学习者而言,时体习得的难度主要表现为在一定语境下时体形式和意义之间的错误或不恰当的匹配。以*-ed*结尾的一般过去时对于二语学习者而言尤其难以习得(Bardovi-Harlig, 2000)。本书从考察中国英语学习者一般过去时的使用情况入手,旨在研究在二语习得的过程中如何建立形式与意义的联结,并探讨其过程中的决定性因素。

本书以二语习得、认知语言学和心理语言学相关理论相结合的视角作为研究的理论框架,对中国学习者的一般过去时形式意义联结进行多维度考察。应用型的第二语言习得理论认为,语法的习得过程是一个“一点点累计学习成千上万个结构、并在这些结构中偏向频率性地概括规则”的过程(N. C. Ellis, 2003, p.67)。结构是语言表现的基本单位,也是形式和意义的联结。因此,英语时体系统的学习过程也是建立该系统形式和意义联结的过程。形式和意义的联结是二语习得理论中必不可少的组成部分,并长期以来是二语习得领域中的研究兴趣所在。本书在 VanPatten, Williams & Rott's(2004)对形式和意义联结相关定义、特征和阶段进行综合概括的基础上进一步阐释该研究主题,并同时结合传统二语习得和心理语言学对该过程中涉及的影响因素对该问题进行综合评述。结构主义学家认为简单的学习机制存在于所有人的感官、行动和认知系统中,语言学习也不例外。联想学习理论适用于所有的学习机制,因此它可以被看作是习得语言结构的心理学习机制的基础。本书也同时介绍了影响该机制信息处理过程的因素,包括输入频率、偶然几率、提示竞争、凸显、遮蔽和阻碍、跨语言迁移以及注意力等。这些因素表明,由于其第一语言已经根深蒂

固,第二语言成年学习者对第二语言学习会产生选择性和偏向性的注意力,因此需要其他手段来指引其注意力以使其注意到其中介语和目标语之间的差异,并以此促进其目标语的学习。外显学习/知识作为一种手段则有助于学习者在建立全面的、接近目标语的形式和意义联结过程中注意到这种差异和差距。在此基础上,本书进而介绍了内隐学习/内隐知识和外显学习/外显知识的概念及其接口问题,尽管在这方面存在很大争议,但是研究者普遍认为外显学习有助于促进学习者的语言习得。基于以上理论框架,本书提出以下研究问题:

(1)中国学习者在多大程度上建立了一般过去时的形式和意义联结?

(2)影响该形式和意义关联的决定性因素有哪些?单纯的內隐学习是否足以确保有效建立该形式和意义的联结?

(3)倘若单纯的內隐学习不足以让学习者充分建立一般过去时的形式和意义关联,那么外显学习对于改进形式和意义的联结又会发挥怎样的作用?

本书遵循了两条研究主线:

第一,中国英语学习者在多大程度上建立了英语一般过去时的形式和意义联结,决定该过程的因素有哪些?通过两个定量与定性相结合的研究——基于语料库的研究和一个补充性的实证研究回答了前两个研究问题。语料库研究和实证性研究都采用翻译(汉译英)作为考察手段,该译文中主要涉及两种时态:一般过去时和一般现在时。此外,作者对学习者的时态的错误使用和正确使用以及它们所附加的时间状语类型都进行了标注。研究表明,中国学习者对英语一般过去时的典型性用法一定程度上建立了其形式和意义的联结,但这种关联并不完整、坚实或接近目标语。这些关联中存在着一些错误的形式和意义的匹配,主要表现为不恰当的时态选择、时态使用不一致、时态相关的目标动词错误形式、主谓不一致等。相似地,中国学习者在翻译译文中往往出现更多的与时态意义相关的错误;他们以句式为单位选择时态,“没有注意到周围的语境”(Granger, 1998, p.197);这些都和探索性研究中的结果一致。笔者发现,在建立一般过去时形式和意义联结的过程中,输入频率、偶然几率、提示竞争、凸显、遮蔽和阻碍、跨语言迁移以及注意力等都对其产生影响。很明显,该过程受到很多因素的制约,这些表明第二语言习得的过程是一个非常复杂、适应性和动态化的过程,如果没有其他引导注意力的手段,单纯依靠内隐学习无法成功建立目标语言特征的形式和意义联结。外显学习有助于提升学习者的意识,并使他们能够注意到他们的语言产出和目标语言形式之间的差距。

第二,对第二语言成年学习者而言,既然单纯依靠内隐学习无法确保有效建立第

二语言的形式和意义,外显学习发挥怎样的作用?本书以另一个实证性研究回答了这个问题。该研究考察了元语言提示在集中性书面反馈中的作用,通过这种元语言提示作为提供学习者外显知识并进行外显学习的手段来研究外显学习的形式和意义联结过程中的作用。鉴于成年二语学习者对更加凸显和可靠的词汇时间表达手段的偏移性注意力,作者认为元语言提示可以作为一种提供外显学习的手段。纠正性反馈作为一种负面证据有助于学习者注意到中介语和目标语之间的差距(Schmidt, 1990; 1995)。该研究采用了前测、后测和延迟后测的设计手段,对比了四个接受不同反馈形式的受试组(集中性反馈+元语言提示;集中性反馈-元语言提示;不集中性反馈+元语言提示;不集中性反馈-元语言提示)和一个对照组。研究显示,尽管各组之间没有显著性差异,但明确的纠正性反馈有助于改善学习者在写作中的一般过去时的使用,特别是带有元语言提示的集中性反馈不但优于其他实验组和对照组,且表现出持续性的效果。因此,外显学习在理论上和教学上都是十分必要的。教师需要向学习者提供针对某语言特征的明确解释,并使其凸显以提升学习者在这方面的意识,学习者也希望教师能够明晰地阐释相关规则或他们出现的错误;此外,正如随后的问卷调查显示,这种反馈形式也收到了受试者的一致好评和欢迎。但是,学习者在三次测试中表现的非直线型趋势同样说明了中国学习者在一般过去时使用过程中出现的重复性甚至是倒退;这就表明要提升学习者注意到这种不凸显的形式及其意义之间的联结还需要很多的时间和努力,而“试图在纠正性反馈和成功的习得之间建立一种直接的关系无疑是过度简单的,也是很有问题的”(K. Hyland & F. Hyland, 2006, p.84)。

在总结研究发现的基础上,本书提出了一些有关英语时体的教学启示:鉴于英汉两种语言各自时间表达的异同及其复杂性,英语时态教学和学习应该是基于不同语境下、不同体裁下,也是不同文化下的教学和学习,也不存在简单的形式和意义之间的一对一的匹配。本书最后对本研究进行了评价,指出其不足之处及以后的研究方向。

关键词:形式意义联结;决定性因素;一般过去时;外显学习;内隐学习;书面纠正反馈;元语言提示

List of Tables and Figures

Tables:

Table 3.1	Components of CEM	(63)
Table 4.1	Coding of types of time expressions	(76)
Table 4.2	Percentage of the simple present and simple past in the obligatory occasions	(78)
Table 4.3	Percentage of correct and incorrect tense choices with types of time expressions	(81)
Table 4.4	Distribution of the tense uses in the follow-up study	(84)
Table 4.5	Questionnaire results	(87)
Table 5.1	Schedule for the study	(127)
Table 5.2	Group means and standard deviations for error correction pret- est	(128)
Table 5.3	Descriptive statistics for the three writing tests	(129)
Table 5.4	Two-way repeated measures ANOVA for the three writing tests	(130)
Table 5.5	Pairwise comparison for the three writing tests	(130)
Table 5.6	One-way ANOVA for the writing tests	(131)
Table 5.7	Descriptive statistics for the two error correction tests	(132)
Table 5.8	Tests of between-subjects effects for error correction tests	(132)
Table 5.9	Parameter Estimates for the error correction tests	(133)
Table 5.10	Mean frequency of the simple past tense obligatory occasions for the writing tests	(135)