

On the Relationship between Language and Culture in Second Language Acquisition

Yuanchun Duan

Institute of of Arts and Social Sciences, The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

ydua2031@uni.sydney.edu.au

Keywords: Second language acquisition, Language and culture, Relationship analysis

Abstract: The theoretical model of second language acquisition believes that language learning is a kind of input learning, which includes both the input of language knowledge and cultural knowledge. Only when the two input together can we achieve twice the result with half the effort. In view of this, this paper expounds the second language acquisition, the relationship between language and culture in second language acquisition, and the cultivation of cultural awareness in second language acquisition, and analyzes the relationship between language and culture in second language acquisition from three aspects: the interlinkage between language and culture, language as the carrier of culture, and language structure as the embodiment of national cultural application habits, hoping to improve language learning in second language acquisition.

1. Introduction

In second language acquisition, language learning is inseparable from culture, and the expression of culture is inseparable from language. The two are complementary and closely linked. Therefore, language learning can't be separated from culture. It needs to learn language on the basis of cultural knowledge learning, so as to achieve twice the result with half the effort. But in daily foreign language learning, teachers and learners do not realize the importance of cultural learning and its influence on language learning, causing serious application errors in grammatical structure and word meaning expression. In view of this, it is of great practical significance to study and analyze the relationship between language and culture in second language acquisition.

2. Overview of Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition theory includes language input theory and affective filtering theory. Language input theory is an important part of second language acquisition theory. There are two ways of language input, passive natural input and active input. Passive natural input is also called acquisition, which refers to naturally learn a certain language under language influence of a certain language environment for a long time. Because of the support of the language environment, learning difficulty of this way is low, and it is a natural input mode. Active input mode refers to the active learning to acquire a certain language. This kind of learning is systematic, comprehensive, and active, so it is active input learning. In foreign language learning, these two kinds of input mode are necessary. Only with natural input mode and active input mode can we master the foreign language learning content better. Moreover, affective filter theory is also included in second language acquisition theory. On the one hand, it is necessary to be familiar with culture and master language culture, rather than passively resist language culture. Especially in the case of being influenced by a certain language for a long time, it is difficult to make changes in language. This situation requires learners to find the right way to learn language, face up to the difficulties encountered in foreign language learning, and pay attention to solve them, so as to reduce the learners' anxiety, timidity, fear and other negative psychology in foreign language learning. Therefore, the learners can throw themselves into foreign language learning with a calm and confident attitude.

3. On the Relationship between Language and Culture in Second Language Acquisition

3.1. Language and Culture are Interlinked in Second Language Acquisition

Culture covers a wide range, formed by the precipitation of a nation in the process of historical development. Language is a part of culture, is the direct or indirect embodiment of culture. Due to the influence of development, history, human environment and other factors, language is regional, national, and closely related to culture. In second language acquisition, language learning advocates language input, which is also based on the interlinked relationship between language and culture. With the infiltration of language environment, the edifying learning can make active learning more effective and meaningful. What learners learn is not only the simple language, but also the culture behind the language and customs of other nations. It can be seen that learning on the relationship between language and culture in second language acquisition is interesting and active. For example, the dragon is the totem of the Han Dynasty in China, and it is an auspicious thing. The people have strong feelings for it. However, in the language and culture of western countries, “dragon” is the embodiment of ferocity and cruelty, and it is ominous. If we do not know this kind of language and culture in foreign language learning, it will cause great misunderstanding. In addition, language needs to be learned and experienced in the cultural environment to better understand the profound meaning expressed by the author. For example, there are many appellations in English. Sister and brother represent not only older sister and brother, but also younger sister and brother. Grandmother and grandfather represent not only father’s parents, but also mother’s parents. It is closely related to western culture. The differences between westerners’ understanding of kinship and Chinese understanding lead to the distinction in language expression. Only in the language environment can we make clear the relationship between the characters through reading the author’s narration.

3.2. Language is the Carrier of Culture in Second Language Acquisition

Culture is an abstract concept, which is closely related to the living environment, historical development and other factors. There are many ways to embody culture, such as dining culture, social culture, language culture, dress culture, etc. It can be seen that language is a way of cultural expression, an aspect of cultural expression and a part of culture. Therefore, language has cultural characteristics and meaning. In addition, language is the foundation of culture and a tool of cultural expression. No matter which culture, it needs to be described by language, such as dining table culture. If there is no language, we can’t understand the differences of dining habits among different nationalities. It can be seen that language is an important tool for cultural expression. In second language acquisition, language is also a tool of cultural expression and a transmission of culture. Only the use of language based on culture can ensure smooth communication and give full play to the application value of English. For example, the language expression of daily greetings in China is considered as a violation of privacy in the eyes of westerners. When you greet foreigners, “Have you had your super/lunch/breakfast?” is difficult for foreigners to accept. They will think that whether eating or not has nothing to do with you. In the process of communication, Chinese people are concerned about asking about age and occupation. However, it is an infringement in the eyes of foreigners. Therefore, if they do not understand culture, as a tool and carrier, language is difficult to develop its use value and significance.

3.3. Language Structure in Second Language Acquisition is the Embodiment of the Application of National Culture

Each language has its own unique structure, grammar and application, which is the reason why it is different from other languages. Each language is closely related to the national culture, which is a concept of convention in people’s daily life. Therefore, in the study of foreign languages, we often encounter the expression confusion that words can’t express their meaning and sentences are not smooth. The main reason for this situation is that it is not based on the cultural application habits, and speakers fail to form the concept of convention as foreigners. Under the mode of second language acquisition, the biggest confusion foreign language learners encounter is inaccurate expression, confused sentence structure and wrong interpretation of word meaning, so that language

expression is just the accumulation of words. For example, there is a saying “好好学习,天天向上” in China. Many learners translate according to literal meaning and Chinese language habits, and the translation is “good good study, day day up”, but the correct translation is “work hard and make progress”. For another example, the expression of cooking dinner in foreign language is “prepare supper”, not “make / do super”. It can be seen that the application of national culture is the main obstacle to foreign language learning, and this obstacle will become more and more obvious with the increase of language learning depth.

4. Cultural Awareness Cultivation Strategies in Second Language Acquisition

4.1. Improve Teachers’ Cultural Quality

Through the above analysis, we can see the importance of culture to language learning in second language acquisition. Therefore, we should build a culture training mechanism to enable students to learn language on the basis of culture, and integrate culture learning and language learning in teaching. This requires teachers to change the traditional teaching methods, pay attention to English grammar, sentence pattern and structure knowledge learning, and at the same time, also focus on cultural ideas. In view of this, teachers should improve their own cultural accomplishment and enrich cultural knowledge. In teaching, they should not only consider whether the language expression is appropriate, but also consider whether the expression is appropriate in a specific culture. In addition, they should improve English communicative competence, encourage learners to follow the foreign language culture and express according to the foreign language application habits. Moreover, teachers are important guides in teaching. They should understand the relationship and interaction between language and culture in second language acquisition, improve their cognitive level of language teaching, and create favorable conditions for high-quality language learning.

4.2. Strengthen Cultural Contrast and Enhance Cultural Understanding Ability

Cultural differences are the main obstacles to foreign language learning. In the acquisition of language learning, it is also due to cultural differences that lead to differences in word interpretation and sentence structure. In this regard, in foreign language learning, we should recognize the influence of cultural differences on language expression, face up to the differences, tell the differences and list them, so that learners can form a systematic concept of language cognition, and consider the cultural differences in the use of language. In addition, we should pay attention to the contrast of application habits. In English learning, many Chinese often fall into the structural framework of Chinese language, and feel difficult to break through the inherent pattern of sentence patterns. Therefore, teachers should compare the application habits of sentence patterns, so as to help students establish correct language expressions. Moreover, under the same language environment, due to cultural differences, expression will be different. Teachers should focus on this to reduce cultural barriers in language learning.

4.3. Strengthen Cultural Input and Enrich Cultural Knowledge

Second language acquisition emphasizes edifying and active learning in cultural environment, so cultural input is very important. For Chinese learners, there is no foreign language learning environment and they are less sensitive to western culture. In view of this, teachers should make use of the second language acquisition theory to teach, actively help students create a cultural environment and instill cultural knowledge. For example, in foreign language teaching, teachers should first teach the language and cultural background before foreign language grammar, sentence pattern, structure and other contents, so as to create teaching scenarios as the access point and provide language environment for students to learn foreign language. In addition, the accumulation of culture is very important. Culture involves a lot of contents. Only extensive foreign language knowledge can enrich cultural knowledge. Therefore, learners should be encouraged to read relevant foreign language articles and works, learn more cultural knowledge in reading, so as to lay the foundation for forming a complete and systematic language and culture learning system.

5. Conclusion

There is a close relationship between language and culture in second language acquisition. Language and culture are interlinked and complement each other. Language is also a tool of cultural expression. At the same time, language structure is also the embodiment of national cultural application habits. It can be seen that culture plays an important role in language learning in second language acquisition. In view of this, we should pay attention to the cultivation of cultural awareness in foreign language learning. On the one hand, it is necessary to improve teachers' cultural literacy, strengthen the contrast with foreign language culture in teaching, make students clear the cultural differences, enhance students' cultural understanding ability, at the same time, pay attention to cultural input, focus on the accumulation of cultural knowledge in reading, so as to form a systematic language culture learning system, and achieve the purpose of improving the quality of foreign language learning.

References

- [1] Wang Hongxia, Shi Qinghuan. Relationship between Language and Culture in Second Language Acquisition. *Overseas English*, no.20, pp.26-28, 2020.
- [2] Zhang Jingjing. A Study on Intercultural Communication Ability Training and Second Language Acquisition. *Journal of Shenyang University of Architecture (SOCIAL SCIENCE EDITION)*, vol.21, no.04, pp.428-432, 2019.
- [3] Zhang Jiani. A Study on the Language and Culture Penetration in Secondary Vocational English Community. *Overseas English*, no.11, pp.13-14, 2019.
- [4] Li Lvliang. Study and Innovation of Language Interaction in the Second Language Acquisition Mode. *Journal of Huaihai Institute of Technology (HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES)*, vol.17, no.02, pp.54-56, 2019.