
**THE EFFECT OF CULTURE ON MOTIVATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE
LEARNING**

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**THE EFFECT OF CULTURE ON MOTIVATION IN SECOND
LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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ABSTRACT

A great deal of research has been done on factors affecting foreign language learning. This paper, referring to overseas research findings as well as taking into consideration the specific characteristics of the Chinese learners of English, discusses some of the most relevant factors that affect foreign language learning. Important implications are also drawn. The purpose is to arouse English teachers' awareness of the importance of these issues and to provoke their thought on how to better teach their students.

The study investigates the three different revision methods of writing in the present middle school English teaching practice. The subjects were 8 students in Sanxin Middle School who shared the similar English learning experiences. The error numbers and the error types in three different revision stages were compared to show the differences among the three revisions. The study also shows that teachers' revision is indispensable in learners' language output modification. It does a great help to the learners' acquisition of linguistic forms which are hard-recognized errors. In the students' exchange revision only a small portion of language errors were identified, and they exchanged each other's ideas of the same topic and studied each other's strong and weak points. Therefore, it is also a good way for learners' language learning in the stage of revision.

The results of the current study demand more attention of students' and teachers to the motivation of students in second language and culture learning.

Key words: input hypothesis, motivation, revision, second language learning, culture

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, in China, English teaching has just focused on the language forms (such as phonetics, vocabulary and grammar) and ignored the effect of background knowledge of culture. As the carrier of culture, the cultural background of language is rather extensive. Lacking of the necessary cultural background may hinder people from comprehending language. Learning a foreign culture is an indispensable part of learning a foreign language. Without teaching foreign culture it is impossible to develop students' communicative competence, which is, to my mind, even more important than linguistic competence. The teaching of culture can also help to increase the motivation of students in the classroom.

Many Chinese texts often contain material which fails to capture the interest of students due to the heavy emphasis on vocabulary and grammar. Many English texts, however, which have been designed for EFL, and specifically the Chinese market, often contain topics which can create a great deal of classroom interaction and help to motivate students to develop their language skills. It is important for the teachers to take advantage of such discussion topics and help students to stimulate their motivation and interests to become proficient in a second language, the study of another language and culture can also enhance their perception and understanding of other cultures.

No matter why students study a second language, it is the fact that motivation is an important factor in the course of second language acquisition. China is developing very fast now, it is following the world's pace and becoming more active in the international communication. It needs more and more people who know English. In such an environment, in many places, from primary school, students begin to learn English. When considering the many factors which influence the manner in which the language is taught. and learned, the English language as a subject in elementary

school, as well as the changes made in methods of teaching and writing new textbooks, the effect of culture can be really helpful for further motivating students to achieve higher levels of proficiency in the future.

The present study intended to highlight the effect of culture on motivation in learning English as a foreign language. Furthermore, the findings of study may achieve some improvements and changes towards teaching and learning L2.

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be addressed is “What is the relationship between culture and motivation in second language learning?” Language is a part of culture. Different languages have different cultural background. In China, English is taught and learned as a foreign language. For the primary school and junior high school students, they have little motivation to learn English. They learn English just because it’s a subject or their parents want them to learn it. Language learning is dull and hard, but language is learned with its cultural background, the students will be more interested in learning language. So I want to illustrate the great effect on the students’ motivation in second language learning.

Delimitations of the Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karaman Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, over thirty (30) days. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC and Academic Search Elite as the primary sources. Key search topics included “culture, motivation and second language learning”.

Method of Approach

A brief review of literature on the theories of Krashen's and Gardner's will be conducted. A second review of literature relating to research, studies and evidence of culture and motivation and their effect in second language learning will be conducted. The findings will be summarized and recommendations made.

Linkage to Theory

1. Krashen's second language acquisition: Attitude is more important than aptitude.
2. Constructivism: Development can't be separated from social context.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the field of SLA, a central issue is what role the language input plays. Language input is very important in second language acquisition because it is self-evident that SLA can take place only when the learner has access to L2 input. Since the end of 1960's, a number of researchers have argued that acquisition occurs incidentally when learners are able to comprehend the input to which they are exposed.

There are three different views on the role of input in language acquisition: the behaviorist, the naturalist, and the integrationists' views.

The behaviorist view is the earliest theory of SLA which is based on the notion of habit formation through practice and reinforcement. It emphasizes the importance of the input. Behaviorist accounts of SLA view the learner as "a language producing machine". Learning an L2 is like any other kind of learning. The whole process of learning can be controlled by presenting the L2 in the right-doses and ensuring that learners continue to practice until each feature is over learned (i.e. become automatic).

In the 1960's, this view was challenged, most notably by Chomsky. It is pointed out that in many cases there is no match between learners' language input and their output. This theory can be best explained that there is a set of mental processes inside the learner's mind which are responsible for working on the input and converting it into a form that the learner can store and handle in production. This is the naturalist view. It minimizes the role of the input and explains language development primarily in terms of the learner's internal processing mechanisms. Input is merely regarded as a trigger to activate the learner's internal processing mechanisms which is called "language acquisition device" by Chomsky.

. It was not until two or three decades ago that researchers raised another theory of SLA—the integrationist model. The integrationist's view treats the acquisition of language as the result of an interaction between the learner's mental abilities and the

linguistic environment. The learner's internal processing mechanisms both determine and are determined by the nature of the input. Similarly, the quality of the input affects and is affected by the nature of the internal factors. It sees language development as the result both of input factors and of innate mechanisms.

Since the development of second language acquisition, a number of researchers have argued that acquisition occurs incidentally when learners are able to comprehend the input to which they are exposed.

Among the many studies of the role of language input in SLA, the most outstanding hypothesis was proposed by Krashen "Comprehensible Input Hypothesis". Krashen and Long (1981, 1983) argued strongly that SLA is dependent on the availability of comprehensible input before the learner's internal processing mechanism can work. Krashen (1985, 1994) also argued that the 'fundamental principle' of L2 acquisition is that 'acquisition', which he defines as the subconscious process of internalizing new linguistic forms and their meanings will occur automatically if learners receive comprehensible input. According to Krashen, comprehensible input should contain exemplars of the language forms which according to the natural order are due to be acquired next.

Several points are made clearly in Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis. Firstly, learners can make progress in SLA by understanding input that contains structures a little bit beyond their current level of competence. Secondly, comprehensible input is necessary in the process of SLA, but it is not sufficient. Learners should also be willing to 'let in' the input they comprehend. Thirdly, it is unnecessary to intentionally make the input comprehensible. Input becomes comprehensible as a result of simplification and with the help of contextual and extra linguistic clues. Finally, speaking is the result of acquisition, not cause; learner production does not contribute directly to acquisition.

The first point actually refers to 'i+1' comprehensible input suggested by Krashen, that is the input that contains structures a little bit beyond their current level of competence. Only in this way the learners second language can be further developed step by step. Comprehensible input is a necessary instead of sufficient condition in

SLA It is only when input becomes intake that SLA takes place; input is that portion of the L2 data which the learner hears or reads; intake is that portion of the L2 which is assimilated and fed into the learner's interlingua system. Therefore Krashen thinks in second language acquisition, learners need (1) access to comprehensible input and (2) a low affective filter that makes them open to the input in order to acquire. The acquisition takes place when the learner understands language containing 'i+1'. This will automatically occur when communication is successful. Krashen emphasizes that input does not need to be finely tuned in the sense that it is linguistically adjusted to contain 'i+1'. Krashen identifies two primary ways in which input is made comprehensible. Firstly, speakers employ 'simplified registers' when speaking to learners. These registers provide learners with the kind of 'modified input' illustrated in the previous section. They involve what Krashen (1981) refers to as 'rough tuning', i.e. pitching the input at a level that enables the learner to understand, but also containing some linguistic forms that the learner has not yet acquired. Secondly, learners can use contextual information and extra linguistic contexts and his general knowledge to help them decode input containing unknown linguistic forms and thereby comprehend and acquire them. The fourth point is about Krashen's idea about the role of output in SLA. Krashen (1982) specifically rejects the possibility that production (as opposed to comprehension) serves any purpose in SLA.

The idea that comprehension is crucial for acquisition also underlies Long's Interaction Hypothesis (see Long, 1983), according to which:

Comprehensible input is necessary for acquisition; and modifications to the interactional structure of conversations which take place in the process of negotiating solutions to communication problems help to make input comprehensible to the learner and, thereby, potentially enable learners to process linguistic forms that are problematic to them.

Many overseas scholars have conducted a lot of research into the topic of the effect of culture on motivation in second language learning. According to Larson and

Smalley (1972: 39), culture is a “blueprint” that guides the behavior of people in a community and is incubated in family life. It governs our behavior in groups, makes us sensitive to matters of status, and helps us know what others expect of us and what will happen if we do not live up to their expectations. Culture helps us to know how far we can go as individuals and what our responsibility is to the group.

Condon (1973: 4) thinks that culture “is a system of integrated patterns, most of which remain below that threshold of consciousness, yet all of which govern human behavior just as surely as the manipulated strings of a puppet control its motions”.

George Peter Murdock (1961: 45 – 54) cites seven “universals” of cultural patterns of behavior: (1) they originate in the human mind; (2) they facilitate human and environmental interactions; (3) they satisfy basic human needs; (4) they are cumulative and adjust to changes in external and internal conditions; (5) they tend to form a consistent structure; (6) they are learned and shared by all the members of a society; and (7) they are transmitted to new generations.

Culture thus establishes for each person a context of cognitive and affective behavior, a blueprint for personal and social existence.

Research has shown that motivation is very important in learning a language ; you need to be enthusiastic about it, and to be interested in it. Different people will have different motives – the desire for promotion, the hope of being able to study abroad, curiosity about a very different culture, and pure intellectual enjoyment is only one of possible motives. But actually wanting to learn is the most important motive of all.

Culture is not only a possible motivation. It is also a great help in your learning. Remember that a language is not just a grammatical system, it is the outcome of a certain culture. It is not very helpful just to learn lots of words and lists of grammatical rules unless you know as much as possible about the background of the language, so that you can understand the ideas which are being conveyed ,the references which are being made, and the inferences which can be drawn from the information explicitly given. So learn as much as you can about the different cultures

which influence English—watch television programs, listen to the radio, try to obtain newspaper and magazines which are written by native speakers, look at advertisements, and above all, read—not textbooks, but novels and poems and plays. They will show you how language is really used. The English language is not an abstract system ; it is a living form of expression which derives much of its meaning from the context in which it is used, and much of its effect from a whole network of extra – linguistic knowledge.

If asked to identify the most powerful influences on learning, almost all the teachers will list motivation high on their lists, considering it as a crucial and decisive factor for learning. Motivation, as one of the most important affective factors, has drawn growing attention in the language learning research. Countless studies and experiments in human learning have shown that motivation is the key to learning (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). “ In fact, some researchers argue that learning and motivation are so strongly interrelated that a person can’t fully understand learning without considering the impact of motivation on it”(Pintrich et al., 1993). And it is well noticed that good language learners with high learning achievements and outcomes are those highly motivated students. Motivation determines the extent of active personal involvement on EFL learning. Motivated students are willing to completely engage in the learning process. Conversely, unmotivated students are insufficiently involved and therefore unable to develop their potential EFL skills. Both theoretically and empirically, many to be one of the most important factors or even a determining factor consider motivation that influences EFL learning.

In the EFL learning classroom, it can be found that mostly only a few of the students are motivated and active in class, responding to the teacher's questions, practicing and getting involved in activities and various tasks. Others seem to remain inactive and even indifferent to what is happening around them, as side watchers or absent-minders who are really not engaged in the learning activities; they are those who are not really motivated to learn. Within this general research background, this article gives the focus to language learning motivation on improving EFL learning

efficiency and effectiveness.

What is motivation?

Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm". According to Corder (1989: 49), "Given motivation, anyone can learn a language". This brings out the importance of motivation in language learning. In foreign language learning as in every other field of human learning, motivation is the crucial force, which determines whether a learner embark on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres. It is a complex phenomenon and includes many components: the individual's drive, need for achievement and success, curiosity, desire for stimulation and new experience and so on. If asked to identify the most powerful influences on learning, motivation would probably be high on most teachers' lists. Second language acquisition theory leaves no doubt about the crucial importance of a further affective variable. Motivation is actually a cluster of factors that "energize behavior and give it direction" (Hilgard, Atkinson and Atkinson, 1979:281). Chomsky (1988:181) points out the importance of activating learners' motivation: "the truth of matter is that about 99 percent of teaching is making the students feel interested in the material". Various studies have found that motivation is very strongly related to achievement in language learning (e.g. Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1980). Then what is motivation? As to the definition of the motivation, former researchers have given a variety of reasonable and comprehensive explanations. For example, Ehrman (1996:137) defines that "motivation is the perceived pay-off for the student's investment of time, energy, and effort. It has to do with why the student is there in the first place and what keeps him or her working". Stern (1983: 385) argues that "the motivation of learners initiates and maintains the learning process, or leads to the avoidance or rejection of learning; it involves the stated reasons and perceived goals as well as the subconscious drives and needs that prompt and sustain the learning effort or lead to its inhibition or rejection." For Gardner et al, the motivated individual is "one who wants to achieve a particular goal, devotes considerable effort to achieve this goal, and experiences satisfaction in the

activities associated with achieving this goal" (1993:2). So, motivation is a complex construct, including three main components: "desire to achieve a goal, effort extended in this direction, and satisfaction with the task" (Mitchell et al, - 1998:19). Hilgard et al (1979:281) conclude, "Motivation is actually a cluster of factors that 'energize' behavior and give it direction". In Williams and Burden's opinion (1997:120-121),"motivation may be construed as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals). It is clear from this definition that motivation occurs as a result of a combination of different influences. Some of these are internal, that is, they come from inside the learner, such as an interest in the activity or a wish to succeed. Others are external, for example, the influence of other people."

So far, motivation is commonly thought of as inner drive, impulse emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action. In other words, motivation is an internal state that arouses, directs, and maintains behavior. The study of motivation focuses on how and why people initiate actions directed toward specific goals, how intensively they are involved in the activity, how persistent they are in their attempts to reach these goals, and what they are thinking and feeling along the way. Explanation of motivation includes both personal and environmental factors as well as intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation.

How to promote learners' motivations in EFL learning?

It is often said by people involved in language teaching that a student with strong motivation will succeed whatever the circumstances are under which he studies. This fact leads us to think about the situation of foreign language learning in our schools nowadays. We face at least forty or fifty students and teach them English every day. Years later, we find it quite disappointed that only a small part of them succeed in their study, many of them fail, and foreign language learning becomes a waste of time. Why does this occur?

The following are the corresponding solutions, or rather, the motivational strategies.

Culture can cultivate the students' interest

As English saying goes, "Interest is half success." Students with little or no interest perform poorly in their English study (See figure1.13 or1.15). As language teachers, we should undertake the task of cultivating the students' interest. A lot of things can be done to arouse students' interest, to name just a few: 1) Compare to western culture, which will enable students to reflect on what and how they have learned, should be adopted; 2) Moderate, attractive and interesting teaching materials which can create a great deal of classroom interaction should be selected and used; 3) A variety of activities, such as pair work, group discussion, debate, English corner, English Association, various competitions inside or outside the classroom can be carried out to help broaden the students' horizons, deepen their insights, etc., so as to arouse their enthusiasm of learning, which will eventually turn into intrinsic interest. Besides, after-class assignments like easy-reading materials which are about the custom and civilization of different nations are also helpful.

Find out the students' aim of learning English and enhance their motivation

Students with clear aim of learning usually make better achievements (See Figure1.4above). We should make the students clearly aware that learning English well is helpful to them both in the short term and in the long run. In the short term, it will help them find a good job. After graduation in the long run, English proficiency will help promote their economic and social status, such as pay increase, promotion, etc, what's more important, It can broaden their views of the whole world.

Help students set goals in learning English

As is indicated by the results of the present research (See Table1.4 and Table1.12), goal setting is another important factor which influences the students' performances. With goal in mind, students can focus on their activities concerning learning, make an effort and put in right amount of time to achieve the goal

Let the students recognize the importance of learning English

Since China opened its door to the outside world and began its economic reform, international exchanges have increased tremendously in many areas. More and more people have perceived the importance of English. English has become an instrument of working, studying and relaxation. For example, going on the line and searching for the information from the web site abroad, watching CCTV English programs, and writing the abstract of their thesis all involve the knowledge of English. With the increasing awareness of the priority of English, students may develop their interest gradually and will make greater efforts to learn it. Intrinsic motivation will be stimulated accordingly.

In one word, teachers are more responsible for helping students to foster motivation as intrinsic motivation and integrative motivation. Teachers have many ways to help students in fostering intrinsic interest and integrative interest in English. It may not be effective just to ask students to become interested in their study. But since some external factors and other types of motivations can work together in building up students' interest in their studies, teachers can use a lot of teaching strategies to achieve this goal. For example, teachers should not hesitate to give students encouragement and praise so that students will be more confident in themselves. Teachers can also introduce some culture knowledge of English-speaking countries and good English books to their students because these are proved to be useful in bringing up students' integrative interest.

With these measures taken, we are more likely to bring about successful language learner.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I. Subjects

The subjects in this study were 8 students from three classes of grade 7 in Sanxin Middle School in Shanghai. These 8 students were randomly chosen from three parallel classes of the same grade. They consisted of 6 girls and 2 boys with the average age of 14. They all shared the similar educational backgrounds of studying English as their L2. They had studied English as second language for at least 6 years in primary school. When this study was carried out, they had been studying English for almost 12 months. They had the courses of listening, comprehensive English, pronunciation and intonation, extensive reading, oral English. They took all these courses in English. However they did not take writing course. Their only chance of practicing writing is the writing homework assigned by their comprehensive reading teacher after every unit. When asked about the writing, they think they have possessed enough language efficiencies (vocabulary and grammar knowledge) to write simple essays although they have few ideas about special writing knowledge such as the writing types (description, illustration or cause and effect etc.), writing skills (the common structure, the topic sentence and so on)

II. Writing Tasks

The students were asked to write an essay named “The Difference between American English and British English”. This task was selected with the help of their reading course teacher. The reason for choosing this topic is that the students are familiar with this topic. They have just learned two texts about the distinctive

characteristics of American English and British English. In the text the characteristics of American English and British English were explained in detail and also aroused a hot discussion among the students. Therefore the topic was comparatively easier to them because they were supposed to have enough writing material from the textbook and their discussion or their own knowledge about it. In this way the teacher hoped the students would focus their attention on their writing and the culture.

III. Procedures

The first phase: draft writing

The students were called together to study about the tasks they would be demanded to do. The students were given the special writing task: “You are asked to write an article named ‘The Difference between American English and British English’. In your article, try to describe the most special characters of American English and British English. Your article should be at least 150 words.” After they were given the task, the students appeared to be slowly-acted. (They seemed not to know how to start their writing with this topic). Seeing this, the reading course teacher gave them some implications. Most of the participants seemed to search for them in their memory what they had learned. These participants seemed more confident of the essay than before. They were ready to write.

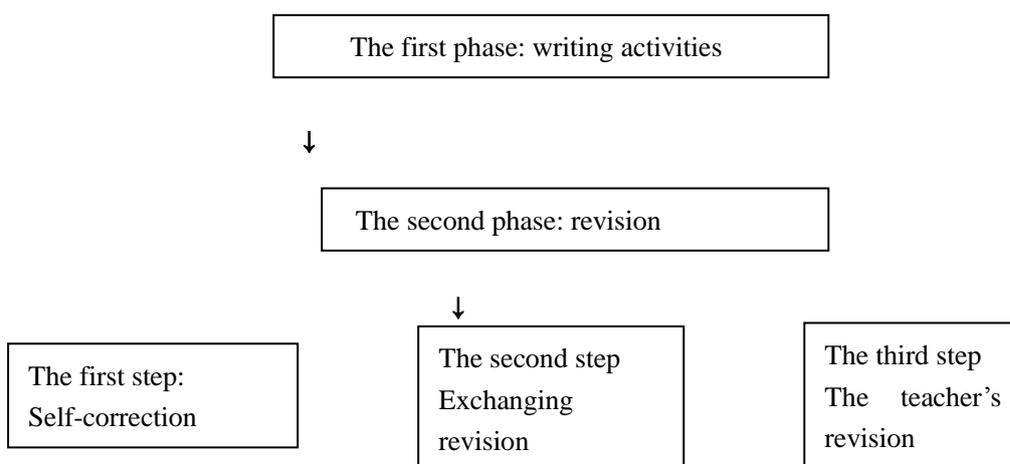
The Second Phase: revising

After collecting all the papers, the author typed them out with double space between each line. In this way, the author hoped that enough space can be left for students’ revision.

A week after the writing activity, the author handed out the typed essay to the students. Then the author gave the following instruction: “Please revise your essays by yourselves.” The author instructed the students to mark the mistakes in the essays with different signs. The signs are: “^” used for adding words; “\” used for deleting a word; “~” the curved underline for a wrongly-spelt word; “_____” the straight underline used for grammatically wrong words, phrases, clauses or sentences. After

showed the correction signs, the students began to revise their own essays. After they have finished the revision, the essays collected. The students were given the original essays again. This time the essay they got was any of the subjects' essays randomly. When they finished the revision, they were given their own original essays again with the teacher's revision on it.

The whole procedure of the study can be indicated by the following scheme:



The third phase: data collection

After the whole research has been done, the author gathered 8 drafts, 24 revised essays. The data was collected by the author and the reading teacher.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysis and findings

The analysis of the drafting phase

It has been proved by other theorists and researchers (e.g. Selinker, 1972; Cohen and Robbins, 1976; Corder, 1981; Kellerman and Sharwood Smith, 1986; McLaughlin, 1987; Larsen Freeman and Long, 1991) that the thought processes during writing are involved in second language learning: extending second language knowledge to new target-language contexts; and formulating and testing hypotheses about linguistic forms and functions. They also argued that in so doing, these learners sometimes engage in grammatical analysis which, though not essential to comprehension, is essential to accurate production.

The author made an analysis of the language problems and the students' solution of them in detail to show that when the L2 learners encounter difficulties in producing the target language, they do notice the differences between American English and British English.

It is hypothesized that output promotes "noticing".(Swain, 1985) In producing the target language (vocally or sub vocally) learners may notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can say, leading them to recognize what they do not know, or know only partially. In other words, under some circumstances, the activity of producing the target language may prompt second language learners to consciously

recognize some of their linguistic problems; it may bring to their attention something they need to discover about their L2 (Swain, 1993). The learners may notice a 'hole' in their interlingua.

Schmidt (1990, 1993, 1994, 1995) and Schmidt and Frota (1986) have proposed the Noticing Hypothesis, which claims that "noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for the conversion of input to intake for learning." (Schmidt, 1994). Noticing, according to Schmidt (1993), requires focal attention and awareness on the part of the learner, and subliminal learning cannot account for SLA process. The Noticing Hypothesis further claims that "What must be attended to and noticed is not just the input in a global sense but whatever features of the input are relevant for the target system" (Schmidt, 1993) Thus, attending to and noticing specific aspects of the input are considered to be of primary importance in learning those aspects. If attention plays a central role in SLA, the question is how to draw learners' attention or noticing to grammatical features in the input in order to promote their learning. It is suggested by Swain that in the process of language output, output is hypothesized to promote language acquisition by making learners recognize problems in their interlingua and prompting learners to do something about those problems-for example, seek out relevant input with more focused attention, search for alternative means to express the given intention and stretch their IL capability, formulate and test a hypothesis, and modify it upon receiving feedback-all depending on the given situation.

In analyzing the eight students' writing processes, the author found that the noticing function did exist in the process of learners' language production. The noticing function can be seen in the following aspects:

1) Spellings

Misspellings are the most basic problems in writing. According to Corder's theory of mistakes analysis (1967), most of the spelling mistakes are caused by learners' carelessness or nervousness. Misspellings are the problems that can be corrected most easily. When a student thinks out a word during writing but are not sure about its spelling, he/she will notice the deficiencies in their study and the gap between what

they want to write and want they can write. They will confirm the correct spellings of the word through looking it up in the dictionary or through getting feedback from teachers and other learners.

2) Lexical search

During the writing processes, the students often met the problems of the selection or the usage of vocabulary. These lexical problems made students notice their lexical deficiencies in their existing linguistic knowledge and pushed them to modify his/her output.

3) Grammatical rules

According to Swain, the production makes the learner move from 'semantic processing' prevalent in comprehension to more 'syntactic processing' that is necessary for second language development. In the process of comprehension, the restricted L2 knowledge of the learners makes them rely on certain strategies (e.g. use of semantic and contextual cues) more than others (e.g. syntactic cues) in order to overcome their linguistic limitations. Skehan (1996, 1998), for example, argues that L2 learners use a variety of strategies of comprehension that may obviate careful attention to form.

There is natural and unavoidable use of strategies of comprehension..., in that non-deterministic and non-exhaustive methods are used to recover intended meaning, with the success of this operation often being dependent on only partial use of form as a clue to meaning... In other words, processing language to extract meaning does not guarantee automatic sensitivity to form and the consequent pressures for interlingua development. (Skehan, 1996)

While during the process of production, as Swain once argued by Izumi (1999) that the processes of grammatical encoding during production and monitoring to check the matching of the communicative intention and the output enable language learners to assess the possibilities and limitations of their interlingua capability.

The analysis of the revision phase

The important roles of comprehensible output have been accepted broadly. More recently, several SLA researchers have further argued that learning depends partly on L2 learners' ability to restructure knowledge (Dekeyser, 1998) and to focus on form when they notice a "hole" in their interlingua, (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Wright, 1996), on the extent to which noticing is learner initiated (Long & Robinson, 1998), and on language production that gives learners the opportunity to expand their IL capacity by reprocessing and restructuring their utterances to produce modified output (MO) (Swain & Lapkin, 1995). Swain and Lapkin in particular argue that when learners produce the target language, external or internal feedback leads to notice a gap in their existing IL knowledge. This noticing pushes them to consciously reprocess their utterances to produce MO. Swain has suggested that modified output is very important for successful second language acquisition. Therefore the revision is a very important step in finishing an essay. Language teachers should pay enough attention to the revision of students' essay. According to the investigation of the present situation of the revision of the students' essays made by the author in Sanxin Middle School, the students' essays are often revised in three different ways. The first way is they hand in the essays and they are revised by the teacher; the second way is they exchange their essays and revise each other; the third way is they revise their essays themselves. Then what are the differences between them? Do they play different roles in the revision? The quantification study of the errors in the revision phase shows something to us.

The following items are the data to be examined:

1. The number of the mistakes identified in the three groups respectively.
2. The error types appearing in the revision part.
3. The number of different error types of the revision in three stages.

The number of the mistakes identified in the three groups respectively

Table 1 Number of errors identified of the three groups during the revision part

Different revision ways	Total number of errors
Step 1 (revised by themselves)	90

Step 2 (revised by their classmates)	63
Step 3 (revised by teachers)	132

Table 1 shows that among the three different stages in the revision part, the errors identified by the teacher are much more than those identified by the students themselves and their companions. It indicates the teacher's language proficiency and revising skills are higher than the students'. The number of errors identified shows that the students could also find out the problems in their writing at a certain high degree. While the errors identified in the stage of exchange are comparatively fewer than the other two.

The Error Types

The following are the main types of the errors in the three stages of the revision.

1) Spellings (including capitalization)

The former always feel everything is exercising.

The former always feel everything is exciting.

2) Prepositions

Americans spend more time on working.

Americans spend more time in working.

3) Vocabulary

Americans pay more attention to their work and work very hardly.

Americans pay more attention to their work and work very hard.

In return, they are very enthusiastic.

On the contrary, they are very enthusiastic.

4) Verb usage

On the other hand, Britons like to enjoy the life.

On the other hand, Britons like enjoying the life.

5) Tense

There must be some changes and people in different countries will get along with each other.

There will be some changes and people in different countries will get along with each other.

6) Agreement

Britons is reserved, but Americans are enthusiastic.

Britons are reserved, but Americans are enthusiastic.

7) Sentence structure

Comparing with them, Americans are more spontaneous.

Compared with them, Americans are more spontaneous

But there are also some differences between them.

However, there are also some differences between them.

8) Articles and numbers of nouns

Britons have a enjoyable life in many Americans' eyes.

Britons have enjoyable lives in many Americans' eyes.

9) Punctuations

On the contrary, Americans do better in this aspect, they are very hard-working.

On the contrary, Americans do better in this aspect. They are very hard-working.

The number of different error types of the revision in three stages

Table 2 Error types in step1

Error types	Number	Percentage
Spellings	20	22%
Prepositions	6	6%
Lexical choice	11	12%
Verb usage	12	13%
Tense	15	17%
Agreement	6	8%
Sentence structures	10	11%
Articles and number of words	10	11%
Total numbers	90	100%

(The revision done by the students themselves.)

Table 3 Error types in step2

Error types	Number	Percentage
Spellings	12	19%
Prepositions	5	8%
Lexical choice	10	16%
Verb usage	8	12.5%
Tense	11	17%
Agreement	4	6.5%
Sentence structure	6	9.5%
Articles and number of words	7	11.5%
Total numbers	63	100%

(The exchanging revision)

Table 4 Error numbers and types in Step 3

Error types	Number	Percentage
Spellings	22	16%
Prepositions	15	11%
Lexical choice	23	17%
Verb usage	18	12%
Tense	15	11%
Agreement	8	6%
Sentence structure	21	16%
Articles and number of words	10	12%
Total	132	100%

(The revision done by the teacher)

The above three tables show the total language error numbers in the essays identified by the subjects themselves, their companions and the teacher respectively. The tables also show the percentage of different error types in the three revision

stages.

The three tables indicate that spelling mistakes were easily to be recognized by the students themselves. (The students identified 20 misspellings, and the teacher identified 22 misspellings.) They also focused on the errors of the tense, and the errors they found about the tenses were as many as those of the teacher. The subjects were very sensitive in finding the errors of the tenses especially the simple tenses like simple present, simple past, and simple future. It may be caused by the emphasis on tenses given in their English learning since the very beginning.

However, they were not good at some other linguistic problems such as: prepositions, lexical choice and sentence structures. They did not even identify half of the errors in these aspects. It indicates the subjects' language deficiencies in these aspects. The subjects couldn't correct the lexical mistakes even when they were under marked by the teacher. During the writing processes, they always thought out a sentence firstly in Chinese and then translated it into English. In this way they were not familiar with the idiomatic use of English words and also were difficult to identify the lexical mistakes.

They had great difficulties in spotting the syntactic problems such as: run-on sentences, dangling-modifiers and incomplete sentences. It is tightly connected with their Chinese writing style. It may be partly caused by the students' deficiency of writing knowledge. They did not learn writing as a subject systematically, so they did not know these terms and the incorrect sentences that these terms represent.

In exchanging revision stage, the students showed great interests in the contents of their companion's essays rather than the grammatical forms, therefore the least errors were identified in this stage. Although fewer mistakes were identified, it could arouse the students' interests in writing.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of the motivation has been discussed in the former. It is certain that if the students are well motivated, they want to learn, and they participate actively in class, express interest in the subject matter, and study a great deal; if they are poorly motivated, they have to learn, and they are made to take part in the classroom activities. So, it is essential that the English teachers should try by every means to stimulate the students' motivation, because they can easily recognize characteristic such as these and have more opportunity to influence these characteristics than students' reasons for studying the second language or their attitudes towards the language and its speakers. If the English teachers can make the classrooms places where students enjoy coming because the content is interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability, where the atmosphere is supportive and non-threatening, they can make a positive contribution to students' motivation to learn.

The issues of learning styles have received a lot of attention in second language acquisition research. The related research suggests that different learners have different learning styles and tend to approach a task with a different set of skills and preferred strategies. Some learners would fall into the group of "visual" learners. Others may be called "aural" learners. Some are learners with an impulsive style. Others may be learners with a reflective style. Some learners feel compelled to memorize and will practice and practice until they have a grasp of new information. For still others, there is a need to add physical action to the learning process.

This is undoubtedly true to millions of English learners in China. The implications for teaching are important. In the classroom, the teacher should be flexible and learn to be tolerant of various learning styles. He should bear in mind the fact that certain ways of approaching a task are more successful for one person than for another, and that when learners are given some freedom to choose their preferred way of learning, they will be better than those who find themselves forced to learn in environments

where a learning style which doesn't suit them is imposed as the only way to learn. In other words, the teacher should always take the learners' learning styles into account and try to create a learning environment in which all learners might be successful in learning English.

In recent years, overseas research on foreign language teaching and learning has shifted its focus on the learners and learning process, particularly on individual learner variables and factors affecting foreign language learning. It has come to be realized that study on learner variables and factors affecting foreign language learning is essential to our better understanding of foreign language acquisition and more efficient teaching of a foreign language. However, so far, little emphasis has been laid on the study in this area in China. What I have attempted in this paper is to discuss the ways in which some of the most important factors, especially the culture has been found to influence foreign language learning and to draw significant implications for classroom teaching. Hopefully, my efforts may arouse foreign language teachers and researchers' awareness of the importance of these issues. It is also my hope that further discussion of the factors affecting foreign language acquisition will be conducted so that the efficiency of foreign language teaching and learning in China might be increased.

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