

Study on Third Language Acquisition under Second Language Environment

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Abstract: Nowadays, more and more people start to learn foreign languages globally. The issue of language transfer in third language acquisition has been the social focus of concern and the emphasis of study by linguists. Mother tongue has some influence on second language acquisition, which has more influence on third language acquisition. With the economic globalization nowadays, the society puts more requirements on language acquisition and the economic development needs mixed-type talents who can speak many languages. This study elaborated the relation between second language acquisition and third language acquisition to show the complexity of the latter. The influence brought by second languages acquisition on third language acquisition and third language acquisition in the environment of second languages acquisition were analyzed.

1 INTRODUCTION

China's participation in WTO indicated that China quickened its pace in reform and opening up, representing the increasing exchanges with other countries, regions and nations. This exchange needs languages as support points, which raises higher requirements for language learning. China is composed of 56 nations. In minority nationality regions of China, it is very common for people to command different kinds of languages, especially English, which is the most popular in the world. Many universities in China set up English plus second foreign language course. With the social development, only commanding two languages can not satisfy the requirements of social development. In this case, more and more people start to learn a third or more languages. However, third language acquisition is not equal to second language acquisition. The study of second language acquisition in China has been gradually mature, however third language acquisition is still lacking. Therefore, it is important to strengthen third language acquisition under second language environment.

2 OUTLINE OF THREE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION UNDER SECOND LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT

Third language acquisition is the acquisition of a third language, which is a new study direction, including factors of society, economy, and mentality, on the basis of deeper development of second language acquisition. Third language here refers to a broad concept rather than the number of commanded languages. The concept mainly refers to one or several languages apart from mother tongue of learners.

As the deep study of second language acquisition provides premises for learning a third language. They are inseparably interconnected and closely related. However, second language acquisition is totally different from third language acquisition. For a long period, many linguists confounded second language acquisition with third language acquisition for the following reasons. First, in the broad sense, second language acquisition means that learners can not only command their mother tongue, but also grasp a second or third or even more languages. Second, the objects of study are same for two types of acquisition, which is based on the learning process, individual differences and teaching mode. The study of second language acquisition just

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emphasizes the common characteristics of foreign language learning while third language acquisition focuses on individual characteristic. In study, first language, second language and third language should be treated as different study fields. The differences between common characteristics and individual characteristics can lead to a series of problems in mentality, recognition and learning process.

3 RELATION BETWEEN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND THIRD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The study of language acquisition started in 1960s. Studies show that some functional words in third language acquisition are transformed from second language acquisition, even though there is no similarity on the pronunciation between second language acquisition and third language acquisition. The study of third language acquisition can not be separated from second language acquisition because it needs second language as a premise. Studies also show that borrowings are frequent between second language acquisition and third language acquisition.

Many scientists compared the learners of single language acquisition with those of multiple language acquisition, which showed that the learners of single language acquisition had more disadvantages. Learners of multiple language acquisition have language awareness in their learning process and that awareness is helpful in memorizing words. Studies in recent years found that the functions of mother tongue acquisition, second language acquisition and third language acquisition in learning process were different. The function of first language is correction while the function of second and third language serves as tools. With the elapse of time, second language acquisition will be replaced by third language acquisition. In third language acquisition, learners will be influenced by first language and second language acquisition, which serves as intermediary function. With the elapse of time, in third language acquisition or multiple language acquisition, language talents will be gradually changed. The advantages of language learning can make learners become more confident in learning a foreign language, which has interreaction and is separated from first language. The learners' previous language knowledge can influence the process of third language acquisition,

but it is not clear which language influences the process. Learners of multiple languages have potential language knowledge, helping them to quickly grasp language knowledge. Multiple language learning can improve language system in learners' brains and help them develop new language skills, facilitating their multiple language awareness. Many fields and functions can demonstrate this kind of language advantage, such as language-use awareness, pronunciation, phrase and grammar. Therefore, single language learners are inferior to multiple language learners in word-use and pragmatic output.

The context of society, politics and culture gives rise to languages. Different contexts reflect different forms of cultures and languages, which influences the patterns of manifestation in foreign language learning. In third language acquisition, learners need to overcome the obstacles of first language and second language. In learning words, grammar and pronunciation, learners will more or less be influenced by their mother tongue or second language. Mother tongue, second language acquisition and third language acquisition are interactional and interconversion, which is helpful in learning process. Studies show that mother tongue and second language acquisition disturb learners to some extent. However, in the same time, this disturbance has great positive effects. The methods of learning languages are interlinked. Learners can use the method of mother tongue acquisition and second language acquisition to learn third language, reducing learning difficulties. Learners of third language acquisition are strong in communication and their sensitive emotion is higher than ordinary people, so they have great potential. The efficiency of language learning depends on two aspects. First is the learners' attitude, teaching conditions of schools, and information-collecting capabilities. Second is the value of the language and the social demand of talents, which is a key factor. Overall, in learning language, learners should know the attitude of society or schools to the language learning, what learning conditions and learning goals they have as well as their own attitude towards learning. These factors are keys and premises to command language.

With the deeper learning of language, learners will find that third languages acquisition is greatly influenced by second language acquisition, especially in vocabulary, grammar usage and semanteme. Therefore, learners will find it easier to learn. The proficiency of second language acquisition play an important role in third language acquisition. People who know second language

acquisition have strong communication skills as well as good language analysis and application capabilities. Learners can skillfully use rich experiences and knowledge got in second language acquisition to dig out their proficiency and appropriately tackle the relation among different languages. They can even find the characteristics and laws of each language and actively guide the correct transfer among languages. Learners should analyze various languages and find their differences as well as the similarity between second language acquisition and third language acquisition, helping them to balance their level of different languages.

4 STUDY ON THIRD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION UNDER SECOND LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT

With the further study of second language acquisition, the proposal of language transfer theory entered a new language study field, which mainly studies third language acquisition is created under what social background. The third language acquisition here does not refer to the number of language learning, but one or several languages apart from mother tongue or second language. Compared with second acquisition, third language acquisition is more complex because second language acquisition is influenced only by first language. Third language acquisition is influenced by both first language and second language acquisition. Studies about third language acquisition started from 1950s and some studies show that borrowing among different languages is frequent. Further studies also show that the role of first language and second language in third language acquisition is different as the role of first language is correction while the role of second language is bridge. With further studies, mother tongue and second language acquisition will gradually be replaced by third language acquisition. If learners can skillfully use two languages, they will help lay a solid foundation for third language learning. The previous knowledge in third language acquisition can be transferred. It is not clear which language that learners have already grasped influences third language acquisition.

In third language acquisition, some notional words can be borrowed from second language acquisition. Second language acquisition plays an important role in third language acquisition and the

language distance is shorter and shorter. The language level, learning time and learning attitude in second language acquisition will all influence third language acquisition. Learners' abilities of knowledge absorption are different. Good learners can borrow more notional words from second language acquisition while poor learners can only borrow notional words from their mother tongue. Thus it can be seen that the process of third language acquisition is very complex.

Second language acquisition has influences on third language acquisition in vocabulary, writing, pronunciation and grammar. First, in pronunciation, most learners of third language remain their mother tongue or second language pronunciation. The pronunciation of third language acquisition is mainly influenced by mother tongue and the role of second language acquisition is comparatively weaker. However, if learners recently have been learning the second language, then the pronunciation of second language will appear more frequently. Second, in writing, third language acquisition often has the tone characteristics of mother tongue. Third, in grammar, time span and skill level should be considered when third language acquisition transfers second language acquisition. If second language acquisition has longer time span and higher skill level, third language acquisition will transfer the grammar of second language acquisition. When third language acquisition transfers second language acquisition, types and inner relation between them should be taken into consideration. In earlier stage of third language acquisition, it often borrows words and phrases of second language acquisition. Generally speaking, second language acquisition has great influences on third language acquisition. As long as these influences exist, third language acquisition has more or less transferred the knowledge of second language acquisition. With the deeper study of third language acquisition, only words transfer will be fewer and fewer. Much attention should be paid on the establishment of systematic network language. Even if there is a close relation between first language acquisition and third language acquisition, procedural or substantial transfer is often based on second language acquisition. However, if second language acquisition and third language acquisition do not belong to same language family, the possibility of transfer will be lower.

Although the study of third language acquisition develops fast, because of short study time and wide study field, third language study is still in primary stage and the methods and scope of study need to be improved. When people are learning a third

language, they often have already learned or grasped another language. So they have already got their mother tongue and second language acquisition as a language basis. In third language acquisition, they should weaken the influence of mother tongue and second language acquisition. Learners need to compare the differences between second language acquisition and third language acquisition, which can help deepen their memory and understand the differences between two languages, reducing the mistakes when using foreign languages and quickening the learning process. However, in learning process, learners should not overly pay attention to the differences among different languages, which can cause negative effects and bring heavy burden, leading to weariness mentality.

Learners should emphasize the individual characteristics and common characteristics of two languages and compare the similarity and differences among different languages. Then they can gradually find laws to enhance their learning passion and efficiency, strengthening their learning confidence. Learners can have systematic analysis on several foreign languages in order to avoid the negative effects of second language acquisition. However, comparison needs to be within certain time and scope. If comparison is undertaken among many languages, the effects can not be ideal, which will confound learners' thinking, memory and understanding. The mutual transfer between second language acquisition and third language acquisition provides learners with better chances to learn several foreign languages. In learning process, the knowledge about foreign languages will influence the effects of third language acquisition. The differences between second language acquisition and third language acquisition can not guarantee the learning ways and learning effects of two foreign languages are same.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Third language acquisition mirrors a lot from second language acquisition, such as study methods and academic theories. As third language acquisition needs a lot of language knowledge, so the learning span is large. In addition, third language acquisition is constrained by social factors and own factors. The constraints of own factors mainly reflect in learning attitude, age, career and gender while social factors include national language policies and language plans. In order to appropriately tackle these factors, some adjustments under the environment of second

language acquisition are needed. Only through these adjustments can learners lay a solid foundation for third language acquisition.

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