

The Influence of Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue on Oral English in Senior High Schools and Its Countermeasures

Xuan Feng *

Beijing No 12. High School, Beijing, 100000, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 1911581223@mail.sit.edu.cn

Abstract. This study discusses the phenomenon of negative transfer of mother tongue, which is common in oral English learning in senior high schools. The research topic is divided into two parts: the influence of negative transfer of the mother tongue and its countermeasures, covering vocabulary misuse, phonetic influence and corresponding teaching strategies. Through literature analysis and theoretical comparison, the phenomenon of rigid mother tongue order and mechanical Chinglish is deeply discussed, and some countermeasures are put forward to solve the problem of negative transfer of mother tongue, such as contextualization practice, in-depth understanding of language characteristics and structure, application of cooperation and correction strategies, peer discussion and cooperative activities. The results show that these strategies can effectively reduce the negative impact of the mother tongue on oral English learning. The research conclusion emphasizes that in order to overcome the challenge of negative transfer of mother tongue, diversified and practical teaching methods should be adopted, emphasizing practical communication and cultural integration, aiming at cultivating students' all-round English application ability and cross-cultural communication ability.

Keywords: oral English learning in senior high school, negative transfer of mother tongue, influence, countermeasures.

1. Introduction

Language learning can be a complicated task [1]. Senior high school students, in particular, often face unique difficulties in developing English as a second language. One of the challenges is the negative transfer of the mother tongue-the interference of the mother tongue in the acquisition of the target language leads to mistakes and difficulties in spoken English. This literature review aims to investigate its influence in senior high school English environment, and at the same time outline effective countermeasures to alleviate its adverse effects.

Negative transfer of mother tongue, also known as interlingual error, refers to a learner's incorrect application of conventions in his or her mother tongue to another language, which often leads to expression errors and eventually leads to an inaccurate communication system [2]. High school students' acquisition of spoken Chinese is likely to be influenced by China culture, so they will encounter difficulties in switching between Chinese and English, which may hinder effective communication. Nowadays, many scholars believe that the English teaching of senior high school students has increased significantly, and their level and ability have improved. However, students' oral ability is still poor, which is probably the result of mother tongue transfer [3].

In this paper, the qualified documents are selected from the academic papers database of Google Academic for literature review. The selected keywords include mother tongue, mother tongue transfer, negative mother tongue transfer, high school English, high school oral English, influence, and strategies. In order to improve the quality of articles. These articles are required to be peer-reviewed articles, and they need to be academic articles published in the past ten years and highly related to the theme of this study.

2. The Influence

Negative transfer of mother tongue may bring unique challenges, but it should be regarded as part of the language learning process. A certain amount of transfer will always occur, reflecting the

learners' previous knowledge and language repertoire; However, excessive or persistent negative transfer will hinder students' progress and prevent them from communicating effectively in English.

2.1. Lexical Misuse

2.1.1 Stick to the mother tongue order

Sticking to the order of the mother tongue is a common phenomenon of negative transfer of the mother tongue, which directly affects the use and understanding of English vocabulary [4]. There are significant differences between Chinese and English in syntactic structure and lexical order. When students follow the lexical order of their mother tongue in spoken English, it may lead to inaccurate expression and communication obstacles.

For example, Chinese usually adopt a "subject-predicate-object" structure, but the order in English expression may be different. Due to the influence of the mother tongue, students may directly transfer the word order of Chinese to English in English expression, which leads to the misuse of vocabulary and sentence structure [5]. This not only reduces the accuracy of expression, but also may confuse the audience, thus reducing the communication efficiency.

2.1.2 Mechanical Chinglish

Another obvious influence is the mechanical Chinglish phenomenon. This phenomenon is usually manifested in the direct translation of words and expressions from the mother tongue, without considering English idioms, idioms and cultural background [6]. In many cases, this literal translation may lead to expression distortion and even absurd vocabulary and sentence structure.

Mechanical Chinglish not only reflects the lack of deep cultural understanding of English, but also may make people feel stiff and unnatural. As Hu Zhen pointed out, if students rely too much on literal translation in oral expression, they will often lose the original elegance and fluency of English and may even make their expression vague or difficult to understand [7].

This literal translation phenomenon also reflects students' lack of confidence and proficiency in vocabulary selection and use. They may tend to use structures and expressions that they are familiar with in their mother tongue, ignoring the uniqueness and complexity of English. This situation not only limits the development of students' oral English ability, but also may affect their motivation and confidence in further understanding and mastering English.

2.2. Voice

2.2.1 The influence of vowels and consonants

In English learning, Chinese native speakers often encounter pronunciation problems with vowels and consonants. Due to the differences between Chinese and English phonetic systems, Chinese native speakers are often limited by their mother tongue in English pronunciation [8]. For example, some consonants and consonant groups in English have no corresponding pronunciations in Chinese, which may cause students to encounter difficulties in imitating these sounds.

In terms of specific pronunciation, due to the influence of the mother tongue, students may have deviations in syllable stress, rhythm and pitch of English. For example, the long and short vowels in English are a big problem for many Chinese students, because there is no similar comparison between long and short vowels in Chinese [9]. In addition, some common consonants in English, such as /θ/ and /ð/, are often substituted among students with Chinese mother tongue background.

2.2.2 The influence of rhythm

English prosodic system is quite different from Chinese. Prosody includes pitch, rhythm and intonation, which is closely related to the clarity of speech and the effectiveness of communication [10]. Learners' native language and habits will affect their pronunciation and intonation when learning English. Although learners' original intention is to communicate better, if learners' pronunciation pays too much attention to accent, it will affect the effect and fluency of communication, so correct

pronunciation is an important part of learning English. Chinese students' common problems in English prosody include inappropriate stress, inaccurate sense of rhythm and the use of tones.

For example, the tone system of Chinese may affect students' perception and application of English tones. Influenced by their mother tongue, students may feel confused and unnatural when they try to use English in descending and ascending tones. The sense of rhythm in Chinese is different from that in English, which may lead to students' deviation in English rhythm and stress [11].

2.2.3 The influence of accent

The accent is one of the most obvious aspects of the mother tongue's influence on second language acquisition. Because of the similarities and differences between the phonological system and the native language, students may keep some Chinese pronunciation features in English [12]. These characteristics may sometimes reduce the audience's understanding ability, especially when communicating with people with non-native Chinese backgrounds.

The accent of the mother tongue may not only affect the clarity of communication, but also affect the audience's impression and attitude towards the speaker [13]. Although the accent itself is not a problem, if it is too obvious, it may give people a stereotype related to the speaker's culture and social identity.

2.3. Phonology

Scholars have confirmed from different aspects that the differences between L1 and L2 in different fields of linguistics lead to negative language transfer. The negative transfer of these languages appears in some major respects. For instance, according to Li Xiaohong, Chinese English can show specific issues caused by the negative influence of the mother tongue, known as inhibitory transfer. These include: (1) using vocabulary incorrectly, like gender, number, and case errors, as well as mismatched word choices. (2) Making mistakes in word or phrase usage due to directly matching words between the two languages [14]. Negative transfer of mother tongue is the result of negative transfer of mother tongue caused by its specific characteristics. This is an example of invasive language transfer. In the process of learning a language, learners will be disturbed by their mother tongue, and they will completely use and imitate their mother tongue, ignoring the differences between the mother tongue and the target language in the grammatical system, resulting in abnormal, ungrammatical and abnormal expression. For instance, rigidly adhering to the structure of one's mother tongue can lead to mechanical Chinglish, characterized by awkward phrasing and syntax. This phenomenon is often referred to as 'Heavy Chinglish.' Scholars such as Wang Liping with Lu Ying concur that negative transfer from the mother tongue can manifest as both vocabulary-related issues and problems with sentence structure (syntax) when learning a new language [15]. Wang Jiasheng and Liu Youchun, Li Na, & Xu Hui. said that the negative transfer of the mother tongue is mainly reflected in pronunciation, phonology and vocabulary in second-language speech [16]. These studies have confirmed from different aspects that the differences between L1 and L2 in different fields of linguistics lead to negative language transfer.

3. Countermeasure

Effective mother tongue transfer requires a comprehensive approach. Teachers should establish an environment to make students feel safe when taking risks and making mistakes, and provide sufficient opportunities for real language use, such as debate, speech, or language exchange, which can enhance students' confidence and fluency. On top of that, it may be beneficial to use technology in language teaching. Online resources, language learning applications and multimedia materials provide students with real English experience across language environments. Language exchange programs help to communicate with native English speakers and enable students to practice English in real life. Scholars have confirmed from different aspects that the differences between L1 and L2 in different fields of linguistics lead to negative transfer. Teachers can help students overcome the challenges related to oral English by adopting appropriate teaching methods, such as explicit teaching,

comparative analysis and communicative language teaching. This will improve students' oral ability. Teachers can implement a supportive and participatory learning environment, technology integration and real language use opportunities.

3.1. Contextualized Practice

In view of the negative transfer of the mother tongue, contextualization practice is an effective countermeasure. By integrating English learning into real or simulated daily situations, students can understand and use the target language more naturally [17]. Contextualized practice is helpful to break through the single grammar and vocabulary teaching and turn to all-around communicative competence training, so that students can use English in practical contexts and reduce the influence of negative transfer of the mother tongue [18].

3.2. Linguistic Features and Structures

Teachers can help students overcome the problem of negative transfer of their mother tongue by deeply explaining the language characteristics and structural differences between English and their mother tongue. Specifically, teachers can compare and analyze the similarities and differences between the two languages in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and pragmatics, so that students can understand why the structure of their mother tongue cannot be directly transferred to English [19]. This comparative analysis is helpful to enhance students' understanding and respect for the uniqueness of English and to reduce the influence of mother tongue interference.

3.3. Collaboration Strategy and Correction Strategy

Collaborative strategies emphasize cooperation among students, teachers and peers in order to achieve common learning goals [20]. In the teaching process, teachers can encourage students to cooperate and exchange, and help them solve the problem of negative transfer of mother tongue together. In spite of this, teachers can also use correction strategies, such as prompting and feedback, to correct students' mistakes in time and guide them to gradually get rid of the shackles of their mother tongue and master the correct use of English [21].

3.4. Peer Discussions, Group Projects and Cooperative Activities

Peer discussion, group projects and cooperative activities are effective ways to cultivate students' practical English ability. Through these activities, this can not only improve their learning efficiency, but can also let these students learn and use English in practical communication and enhance their perception and grasp of English. Peer discussion helps students to learn and supervise each other, while group projects allow students to complete tasks together in cooperation, further reducing the influence of mother tongue interference.

Cooperative activities further strengthen students' communicative competence. By simulating real situations, students can solve problems together in cooperation, which can not only enhance students' practical language application ability, but also cultivate their teamwork ability. Such practical activities are helpful for students to use English in the actual context, reduce the influence of mother tongue thinking and better integrate into the target language and culture [22].

3.5. Technology

Sun et al. think that contextualized language practice is an effective strategy [23]. Situations and communication tasks in real life enable them to use their spoken English in real situations, while role-playing, debate and simulation can promote meaningful language use and minimize transfer errors. Butzkamm believes that teachers can compare and contrast the language features and structures of the mother tongue and English to help language transformation [24]. In addition, Akyol also suggested cooperation strategies and correction strategies [25]. Peer discussions, group projects and cooperative activities provide students with opportunities for meaningful language exchange.

4. Conclusion

Negative transfer of mother tongue is an obstacle for senior high school students to learn English as a second language. What are the negative effects of summing up? This study also points out some suggestions accordingly. The author hopes that teachers and students can work together to create a positive learning environment. Through collaborative efforts, teachers can ensure that students have the tools and resources needed to succeed in their studies. Additionally, students should be encouraged to take initiative and participate in the learning process. By creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding, teachers and students can form an effective partnership that will help to promote academic excellence.

As a means to resist the negative transfer of the mother tongue, it is an indispensable step to help high school students become effective communicators in English. Through these measures, educators can make senior high school students learn a second language better and more efficiently.

References

- [1] Li Xiaohong. The Influence of Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue on Senior English Majors' Oral English Learning and the Countermeasures. 2021, 124-128.
- [2] Hui Jinlan. The Influence of Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue on Senior High School Students' Oral English Ability. *Teacher: Teaching and Research* 2011, (7), 1.
- [3] Kecskes, I., & Nde Papp, T. *Foreign language and mother tongue*. Psychology Press. 2000.
- [4] Odlin, T. *Language transfer (Vol. 27)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989.
- [5] Guo Yuxi. Rules of Short Vowels in English. *Frontier Economy and Culture* 2014, (9), 2.
- [6] Jerry Lee. Study on Mother Tongue Transfer in Idiom Learning. *Value Engineering*, 2016, 035(028), 167-169,170.
- [7] Hu Zhen. The Application of Literal Translation and Free Translation in Oral English. *Scientific Information: Scientific Teaching and Research* 2007, (25), 233+266.
- [8] Yang Guangyi. *Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue in English Alphabetic Phonetics — A Case Study of Preschool Education Majors*. Overseas English. 2016.
- [9] Guo Juanqing. *The phenomenon of syntactic negative transfer in senior high school English writing and its countermeasures*. (Doctoral dissertation, Ningbo University). 2016.
- [10] Wang Lingling. *Contrastive analysis of English news, lectures and dialogues*. (Doctoral dissertation, Shanghai Normal University). 2013.
- [11] Ma Yanfang. *On the Differences of Oral Rhythm between Chinese and English*. *Innovative Education in China*. 2005.
- [12] Li Xie. *How to improve students' oral English*. *New World China Education Development Forum*. 2007.
- [13] Zhang Shuyue, Zhao Feng, Huang Junqing, & Tang Wenqing. The Influence of Speaker's Accent on Listeners' Attitude and Behavior and Its Mediation Mechanism. *Psychological Research*, 2022, 15(6), 11.
- [14] Jing, Y. A. O., & Xiaohong, Li. Are Chinese undergraduates ready for autonomous learning of English listening? –A survey on students' learning situation. *The Journal of Language Learning and Teaching*, 2017, 7(2), 21-28.
- [15] Wang Liping, Lu Ying, Wang, Liping¹, Lu, & Ying² (1.2. Qiqihar et al. Exploration of Oral English Teaching from the Perspective of Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue. *Journal of Chengdu Aviation Vocational and Technical College*. 2012.
- [16] Wang Jiasheng. *On the Influence of Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue on Oral English Learning*. Brand: *Theory Monthly*. 2014.
- [17] Amara, N. Errors correction in foreign language teaching. *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education*, 2015, 5(3), 58-68.
- [18] Zhu Tingting, & Li Liu. *Negative transfer of mother tongue and its teaching strategies under the cultural context differences between China and Japan*. *Chinese Journal*. 2016.

- [19] Qiao Liangwen. Analysis of Language Errors in English Postgraduates' Thesis. (Doctoral dissertation, Suzhou University). 2013.
- [20] Dörnyei, Zoltan. Psychological processes in cooperative language learning: group dynamics and motivation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 1997, 81(4), 482-493.
- [21] Spada, N., & Lightbown, P. M. Instruction, first language influence, and developmental readiness in second language acquisition. *The modern language journal*, 1999, 83(1), 1-22.
- [22] Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. Input, interaction, and output in second language acquisition. In *Theories in second language acquisition* (pp. 194-220). Routledge. 2014.
- [23] Gao Bingyang, & Chen Xiaojuan. The Influence of Negative Transfer of Chinese Mother Tongue on Oral English Learning. *Overseas English* 2017, (23), 3.
- [24] Butzkamm, W. We only learn language once. The role of the mother tongue in FL classrooms: death of a dogma. *Language learning journal*, 2003, 28(1), 29-39.
- [25] Shu Chunling. College English Teaching Strategies. *Journal of Inner Mongolia Agricultural University: Social Science Edition*, 2006, 8(4), 2.