

Foreign Language Learning: “1+1>2”

“1+1>2”外语学习模式

高一虹 著

北 京 大 学 出 版 社
北 京

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

“1+1>2”外语学习模式/高一虹著. —北京:北京大学出版社,
2001.7

ISBN 7-301-05004-6

I. 1… II. 高… III. 外语—学习方法 IV. H09

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2001)第 039581 号

书 名: “1+1>2”外语学习模式

著作责任者: 高一虹 著

责任编辑: 范一亭 fyt@pup. pku. edu. cn

标准书号: ISBN 7-301-05004-6/H. 0617

出版者: 北京大学出版社

地址: 北京市海淀区中关村北京大学校内 100871

网址: <http://cbs. pku. edu. cn/cbs. htm>

电话: 邮购部 62752019 发行部 62754140 编辑部 62752028

电子信箱: zpup@pup. pku. edu. cn

排版者: 兴盛达打字服务社 62549189

印刷者:

发行者: 北京大学出版社

经销者: 新华书店

890×1240 A5 开本 7.25 印张 208 千字

2001 年 7 月第 1 版 2001 年 7 月第 1 次印刷

全书定价: 13.00 元

序

本书作者高一虹是北京大学教授、博士生导师。在出版本书以前,作者已有多篇论文和专著问世,而今天她终于有机会将自己在博士论文中所做的研究系统地呈现给读者。作为她的导师,我有幸目睹作者的成长和本书的完成过程,愿与读者分享内心的激动和喜悦。

一虹在从事本项课题研究,以及她以后的学术活动中,都坚守这样一个信念:外语学习者应追求目的语文化与母语文化的相互促进以及以此为基础的人格完善,她借用人本主义心理学家弗洛姆的概念,将此称为“生产性双语学习”,并用抽象公式表示为“ $1+1>2$ ”。我们知道,有不少外语行家介绍过他们自己学习外语的经验,出发点和终点都离不开目的语和目的语文化,似乎与母语无关。甚至出现令人咋舌的奇谈怪论,如“要学好外语就要找洋妞同居”;有的学了几句外国话后,便高唱“中国文化落后论”,居然干起口诛笔伐黄土地黄皮肤的行当。按这个套路学外语,岂不把后生变成假洋鬼子?一虹的研究宣判了“削减性双语学习”的死刑,分析了“附加性双语学习”的局限,指出“生产性学习”才是正道。不信,一虹访问了数十名经过无记名投票公认的“最佳外语学习者”,无不精通中外文化,其中许多是巨匠。那些在洋文化冲击中迷失方向的人,不妨学习本书;那些哀叹中国缺少大师级人才者,会从本书看到曙光。一虹也绝不是迷信陈规惟国粹是问者。她的成长经验表明,不论是祖国文化,还是外来文化,凡精华继承之,凡糟粕摒弃之。这一倾向渗透于本书对许多主题的论述:母语文化归属、目的语文化归属、文化意识、文化休克、工具性动机、归属性动机、开放性、批判能力、共情能力、整合能力,等等。

一虹之所以取得上述成就,得益于她注意对第一手资料的收集。她不仅向大师级名人请教;也注意在北京大学英语系团结同事和学生,定期组织语言学沙龙,十余年始终不懈,在京城高等学府享有“老字号”的盛誉;她还为诸如“青春热线”的社会服务机构当义工,与那

些有这样那样苦恼的青年倾心交谈,交流情感,消除他们的疑惑。她本人也能从谈话过程中收集无比丰富的、活生生的对话式语料。当然,任何语料只是没有经过加工的矿砂。一虹还十分注意掌握处理材料的方法。在哈佛大学访学时,她认真学习了语言学研究方法和统计分析技术,这使她能从粗矿砂中提炼出真金。

尽管如此,我认为能把这些工作做得如此完善的原动力,来自一虹的爱国热情。也许有人不知情,一虹有优裕的条件和多次机会移居国外与父母团聚,但她始终认为她的事业在国内,祖国在呼唤她;也许有人不知情,她在国内图不了轻松,公婆多病需照顾,她承担着近乎全部家务。在这些背景下近观本书作者,一虹,奇女子也。

胡壮麟

2001 年 6 月 6 日

于北京大学蓝旗营小区

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research objective

The present dissertation aims to build an L2^① learning^② theory suitable for foreign language learners, especially EFL (English as a foreign language) learners in China.

The landscape of Chinese L2 education has been constantly changing, subject to national socio-political impact and international influence of language teaching theories. From a craze to learn Russian in the decade right after the founding of the People's Republic of China(1949), China has shifted to a greater enthusiasm to learn English. Along with this transformation is the changing scene of teaching approaches: the Soviet “conscious practice” method in the fifties, the Western audio-lingual method and cognitive code method in the sixties and seventies, and more recently, the communicative approach in the eighties and nineties.

Concurrent with a sweeping process of modernization and socio-economic reform since the 1980s, China's English-language needs have been accelerating at a dramatic speed, and consequently, the entire enterprise of English-language teaching has boomed. Numerous EFL training programs, TV lessons, textbooks, read-

① Unless otherwise specified, L2 in this dissertation refers to both “second language” and “foreign language.”

② No distinction is made between “learning” and “acquisition” in Krashen(1981)'s terms.

ing materials, exercises, tests, cassettes and software have been developed. Chinese EFL teachers are increasing in number, and also in the proficiency of handling various practical materials and situations.

While catching up with this rapid pace of development in the practicing field, one is urged to contemplate on the mechanisms under the whole L2 learning process, on the social, psychological and philosophical meaning of L2 learning, and related to this, the objective of Chinese EFL education.

Compared with the blossoming creativeness in the production of specific techniques and materials, our theoretical arena has been relatively silent. In this dissertation I shall make an effort, pursuing an L2 learning model that is best suited to Chinese EFL learners.

1.2 Characteristics of the model

Named “ $1 + 1 > 2$ ”, this model I am trying to build up is noted for several features. First, its primary concern is learning attitude and motivation. Generally speaking, L2 learning models fall into two large groups—those with a linguistic focus (e. g. Krashen’s monitor model, 1981; Carroll’s conscious reinforcement model, 1981; Bialystok’s strategy model, 1978; Ellis’s variable competence model, 1984) and those with a social psychological focus (as reviewed in Chapter 2). The “ $1 + 1 > 2$ ” model can be classified into the second group.

Focusing on motivation does not mean that it is always more influential than other learning factors. Rather, it is considered of more pedagogical importance. There are a large number of factors that contribute to L2 learning outcome. These include intelligence, language aptitude, age, attitude, motivation, learning context,

cognitive styles, personal traits (such as extroversion and introversion), and some others. Among all these I see three most important ones: aptitude, motivation, and environment. Aptitude (including general intelligence) is for the most part a matter of “nature” rather than “nurture,” especially for adult learners. Environment, when referring to the objective surroundings, is also a fixed element independent of individual efforts. The most malleable factor in the learning procedure is then motivation (and attitude which leads to it). Therefore, this factor is pedagogically the most significant.

Secondly, this model is mainly concerned with attitudes toward cultures, including the native culture (C1) and the culture of the L2-speaking community (C2). This stand is based on the assumption that language is a component of culture, and therefore language learning (“foreign language” as well as “second language”) entails culture learning. Besides, in contemporary China, English learning is closely associated with a process of learning the Western cultures and sorting out our own cultural heritage.

Thirdly, the approach taken in this model is one of humanistic psychology. The learner, or the learner’s personality defined in terms of basic need levels, is perceived as the starting and resting point of L2 learning. The person, or for our concern the learner, is the real “carrier” of language, culture, and thought. Therefore, any theory of L2 learning entails a theory of L2 users, or a theory of persons and personalities.

Fourthly, the “ $1 + 1 > 2$ ” model is a learning model which bears implication for teaching. It is primarily descriptive, since it offers a qualitative account of some “best L2 learners.” Based on such description, suggestions are made concerning how pedagogy can facilitate the cultivation of a greater number of excellent learners. For this reason, the model also contains a normative or “pre-

scriptive” (spare the word from negative associations) meaning.

1.3 Main idea of the model

The main idea, as represented in the formula “ $1 + 1 > 2$,” is that language and culture learning in the best case will generate creative energy and elevate personality. The concepts of “subtractive bilingualism” and “additive bilingualism” in previous models either emphasize unfavorable results of L2 learning, or overlook the interaction between two cultural systems. In contrast, “productive bilingualism” or the “ $1 + 1 > 2$ ” model proposed in this dissertation holds that the L2 learning process may resemble that of a nuclear fusion. In this process, atoms of different cultures are forced closely together so that they fuse. This forms a new element in the personality and releases a large burst of creative energy. Personality transformation occurs, but it is not a horizontal one from C1 identity to C2 identity, as proposed by previous models. Rather, it is a vertical one transcending lower level needs.

1.4 General organization

The whole dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter 2 delineates the background of the study. Research literature in three major domains is reviewed: the relation among language, culture, and thought; the bilingual mind at different levels; existing L2 learning models with a social psychological focus. This chapter relates language learning to culture learning and cognitive development, presents an understanding of bilingualism, and points out the limitation of the “acculturation models,” especially their inappropriateness when applied to the Chinese EFL context. The analysis points to the deficient and defective personality models entailed

in the acculturation theories.

Chapter 3 paves the way for the new L2 learning model by introducing Maslow's basic need hierarchy and self-actualization theory as a theoretical basis, and by presenting the design of an empirical study. Maslow's humanistic approach to motivation and behavior is compared to Skinner's behaviorist approach and Chomsky's rationalist approach. Analysis is also made regarding the relationship between Maslow's theory of basic needs and Marx's theory of social development, and the applicability of self-actualization theory in contemporary China. In light of this theory, some features of self-actualizing L2 learners are proposed. Following this is the design of an empirical research, a qualitative study that consists of interviewing 52 informants, half of whom are nationally recognized as "best L2 learners."

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the findings. The major common qualities found on the informants include an open attitude toward both C1 and C2, ability of critically evaluating the two cultures, incorporation of different cultural elements, and creativity facilitated by L2 and C2 learning. As to the psychological process, informants show a common pattern of a three-stage development: the innocent player, the conscious striver, and the autonomous self-actualizer. Personality transformation occurs, but it is transcendence of lower-level needs rather than change of cultural identity. Features of sub-groups by age and sex are also reported.

Chapter 5 sets up the theoretical construct of the new L2 learning model, drawing on the personality theory introduced in Chapter 3 and empirical data discussed in Chapter 4. While "subtractive bilingualism" and "additive bilingualism" are rendered as " $1 - 1 = 1$ " and " $1 + 1 = 1$ " respectively, a productive learning outcome of " $1 + 1 > 2$ " is described. This chapter also proposes the concept of "sociocultural competence" as a general learning out-

come, composed of linguistic competence, communicative competence, and a “critical competence.”

Chapter 6 consists of pedagogical implications of the “ $1 + 1 > 2$ ” model. It discusses the necessity and possibility of making sociocultural competence a pedagogical objective, and offers suggestions for curriculum design and teaching methods.

Chapter 7 sums up the major contributions of the new model, defines its range of application, and describes its limitations.

Chapter 2 Background of the Study

2.1 Language learning and culture learning

To the extent that language is a social semiotic, language learning is also culture learning. Yet it is necessary to bring in a third element, thought, in the discussion of language and culture, because the three factors are interrelated.

2.1.1 Language, culture and thought

2.1.1.1 Culture: its definition and three levels

As early as 1953, Kroeber and Kluckhohn reviewed 164 definitions of culture (Stern, 1983). In 1987, Richmond announced that the number of definitions had reached 450 (Richmond, 1987). Among these definitions, there are those which encompass all material, institutional and psychological aspects of the community, and those which depict culture primarily as behavior patterns and values behind them. Some anthropologists incline towards the former stand. Malinowsky (translated by Fei, 1987), for instance, states that culture refers to the constellation of materials, goods, techniques, thoughts, habits and values in the tradition of a community. Others tend to be less concerned with the material aspect. Linton (1945) defines culture as “a configuration of learned behavior and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society.” Edward Hall (1959) sees culture as primarily a message transmission system. Those who particularly concern themselves with language

teaching tend to follow the second line and focus on the behavioral aspects of culture. Lado (1957), for example, states that "cultures are structured systems of patterned behavior." Taking a humanistic stand, Brooks (1975) holds that culture is always associated with individual persons, and is primarily composed of people's ways of living. In a similar manner, Nostrand (1974) emphasizes the "feelings, beliefs, and thought process" of members of a community.

In this thesis we include the material or physical aspect but will focus more on the behavioral and value orientations. Culture is then a configuration of learned human behavior, results of behavior, and principles controlling behavior that are shared and transmitted by persons in a particular society.

It is necessary to note that my stand here is a humanistic one. That is, "human behavior" is seen as emitted by human beings, and studies of human behaviors, including culturally related behaviors, are necessarily related to studies of persons and personalities. This point will be elaborated on in Chapter 3.

There are various categorizations of culture. The commonly accepted ones include Hall (1959)'s "Ten Primary Message Systems," Kluckhohn's five themes, Camilleri (1986)'s anthropological culture (or small c culture) and academic culture (or big C culture), Brooks (1975)'s institutional and individual culture, and Murdock (1971)'s seven facets.

For the purpose of this thesis, culture is examined at three levels: the PHYSICAL culture at the surface level, the CONVENTIONAL or INTERPERSONAL culture at the intermediate level, and the PSYCHOLOGICAL culture at the deep level (Cf. Pang Pu, 1988, pp. 37—38; Gao Yabiao and Wu Danmao, 1988, p. 3).

The physical culture consists of objects or materials. ("Physical" here is not equivalent to "bodily".) Naturally, many of these are results of human behavior. On the other hand, they constitute

targets that people interact with; they form the environment that behaviors occur. In other words, they are extensions of behaviors. Food, clothing, handicrafts and so on belong to culture at this level.

The conventional or interpersonal culture is composed of the institutional, behavioral and customary aspects of the community. They are not substantial objects, but mechanisms that have operational functions. At this level there are the governmental systems, the constitution, the wedding procedure, and the burial ceremony. There are also norms of proper behavior, for example, the necessity of handshaking or hugging when meeting a friend.

Culture at its deep level consists of psychological storage of the community. These are the common values and beliefs of the community, the “myths” that guide people’s behavior. Such values shape principles of social organizations, interpersonal relationships, and the ways in which people deal with their physical environment.

The three levels of culture are interrelated. The deep level often has manifestations at the intermediate and surface levels. On the other hand, changes at the surface and intermediate levels may bring about changes at the deep level.

The general idea that language is a component of culture is not under debate, although there is the suggestion that a small part of language is unrelated to culture (Hudson, 1980, p. 84). As a symbolic system of human communication, it can be perceived as a subcategory in the intermediate level of culture. Yet precisely because of this symbolic function, language penetrates into all cultural levels; it reflects and organizes other cultural elements and gives them meaning. Therefore, language is a very special component of culture; it is connected with every level of culture as the blood network is connected with the entire human body. Without doubt,

there are other systems through which culture gets transmitted, such as music, painting, and architecture. But no other symbolic system is as comprehensive and powerful as language is.

2.1.1.2 Language and thought

This section will address the issue of the relationship between language and thought. With the discussion of “counterfactual thinking” in Chinese related to the support or rejection of the Whorfian hypothesis, it will be pointed out that studies on language and thought have to take culture into consideration.

2.1.1.2.1 Thought determines language, or language determines thought ?

One commonly debated issue concerning the relationship between language and thought is which one plays a more dominant role. Two groups differ in their views—some believe that thought precedes language and others hold that language determines thought.

The former group argue that language is the “dress” of thought and is dominated by thought (Cf. Wu Tieping, 1990, Hu Zhuanglin et al. eds. 1988, Chapter 13). One important source of empirical evidence for this view is research on “cognitive constraints,” especially those on categorization in different languages. It is documented that the natural categories of plants, animals and objects are universally organized into taxonomies of class inclusion, and there are some common levels of abstraction: superordinate (e. g. “fruit”), basic object (e. g. “apple”), and subordinate (e. g. “Mackintosh apple”). It is only at the subordinate level that languages tend to differ (Cf. Brown, 1986). In other words, some “cognitive constraints” on language seem to exist; thought dominates language. These findings do speak strongly for the dominating role of thought, although they are mostly limited to concrete objects.

The opposing view on the issue of language-thought relationship is that language is the “carrier” of thought; language precedes thought. A typical example of this is linguistic determinism (Whorf, 1956), commonly referred to as the Whorfian hypothesis. According to this view, an individual’s thinking is determined by the native language, because one can only perceive the world in terms of the categories and distinctions encoded in the language.

One of the empirical issues concerning the validity of the Whorfian hypothesis is counterfactual thinking in Chinese and English. Alfred Bloom (1981), arguing for the Whorfian hypothesis, proposed that since Chinese does not have distinctive markers of counterfactual conditionals such as the subjunctive mood in English, “Chinese speakers might be expected typically to encounter difficulty in extending the use of counterfactual speech outside of those concrete situational contexts” (p. 22).

To test his hypothesis, Bloom prepared a counterfactual story in both English and Chinese. The Chinese version was given to Chinese-speakers in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and the English version to English speakers in the US. It was reported that only 7% of the Chinese speaking subjects gave counterfactual interpretations whereas 98% English speaking subjects did so. Bloom claimed that the result supported his hypothesis, and in effect, the Whorfian hypothesis.

Counter evidence was provided by Terry Kit-fong Au (1983), who did five experiments on the issue and found results contrary to that of Bloom’s. According to Au, variables that influenced the understanding of counterfactual factors included the idiomaticness of language, the number of counterfactual cues (such as “hui,” “jiu hui”), the complexity of stories and the age or general cognitive ability of subjects. The most important element that affected counterfactual thinking of the Chinese subjects in Bloom’s studies, so

Au argued, was the unidiomatic Chinese. Given idiomatic language, Chinese speakers could process counterfactual stories as well as English speakers.

Following Au, Cynthia Hsin-feng Wu (1990) did a small scale study on the same issue and used telephone conversations rather than written text to elicit subjects' response. She found that the accuracy of answers offered by the Chinese subjects depended on the specificity of the context. When the context was concrete, there was no explicit problem in processing the question. When the question was abstract, subjects majoring in natural sciences performed better than those majoring in social sciences. Wu's study tends to show that educational background is another influencing factor in counterfactual thinking. Both Au and Wu claimed that their research result rejected Bloom's hypothesis that Chinese speakers were deficient in counterfactual thinking, and therefore rejected the Whorfian hypothesis.

When examined closely, however, the debate on counterfactual thinking debate does not really offer direct support or rejection of linguistic determinism. Rather, it brings up two noticeable questions: culture as an intervening factor, and thought at different levels.

2.1.1.2.2 Culture as the intervening factor

While both sides of the counterfactual debate consider themselves arguing for the relationship between language and thought, it seems that they fail to recognize explicitly the intervening function of culture. Bloom, whose entire research is on the determining function of language on thought, has in fact tried to trace historical and cultural "sources" of the Chinese way of thinking:

"Traditional China developed both a very rich tradition of empirical observation and an active skeptical orientation, but did not develop a scientific tradition ... for it

lacked the third necessary ingredient to such a tradition—namely, a theoretical orientation, an inclination to leave the world of practical application behind in an effort to construct and test purely theoretical explanatory frameworks.”(p. 55)

Following the description of the impacts that traditional Chinese culture and philosophy have on Chinese people’s “cognitive life,” Bloom moves to their impacts on the Chinese language. He contends that historically speaking, “languages are much more the products of their cultures than determiners of them.” (p. 59) Thus Bloom’s explicit view of language, culture, and thought is in fact as follows:

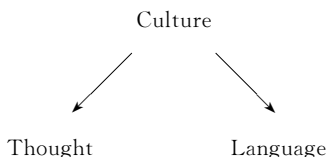


Figure 2.1 Bloom’s View of Culture, Thought and Language

As Wu (1990, p. 15) rightly points out, Bloom fails to draw the connection between thought and language after he builds the links between culture and thought, culture and language respectively. The problem with Au and Wu, however, is that they are even less bothered by the relations. They are busy finding evidence that Chinese speakers can process counterfactual thinking as well as English speakers. This they did quite successfully, but they did not demonstrate whether this ability of counterfactual thinking is a result of language or of culture. Consequently, the results of their studies could not reject language determinism.

What we can see from the counterfactual debate is that language is interwoven in culture; it is difficult to talk about the relationship between language and thought without taking culture into