The Influence of Chinese Topic-Prominent Features on the Acquisition of Four Types of English Subjects

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Abstract

This paper reports an investigation of the influence of Chinese topic-prominent features on the acquisition of four types of English subjects; dummy subject, gerund, infinitive and clausal subject introduced by that. By analyzing the results of the translation task by two groups of participants, it discovered the accuracy sequence of the four items, dummy subject > gerund > infinitive > clausal subject. It classified four typical TP-characterized sentences as follows: 1) Over-use of have/has in existential construction; 2) Under-acquisition of dummy subject it; 3) Zero-subject; 4) Dropping complementizer that in clausal subject.

Key words: topic-prominent features; subject acquisition; accuracy sequence; TP-characterized sentences

1. Introduction

The concept of subject originally came from the study of Indo-European language family, not Chinese. Hence, the degree of its grammaticalization is far higher in English than in Chinese. Jespersen provided some data about the growth of SVO (subject-verb-object) structure in his Essentials of English Grammar, which records that “In a statistical investigation of word-order in a series of representative nineteenth-century writers, it was found that the order S-V-O was used in from 82 to 97 per cent. of all sentences containing all these three members, while the percentage for Beowulf was 16 and for King Alfred’s prose 40” (Jespersen, 1933: 99). Though subjects in English and Chinese languages have something in common, the differences are quite clear, and the key disparity lies in whether subject is the most fundamental syntactic element. Subject is obligatory in English with
the exception of imperatives, and it plays syntactic and semantic roles, or just syntactic role as in the case of dummy subjects. In contrast, subject may be optional in Chinese, and null subjects are frequently used, particularly in colloquial Chinese. The notion of Chinese topic was put forward by Zhao Yuanren in 1968. In his A Grammar of Spoken Chinese, he claimed: “In Chinese, the proportion of applicability of the actor-action meanings is still very low, perhaps not much higher than 50 percent and wider conception of topic and comment is much more appropriate” (Zhao, 1979: 45). Since then, the similarities and dissimilarities between the two notions, subject and topic, and the two constructions: subject-predicate and topic-comment, have been discussed at home and abroad (Chen & Gao, 2000; Dikken, 2005; He, 2002; Huang, 2002; Shi, 2000; Wang, 1999; Yang, 2002; Yuan, 1995).

Moreover, based on the theory of language typology, Li and Thompson (1976) classified world languages into four types, and the two major types are topic-prominent language (TPL) and subject-prominent language (SPL) with Chinese and English as their respective representatives. They generalized features of TPL and SPL and examined definitions and characteristics of subject and topic. They pointed out:

Dummy subject is the unique feature in SPL.
In TPL, there will be a surface coding for the topic by means of initial position or morphological marker, but not necessarily for the subject. A topic need not have a selectional relation syntactically with any verb in a sentence; that is, it need not be an argument of a predicative constituent, which is obligatory to a subject. (Li & Thompson, 1976: 461-471)

The Theory of Markedness can be used to illustrate the typological transfer when Chinese English learners learn English subjects. Cross-linguistically, unmarked features are those that are universal or present in most languages, whereas marked ones are those that are specific to a particular language or found in only a few languages. For instance, dummy subjects are marked items whereas nouns and pronouns are unmarked items when comparing sentential subject in Chinese and English.

Eckman’s Markedness Differential Hypothesis (1977) predicts:

1) Those areas of the L2 which differ from the L1 and are more marked than the L1 will be difficult.
2) The relative degree of difficulty of the areas of the L2 which are more marked than the L1 will correspond to the relative degree of markedness.
3) Those areas of the L2 which are different from the L1 but are not more marked than the L1 will not be difficult. (Eckman, 1977: 321)

The transferability of some L1 linguistic items aroused scholars’ interest (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2000; Yu, 2004). The four research items in this thesis, dummy subject, gerund, infinitive and clausal subject introduced by that, are marked ones cross-linguistically with the degree of markedness varying significantly. Complementizer phrase introduced by
that is highly marked in terms of English subject domain, but its Chinese equivalent is unmarked because subject-predicate phrase can be used as subject or topic without any marker. Thus, negative transfer would occur. In other words, the particular structure in the learner language, modeled after Chinese subject-predicate phrase and clausal subject without complementizer marker that, is likely to be produced.

2. Relevant Studies

There are a number of studies concerning typological transfer at home and abroad. Fuller and Gundel (1987) studied topic-prominence (TP) in learner language and they claimed the process of second language acquisition (SLA) was characterized by an early universal topic-comment stage.

Register (1990) studied the influences of typological parameters on learners’ judgments of empty pronominal categories in English. The results showed that the Chinese group, whose empty categories are licensed by selection of two parameters, a null subject parameter and a null topic parameter, which are pragmatically motivated, made fewer errors than the Spanish group, whose empty categories are licensed by selection of a null subject parameter that is syntactically motivated. Evidence indicated that typological parameters linked to pragmatic motivation of L1 might be easier to reset cross-linguistically than parameters linked to syntactic motivation.

Sasaki (1990) studied the linguistic phenomenon of TP in Japanese EFL students’ existential constructions with a locative sentential topic by analyzing subjects’ writing. The results suggested that there was a general shift from topic-comment to subject-predicate structures as the students’ proficiency increased, and that the fact that they did not use existential constructions in free writing did not mean that students with lower proficiency could not use the target-like subject-prominent structures in other conditions.

Jin (1994) adduced data from 46 native speakers of English learning Chinese (a TP language) as a second language. His study contributed to three important findings. First, there was no universal TP stage. Second, the process of learning Chinese is a process of typological transfer, in which certain grammaticized structures will be reanalyzed and assigned new values. Third, both TP and SP are transferable typologies.

Cai (1998) and Cai (2002) investigated the influence of topic-prominence on Chinese EFL learners’ writing by virtue of the theory of L1 transfer. Cai (1998) studied Chinese EFL learners’ acquisition of subject-predicate structures. His findings claimed that at least 23% of the errors resulting from the TP features were attributed to L1 transfer and there was no significant difference between the influences of TP features on beginning and intermediate learners, but there was between the two groups and advanced learners. Cai (2002) explored the phenomenon of pro-drop in Chinese EFL learners’ output. The results of the empirical study show that learners may not be sensitive to the pro-drop parameter before they successfully acquired the English subject, due to the negative transfer of Chinese topic-prominent features.

Jung (2004) carried out an experiment, the result of which did not support the so-
called early universal stage of topic-prominence but suggested that learners transferred their subject-prominent first language and gradually became sensitive to the characteristics of the target language with increasing target language proficiency.

The above studies investigated the influence of TPL and SPL on subject acquisition and topic acquisition respectively from the typological perspective. Chinese and English belong to quite different language families. Chinese is a Sino-Tibetan language characterized by parataxis with topic-comment construction as its distinctive feature and English is an Indo-European language characterized by hypotaxis with subject-predicate construction as its fundamental syntactic pattern. Specifically, Chinese syntactic patterns can be classified into four types from the perspective of subject: sentence with topic and subject, sentence with subject, sentence with topic, and sentence with neither topic nor subject. In English, however, subject is a necessary condition for legitimizing a sentence, and the grammatical means of topicalization is seldom used except for pragmatic function. It goes without saying that there is a great distance between Chinese and English in terms of subject, and it is unavoidable that Chinese TP features will have an effect on the developmental pattern of learners’ interlanguage. This study, therefore, aimed to find out how and to what extent Chinese TP features influence the learners’ acquisition of English subjects.

3. Empirical Study

3.1 Hypotheses

Two studies were conducted in this research in order to get adequate data to test the following three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Generally speaking, there is a negative relationship between learners’ ability to distinguish Chinese subjects from topics and their achievement in acquiring English subjects, owing to the great language distance.

Hypothesis 2. The accuracy order of the four types of English subjects can be roughly described as: dummy subject > infinitive and gerund > clausal subject, based on degree of markedness.

Hypothesis 3. Advanced learners are less influenced by Chinese topic-prominent features and more sensitive to English subject-prominent features than intermediate learners.

In general, it may be rather easy for learners to acquire the dummy subject. Although learners roughly experience the same acquisition sequence from unmarked items to marked ones in L2, they may sometimes acquire a certain marked item earlier than an unmarked one because language acquisition is a complex process. A good case in point is Chinese-speaking learners’ acquisition of English dummy subject. For one thing, there is little mother tongue interference due to the lack of such an item in the L1; for another the two syntactic constructions, existential structure there be and expletive it, are marked items because they play only syntactic roles in English rather than both syntactic and semantic roles as other English subjects do. When learners are exposed to these items at early stages
of SLA, the sufficient input enables them to master the marked construction quite early.

Fewer learners will use the subjects in non-finite form spontaneously. Even if they use them, they may use them clumsily. Verbal phrases can be used as subject in Chinese, while in English this item can be either infinitive or gerund applied in different linguistic contexts. It is this distinction that causes confusion. Based on prior grammatical knowledge, college students, for example, are aware that infinitive and gerund are relatively difficult linguistic elements. Hence, they are unwilling to use them for fear of committing errors; rather, they adopt cognitive strategies of avoidance or linguistic rule of substitution.

Of the four items under investigation, the most difficult to acquire is the causal subject. First, this item is highly marked intra-linguistically and cross-linguistically. Second, there is a strong underlying syntactical similarity between the learners’ L1 and L2, since clausal subjects can be found in English as well as in Chinese. English clausal phrases are introduced by how, when, where, what, which, who and other complementizers which function syntactically and semantically. One exception is the clausal subject elicited by that which only plays syntactic role but no semantic role, so it is highly marked in the learner language, whereas Chinese clausal subjects (also called subject-predicate phrases) do not need such complementizers. Therefore, Chinese English learners may get confused when they acquire English clausal subjects.

In summary, the degree of markedness in terms of the four types of English subjects is arranged like this: dummy subject < subject in non-finite form < clausal subject. By recognizing the degree of markedness, predictions about the acquisition order can be made, hence the formulation of Hypothesis 2.

3.2 Study 1

The purpose of the first study was to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. Two tasks were designed to measure the correlation between participants’ scores in identifying Chinese subjects and topics and the scores in translation assignments. One task was Chinese-English translation consisting of 20 sentences (Appendix I), in which Chinese sentences were characterized by topic-prominent features and their English translations =had infinitive, gerund, clause or dummy subjects respectively. The other (Appendix II) was composed of 20 Chinese sentences that either had subject but not topic, or had topic but not subject, or had both topic and subject, or had neither topic nor subject. The purpose of this task was to examine the participants’ sensitivity and proficiency in distinguishing Chinese topics from subjects. The score of each item in the two tasks was 5, and the total score in each was 100. If the participants chose the right item and used it correctly, they got the full mark of 5; if they only chose the correct item but used it improperly, they were given 3 points, and they got none if they did not choose the right item.

Fifty-four sophomores from the School of Chemistry Education of Shaanxi Normal University were chosen as participants to accomplish the above two tasks. The two tasks were carried out in two periods, with the translation task first for fear that the participants might get some clues about the purpose of the study from the task of judgment of Chinese topic and subject.

After the completion of the tasks, 48 valid papers were collected. Then the scores were
calculated to determine the mean scores, standard deviation and frequency of usage. The results are displayed in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1.** Scores in translation of four types of English subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dummy subject</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>53.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clausal subject with <em>that</em></td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerund</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>14.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infinitive</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>14.58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.** Scores in judgment of Chinese subject and topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentence with both subject and topic</td>
<td>3.389</td>
<td>1.965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence with only topic</td>
<td>3.146</td>
<td>1.717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence with only subject</td>
<td>4.365</td>
<td>1.623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence with neither subject nor topic</td>
<td>3.313</td>
<td>2.304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typical errors in translation task are listed as follows:

- Accept this job mean you will get up early.
- To read aloud is helpful to English learning.
- He didn’t pass the exam making his parents disappointed.
- What do they want to do has nothing to do with me.
- The weather is cloudy from Monday to Friday.
- From dormitory to classroom need twenty minutes.

The results of the translation task showed that the majority of the participants were confused when using infinitive and gerund; that is, when and how to use the two non-finite subjects was a difficult task for them.

The first two erroneous sentences should be changed into the following:

To accept this job means you will get up early. (The form “to do” suggests that the action will happen in the future.)

Reading aloud is helpful to English learning. (The gerund implies the activity is regularly taken.)

Great variation lay in the usage of clausal subjects. Those introduced by *wh*-words, such as *what, when* and *which*, were easy to be learned, and most participants had adopted this item in their translation but some committed mistake in terms of word order. The fourth sentence is a typical example, and the correct sentence should be:
What they want to do has nothing to do with me.

In addition, few students accurately used subjects introduced by *that*. The mean score was 1.58 (the lowest) and the standard deviation was 1.93 (the highest). The two values suggested that great individual discrepancy existed among the participants and this item was the hardest of the four. As a matter of fact, some learners regarded the complementizer phrase as subject, but they omitted *that*; this can be seen from the third sentence.

Obviously, the participants got the highest score of 2.87 in dummy subjects. They seemed to have found this item easy.

Table 2 indicated that the participants’ judgment about the four types of Chinese sentences varied greatly. They got the highest mean score (4.365) and lowest standard deviation (1.623) in judging sentences with subject only, while they got the lowest score (3.146) in judging sentences with topic only. The results also showed that some participants had a tendency to regard the element in sentence-initial position as subject.

Above all, the analysis revealed no negative relationship between learners’ level of Chinese and their English performance. On the contrary, the coefficient (*r*) between the participants’ scores of the two tasks is 0.34 (*P* = 0.05), and this indicated that learners’ native language, to some extent, does exert influence on their acquisition of English subjects; the more they knew about Chinese subjects and topics, the higher scores they had in their English performance. Hence, Hypothesis 1 was not confirmed. In addition, two points were discovered: 1) The participants had better acquired the dummy subjects because the mean score was the highest among the four. 2) The mean score and the frequency of clausal subjects introduced by *that* were the lowest among the four categories. Hence, the accuracy order is: dummy subject > subject in non-finite form > clausal subject, and this result confirmed Hypothesis 2.

3.3 Study 2

Study 2 was designed to test Hypothesis 3 and further examine Hypothesis 2.

**Participants**

The participants were 65 college students from Shaanxi Normal University, and they were divided into two groups. One was regarded as intermediate learners. They were 35 freshmen (average age = 18) from the School of Food Engineering who had received secondary education in different provinces of China, so their English proficiency could be assumed as typical of college beginners. The other group was regarded as advanced learners. They were 30 English majors (average age = 21) in their fourth year, and 90% had passed the Test for English Majors Band-8. The time and settings for English learning between the two groups varied greatly. The English majors had learned English three years longer than the non-English majors, and they had far more opportunities to use English such as communicating with native speakers. Although there was no doubt that English majors’ proficiency was higher than that of non-English majors, the question remained: Are English majors less influenced by Chinese topic-prominent features than non-English majors in acquiring the four types of English subjects? Or are English majors more
sensitive to subject-prominent features of English than non-English majors?

Study Design
The task of Chinese-English translation in Study 1 was adopted again in this investigation (Appendix III), but the previous 20 sentences were replaced by 4 paragraphs in order to eliminate elicitic factors as much as possible through providing the participants with sufficient language context. The four paragraphs had the following characteristics: First, the topics of fast food, Internet, physical exercise and cheating on an examination could guarantee that the participants had no comprehension problems while reading the Chinese texts. Second, some sentences in the four paragraphs were characterized by typical Chinese TP features such as null-subject, which aimed at examining the participants’ response to the four research items. Third, some difficult words and phrases were supplied with English translations to make sure that the participants would not be disturbed by difficult expressions.

Procedures
Two groups of participants were asked to finish the translation task in no more than an hour and to hand in papers as soon as they finished it.

The scoring procedure was similar to that in study 1.

Most participants finished the task within 40 minutes, and this showed that the translation material was not too difficult for them. There were 65 participants all together, but only 56 papers were valid. Nine students did not finish the entire translation task or dropped some sentences in their translations.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Accuracy of the Four Types of Subjects in the Translation Task
Independence samples T-test was employed to examine the difference between the English majors and non-English majors’ performance in terms of the four types of subjects (T=3.083). The value of significance in T-test was 0.003 (< .05). Hence, a conclusion could be safely drawn that a noticeable difference did exist between the advanced group and the intermediate group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dummy</th>
<th>Gerund</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Clausal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English majors</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English majors</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the English majors’ performance was superior to that of the non-English majors in acquiring dummy subject, gerund and infinitive subjects. However, in spite of their higher proficiency, they were inferior to the non-English majors in the use of clausal subject introduced by *that*. This phenomenon did not suggest that the participants in the
advanced group had not acquired this item. Rather, acquisition is hard to evaluate because it is a combination of learners’ language performance and competence. However, the data from the study could not present a complete picture of the learner’s competence in a specific linguistic item due to reasons such as semantic redundancy or other processing problems. The English majors’ translation of the following Chinese sentence was a good case in point. Few of them were willing to make use of clausal subject. Instead, they employed compound structure of gerund or divided the original sentence into a main clause and a subordinate clause.

他考试舞弊让老师和同学们都很失望。
*Ta kaoshi zuobi rang laoshi he tongxuemen dou hen shiwang.*

a. That he cheated on the exam disappointed his teachers and his classmates. (1)
b. His cheating on the exam disappointed his teachers and classmates. (14)
c. He cheated on the exam, which disappointed his teachers and classmates. (3)
d. It disappointed his teachers and classmates that he cheated on the exam. (6)

Fourteen English majors used gerund instead of clause, and this suggested that these learners had acquired gerund subject earlier and better than clausal subject. Moreover, it was likely that the English majors had a flexible mastery of using various target language structures that enabled them to diversify their expressions. In contrast, 15 non-English majors used clausal subject, but only three of them used it correctly; others committed the error of dropping the complementizer *that*, and they produced the following sentence:

* He cheated on the exam disappointed his teachers and classmates.

To sum up, Study 2 further confirmed Hypothesis 2. Meanwhile, it revealed a few characters the English and non-English majors shared in common. First, for dummy subject, it was relatively easy for both groups. Second, the accuracy of clausal subject was the lowest in both groups. Third, the English and non-English majors were good at employing gerund, but rarely used infinitive.

4.2 Classification of Four Types of TP-characterized Sentences
Since some subject constructions can be realized in different ways, in order to learn more about learners’ acquisition of the four types of English subjects, four types of learner sentences with the influence of Chinese topic-prominent features were classified as follows:

**Type 1: over-use of have/has**
This type results from typological transfer of the Chinese pragmatic functions (i.e., the topic-comment construction) to English syntactic forms (subject-predicate structure). As is known, there are two kinds of existential constructions in English, one is the syntactic pattern *there be*, and the other is the usage of *have/has*, which indicates possessing something or displaying a mental quality or physical feature. When Chinese-speaking learners reconstruct the existential structure, they may mistakenly equate Chinese *you to*...
have/has and transfer Chinese word order directly. For instance,

美国有很多诸如Burge King, Taco Bell等的大型连锁店。
Meiguo you henduo zhuru Burger King, Taco Bell deng de daxing liansuodian.
* The US has many big chains like Burger King, Taco Bell.
There are many big chains like Burge King, Taco Bell in the US.

Type 2: under-acquisition of *it*
This is another kind of transfer of TP feature to the target language. It results from two situations. On one hand, topic indicating time in some Chinese sentences is characterized by sentential-initial position to show when the event occurs. On the other hand, subject is obligatory in English but optional in Chinese. Consequently, when translating Chinese into English, learners may mistake topic for subject, and they may place the prepositional phrases or noun phrases in the position of subject rather than that of adverbial modifiers. For instance,

今天早晨很冷。
Jintian zaocheng hen leng.
* Today/This morning is very cold.
It’s very cold this morning.

The syntactic feature of the Chinese sentence can be described as: [+topic, –subject], but the feature of the two English translations is [–topic, +subject]. The error implied that learners had a vague idea of subject-predicate construction; they had not acquired the thematic role of the argument (subject in this case), so they borrowed thematic features from their first language to construct their second language sentence.

Type 3: zero-subject
It is known that null subject is the typical characteristic of TPL, and it is acceptable to omit subject in Chinese, but in highly SPL like English, subject cannot be dropped. When Chinese-speaking learners translated Chinese sentences with verbal phrases occupying sentence-initial position, they may produce subject-less sentences in the target language. For example,

保持身体健康意味着你应该经常锻炼身体。
Baochi shenti jiankang yiwei zhe ni yinggai jingchang duanlian shenti.
* Keep fit means that you should do exercises regularly.
To keep fit means that you should do exercises regularly.

A verbal phrase can function as subject or topic in Chinese, but in English it has to be an infinitive or gerund if it functions as subject. This means that learners must reset the phrase by adding the infinitive particle to or the inflectional suffix -ing to indicate their syntactic role as subject. Learners’ errors may result from two situations. One is that null
subject is the overt transfer of Chinese topic-prominent feature. The other is that Chinese is not an inflectional language as English, and this may lead to the lack of the gerund form of a verb that is derived by adding the inflectional suffix -ing; likewise, there is no distinction between finite and non-finite verbs, with the former having different tenses and aspects by means of inflectional devices. Clearly, such errors decrease gradually with the learner’s language getting closer to the target language.

**Type 4: clausal subject without that**

Clausal phrase can be used as subject in Chinese as well as in English. However, the only difference in clausal subjects between the two languages lies in the marker that. English clausal subjects are introduced by that to form grammaticalized structure, while Chinese does not need any complementizer. Sometimes difficult items in learner language are the result of similarities rather than differences between the learner’s native and target languages. So the omission of that in clausal subject was a frequent error among Chinese-speaking learners. For example,

他考试舞弊让老师和同学们都很失望。
Ta kaoshi wubi rang laoshi he tongxuemen dou hen shiwang.
*He cheated on the exam disappointed his parents.
That he cheated on the exam disappointed his parents.

Above all, it is understandable to attribute the above TP-characterized sentences to first language interference, because the first three types of subjects have close relationship with topic-prominence features of Chinese, and the fourth type is the result of similarity rather than dissimilarity between the learner’s native and target languages.

**5. Concluding Remarks**

The results of the study lead to the following conclusions:

1) In general, the learners’ acquisition of the four types of English subjects is influenced by Chinese topic-prominent features, whether their English proficiencies are advanced or intermediate. However, learners exhibited a decrease in the use of topic-prominent construction and an increase in subject-prominent structure with the development of learners’ interlanguage. An approximately similar development pattern for Chinese-speaking learners’ accuracy order of the four items can be described as: dummy subject > gerund > infinitive > clausal subject.

2) The topic-prominent features of learner language in terms of the four items are displayed through four kinds of TP-characterized sentences, namely, mistaking Chinese topic denoting location for English subject in existential construction there be, under-acquisition of dummy subject it, zero-subject in the English sentence, and dropping complementizer that in clausal subject. For dummy subjects, existential structure is the first and easiest one to acquire, whereas the participants’ achievement on expletive it
varied greatly. For subjects in non-finite form, the results suggest that Chinese-speaking learners prefer using gerund to infinitive.

6. Limitations of This Study

Limitations about this research are obvious.

First, findings are not entirely definite yet because of the relatively small samples. All the participants came from the same university and the non-English majors were from the same department. It is necessary to try the test on a larger sample in future research.

Second, the test itself only partially examined the participants’ English performance; it did not give a complete picture of their language competence. Lastly, this thesis lays much emphasis on quantitative study and attaches less importance to other cognitive factors that may complicate the picture of developmental stage and acquisition sequence. For instance, learners’ characters play a vital role in their choice of learning strategies. So it is wise to conduct more studies in future to examine the four research items both linguistically and psycholinguistically.

Acknowledgements

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References


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**Appendix I Translation (Study 1)**

请把下面各句译成英语。

1. 创作难，翻译也不容易。
2. 他们要干什么与我无关。
3. 星期一到星期五全是阴天。
4. 谁将成为系主任（dean）尚未决定。
5. 据报道，今年的大学英语四级考试（CET Band-4）将有大的变动。
6. 我是昨天下午去的图书馆。
7. 朗读有助于英语学习。
8. 接受这个工作意味着你得早起。
9. 大门口（at the gate）有人在等你。
10. 物价上海最贵。
11. 基因工程（genetic engineering）我是门外汉（layman）。
12. 下大（heavy/heavily）雨了。
13. 他考试没及格让父母很失望。
14. 对我而言，这是小事一桩（a piece of cake）。 
15. 他们学校，男生多女生少。
16. 这间教室有20个男生，23个女生。
17. 撒谎被认为是不可饶恕的（unforgivable）。
18. 从寝室（dormitory）到教室需要二十分钟。
19. 怎么把这事办好是个难题（tough task）。
20. 他不辞而别让我们很困惑。

Appendix II  Identifying Chinese topic and subject (Study 1)

姓名: ________  专业: ________  联系方式: ________
请判断下列各句的主语。
如果有主语，请在第一空栏填写；如果没有主语或不能确定，请在对应一栏中划“√”。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>主语</th>
<th>无主语</th>
<th>不确定（注明原因更好）</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他们大鱼吃小鱼。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我们谁也不去。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>水果我最爱吃苹果。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一只青蛙四条腿。</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>今天星期天。</td>
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<tr>
<td>这件事情你不要告诉别人。</td>
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<tr>
<td>端午节家家吃粽子。</td>
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<tr>
<td>那场洪水，幸亏通知得及时。</td>
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<tr>
<td>他零钱用完了。</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>王洪啊，我昨天还见过。</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>他头疼。</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>刮风了。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>张爱玲我喜欢她的小说。</td>
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<tr>
<td>太自私了他。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我们班，一半是男生，一半是女生。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>学校管理他很有经验。</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>大象鼻子长。</td>
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<tr>
<td>轮到你发言了。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>墙壁上他挂了一幅画。</td>
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<tr>
<td>冷得我直发抖。</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

如果你对以上各句的主语有疑问，或者有任何相关的见解请写在下面：

谢谢您的合作！
Appendix III  Translation task (Study 2)

请将以下四段汉语翻译成英语。

美国有很多诸如 Burge King, Taco Bell 等的大型连锁店（big chain）。但是，没有哪家比 McDonald’s 更出名。McDonald’s 为什么能够如此受欢迎引起了市场调查人员的兴趣。据报道，McDonald’s 成功的秘诀在于其“思维全球化，产品本土化”的营销策略（a marketing strategy of “think global, act local”）。他们实际所做的就是在不同的国家提供具有地方风味（local flavor）的食物以适应不同的文化。

因特网是我们日常生活必不可少的（indispensable）一部分。网上聊天可以让我们结交更多的新朋友；发送和接收电子邮件可以改善人际关系（interpersonal relationship）。但是，因特网也有弊端（disadvantage）。青少年沉溺于（be addicted to）网络游戏已经成为一个严重的社会问题。另外，很多网站归个人（individual）所有，赚取利润是这些网站的最终目的（ultimate goal）。因此，谁能来有效地管理网络成为一大难题（a big headache）。

保持身体健康意味着你应该经常锻炼身体（do exercise regularly）。打网球是我最喜欢的体育运动。每天早晨我都会在附近的公园和朋友打半个小时的网球。今天早晨很冷，我像平常一样（as usual）六点起床，跑步去公园。从我住的公寓到那里大约需要10分钟。一路上我想今天晨炼的人一定很少。可是，公园里看到的一切给我留下了深刻的印象。尽管天气不好，依然有很多人在进行各种各样的体育运动，包括一些老人和孩子。

他考试作弊（cheat on an examination）让老师和同学们都很失望，尤其是他的父母。从那以后，父母很难完全相信他。对他们而言，他所说的只是些半真半假的东西（half-truth）而已。

(Copy editing: Cao Yongheng)