

Study on the Fossilization of Interlanguage in English Teaching in Senior High School and its Countermeasures

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Abstract

Interlanguage refers to a special language system that is totally different from the native language and the target language in the process of learning a foreign language. With the development of interlanguage, it gradually approaches the target language, but rarely fully integrates with the target language, showing a state of stagnation, which is called fossilization phenomenon. Fossilization is complex, repeated and durative, it appears in various aspects of Interlanguage like phonetics, syntax and semantics, and fossilization phenomenon seriously restricts the progress of learners' foreign language level. In senior high school English teaching in China, the phenomenon of interlanguage fossilization is common. This paper will explain and discuss the causes of this phenomenon, and on this basis, put forward some strategies to alleviate this phenomenon, possibly eliminating fossilization effects to help improve learners' ability to learn and master foreign languages and teachers' teaching quality and efficiency.

Keywords

Interlanguage; Fossilization; Teaching.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The concept of interlanguage was first introduced by Selinker. In 1972, Selinker published a paper entitled "Interlanguage", in which he elaborated the concept of interlanguage and noted that in the process of learning a second language, second language learners would consciously establish a language system that is not only dependent on the mother language but also different from the mother language and the target language. Thus, he proposed the concept of interlanguage.

1.2. The Development Process of Interlanguage Fossilization

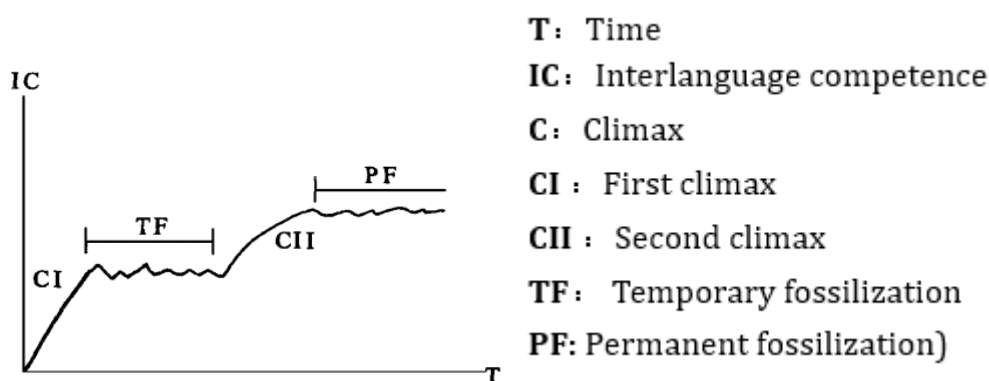


Figure 1. Process of interlanguage development

Interlanguage is systematic, dynamic and permeable, but the most obvious feature is its fossilization. Only about 5% of the population can form the same full-fledged target language system as native speakers. According to Selinker&Eubank's preliminary hypothesis, after a stable period of five years, interlanguage will fossilize, but many of them will be temporarily fossilized. If the optimal input can be obtained, such as living and studying in the target language country for a period of time, the learner's foreign language ability will usually make a second leap. The following diagram shows the process of interlanguage development.

2. Causes of Interlanguage Fossilization

The causes of fossilization in English interlanguage are rather complicated, and there is no authoritative conclusion in the field of language teaching theory. Some scholars believe that the sources of fossilization of Chinese foreign language learners include the following four aspects.

2.1. Learning Strategies

Selinker found that the fossilization of interlanguage caused by the use of learning strategies is the most common phenomenon among learners. Due to the lack of knowledge of the rules of the target language, learners in the pre-interlanguage formation stage may resort to strategies such as ellipsis and simplification, overgeneralization and language transfer, which may lead to the generation of non-target language forms. Although the forms of non-target language will gradually decrease as learners gradually understand the rules of target language and internalize them, some of them will remain and accompany the whole process of interlanguage formation.

2.2. Communicative Strategies

Corder argues that interlanguage is "generally unstable". In the process of communication, when learners cannot use ready-made and accurate target language to express their ideas, Often, learners will consciously or unconsciously use some verbal or non-verbal means to communicate. However, learners' excessive desire to successfully use various communicative strategies to make up for their lack of language knowledge will lead to an illusion that there is no need to learn new knowledge of the target language, which leads to the tendency of interlanguage fossilization.

2.3. Communicative Feedback

The process of fossilization is mainly determined by pragmatic problems rather than syntactic problems. There are two kinds of information exchange between the speaker and the listener (the one who has a better command of the language); The "emotional" information expressed in extra-linguistic forms such as facial expressions, tone of voice or body language, and the "cognitive" information expressed in verbal forms. Both types of information have three expressive states: positive, neutral, and negative. Positive emotional feedback and cognitive feedback will encourage learners to continue using the same language. And if these forms of language contain errors, then the errors are likely to fossilize.

2.4. Cultural Shackles

Language is the carrier of a country or a nation's culture, and cultural differences have a great impact on learners' second language learning. Schuman believed that second language acquisition is one of the main aspects of cultural integration, and the degree to which a language learner can integrate his own culture with the second language culture determines the success or failure of his second language acquisition. If learners have a psychological conflict with the target language that is different from their own culture, the degree of cultural transfer will be reduced, that is, learners no longer modify their interlanguage based on the target language,

thus controlling the level of input information received by learners and ultimately leading to the formation of fossilization.

3. Fossilization of High School Students in the Process of English Learning

3.1. Phonetic Fossilization

In daily teaching, we often find college students still unable to overcome their "Chinese accent" after nearly ten years of English learning. For example, they often make no distinction between short and long vowels, and even use some similar sounds in Chinese to replace the sounds that are not in Chinese. Many students are easily influenced by Chinese when they pronounce English sounds, and unconsciously use Hanyu Pinyin to replace similar English sounds, such as /ai/ pronounced as "alas". Another example is /ae/, because there is no correct sound in Chinese, so they use a relatively similar Chinese sound instead, such as "ah" instead of /ae/.

3.2. The Fossilization of Word Meaning

Language and culture are closely related. Due to the great social and cultural differences between English and Chinese languages, there are very few identical words in English and Chinese. Therefore, learners are prone to fossilization in the following two aspects: First, fossilization of false equivalence and other words. In English learning, students often use Chinese ideas to understand the meaning of English words. For example, the English word "busybody" refers to a busybody, which is often misunderstood by students as "a busy person". Second, the fossilization of emotional differences. In students' textbooks, some words have only one Chinese meaning in the textbook, but their inner emotional color and cultural connotation are completely ignored. For example, students all know that black is black, and art is art, but black art refers to sorcery instead of "black art". That is because in Christian culture and the Bible, darkness symbolizes evil and demons, and is often associated with demons and evil, which usually brings pain and misfortune to people. These phenomena can be said to emerge endlessly in students' English learning, which is completely due to the fossilization of vocabulary caused by the language and cultural differences between Chinese and English.

3.3. Grammatical Fossilization

In the teaching of college English, the author has noticed that students' fossilization also occurs in a wide range of grammar, such as articles, tenses, subject-predicate agreement, pronoun sex and number, etc. From the cognitive point of view, students lack the knowledge of the target language item in their knowledge structure, and the awareness of this aspect in the use of language. For example, although many students understand some grammar rules in English (such as plural nouns, case of pronouns, predicate form of the third person singular simple present tense, etc.), before they have formed corresponding skills and habits, their oral and written expressions are often influenced by their native language habits. Unconsciously, such mistakes as "I have two books." and "He study English" appear.

4. Strategies for Solving Interlanguage Fossilization

4.1. Fully Understand the Laws of Interlanguage Itself

Foreign language learning is a long process of internalization. Some learners will be affected by various factors, such as the surrounding language atmosphere, their own learning methods, teachers' teaching ability and teaching methods, etc. Interlanguage has three characteristics, namely polymorphism, systematicness and variability, and its language system is constantly developing. Through scientific language teaching methods, teachers should enable learners to successfully cross the language transition stage and make new breakthroughs in the language system and teaching of the target language.

4.2. Reduce the Interference of Mother Tongue

Mother tongue interference is the most important cause of fossilization of spoken language. For example, Chinese uses "because" and "so" together, but English uses only one or the other. These incorrect expressions result from cultural differences and directly affect learners' oral expression. On the other hand, teachers should also improve their teaching ideas, accept the behaviorism teaching point of view, and integrate the language-related culture into the teaching. In oral communication class, teachers should give full play to their guiding role according to their own advantages and the actual situation of students, design reasonable, lively and helpful classroom teaching activities to strengthen students' language ability, strengthen students' awareness of participation, give full encouragement to authentic expressions, and correct improper expressions in time.

4.3. Cultivate Students' Good Learning Strategies

Second language learning is a process of transferring from the native language to the target language. As the two languages belong to different families, negative transfer will exceed positive transfer in the process of second language acquisition. Therefore, teachers should guide learners to develop good language learning strategies in teaching and minimize the influence of negative transfer on learning. In the traditional classroom teaching mode, only a few learners can really relieve their fossilization by correcting after class. Teachers can let learners record their own speech, and let learners participate in retrospective self-correction by recording their own voice, so that they can get closer to the true nature of interlanguage.

4.4. Emphasize Cultural Factors in Teaching

The language of any nation or country has its own cultural background and connotation. To learn a language well, it is necessary to learn its related cultural knowledge and understand the social and living conditions of the people who use the language. Language is a part of culture, and plays an important role in the culture, it can be said that a language reflects the characteristics of a nation, it not only contains the history and cultural background of the nation, but also contains the nation's view on life, lifestyle and way of thinking. Therefore, to understand the language of a country, it is necessary to understand the culture of the country and the nation. To learn a foreign language is not only to master the pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and idioms, but also to teach the language operator how to see things and how to observe the world; To understand how they use their language to reflect the thoughts, habits, and behaviors of their society; To understand the culture of their society.

5. Conclusion

The fossilization of interlanguage is very common in high school English teaching, and the reasons and degrees of fossilization are different for different learners. Therefore, as the organizer and arranger of teaching activities, teachers can correctly analyze the causes and paths of students' fossilization according to the characteristics of the development of students' interlanguage system at the present stage: choose appropriate ways to weaken the negative impact of fossilization on students, constantly improve students' English level and promote the development of their interlanguage system.

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