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**Interlanguage and Its Implications for
English Language Teaching**

过渡语及其对英语教学的启示

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Synopsis

As a subject in second language acquisition (L2 acquisition), learner language is drawing increasing attention from researchers. Although different concepts are proposed for it, such as Selinker's "interlanguage (IL)", which is accepted universally, Nemster's "approximative system" and Corder's "idiosyncratic dialect", a consensus is reached that IL refers to a continuum between learner's mother language and the target language, and it is a natural language with its internal structures. After a review of the theories of IL, we turn our attention to L2 acquisition, which provides a framework for studying IL.

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), as a hybrid branch of IL and pragmatics, is concerned with the study of two major areas: learners' comprehension and production of linguistic action, and the development of pragmatic competence. It is argued that L1 transfer is the major cause of the occurrence of IL. After the survey of pragmatic transfer, this thesis deals with limitations of ILP study.

What makes this thesis forceful is that it not only investigates pragmatic aspects of IL, but also explores internal mechanisms of IL. After the discussion of ILP, we discuss four views regarding Universal Grammar's (UG) role in L2 acquisition in the hope of exploring whether IL is constrained by UG. In this thesis, we conclude that IL is in part constrained by UG. In addition, the corpus-based study of learner language—learner corpus is discussed in this thesis.

Through the examination and discussion of substantial theoretical literature and empirical researches, this thesis concludes that acquisition of pragmatic competence should be emphasized in English language teaching (ELT). Besides formal instruction, appropriate attitudes towards errors and consciousness-raising are called upon in classroom settings. Learners should be encouraged to interact actively with other learners and native English speakers, and to explore more access to authentic input, such as original English movies and novels. In the end, the importance of IL research, especially of ILP research, to L2 acquisition is emphasized, and limitations of current research are suggested.

Key Words: Interlanguage; Interlanguage Pragmatics; English Language Teaching

摘要

学习者语言，作为二语习得理论中的一个课题，越来越引起研究者的兴趣。尽管研究者就这一现象给出了不同的定义，如 Selinker 提出的并已被广为接受的过渡语，Corder 提出的族际方言，Nemster 命名的渐近系统，但研究者就这一现象达成了共识，即承认过渡语是外语学习者在学习过程中形成的介于母语和目标语之间的语言连续体，并具有自己的独特性。笔者在回顾了过渡语理论的发展后，介绍了过渡语的研究框架，即第二语言习得理论。

过渡语语用学，作为过渡语和语用学的结合点，其研究领域主要包括两个方面：学习者在外语学习的过程中如何理解和表达言语行为，以及学习者语用能力的习得。本文认为，母语迁移是过渡语产生的主要原因。在探讨了语用迁移后，笔者提出了过渡语语用学研究的局限性。

本文不仅从语用学的角度探讨了过渡语，还从内部机制方面探讨了过渡语的形成。在回顾了过渡语语用学理论后，我们介绍了关于普遍语法在二语习得中的作用的四种观点，并探讨了普遍语法对过渡语的约束性，从而得出结论：过渡语部分受制于普遍语法。此外，笔者还介绍了以语料库语言学为基础的学习者语言研究——学习者语料库。

通过引入并分析综合大量的理论和实证研究结果，笔者提出在英语教学中应注重培养学习者的语用语际能力，除了教授语法知识外，教师应教授相关的语用知识，增强学习者的语用学习意识；要正确对待学习过程中的各种错误；在课堂上通过组织小组活动等鼓励学习者之间，及学习者与英语本族语者进行交流；通过播放原版电影，阅读原版小说等使学习者接触大量的原汁原味的英语。最后，笔者强调了过渡语研究对英语教学的重要性以及当前研究的局限性。

关键词：过渡语；过渡语语用学；英语教学

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Interlanguage (IL), as the theme of this thesis, is put forward through a discussion of what Standard English is. It is held that few second or foreign language learners have a good command of the target language as well as native speakers. They fail to reach target language competence grammatically, or comprehend and produce the target language appropriately. Selinker (1969, 1972), who proposes “interlanguage hypothesis”, is regarded as the first one who explicates this term explicitly. According to him, IL refers to learners’ version of the target language. Although different definitions are proposed by some other researchers, such as Corder’s (1971) “idiosyncratic dialect”, Nemster’s (1971) “approximative system”, and their focuses are different, a consensus is reached that IL is a continuum between learner’s mother language and the target language, and it is a system with its internal structures. Substantial findings of IL theories are reviewed at the beginning of this thesis.

After “communicative competence” was proposed by Hymes in 1972, more researchers shift focus to contextual factors affecting learning process to criticize Chomsky’s ignorance of external factors in language learning. When pragmatics is studied within the framework of L2 acquisition study, a new branch arises as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). Relevant findings are examined on the theories and researches of pragmatic aspects of IL, and these findings reveal that ILP mainly studies how learners comprehend speech acts in the target language, how learners perform action appropriately in a particular context, and the development or acquisition of learners’ pragmatic competence.

Whether Universal Grammar (UG) is available in L2 acquisition is still an open question. There are mainly four views concerning this question: the complete access view, the no access view, the partial access view and the dual access view. Although researchers hold different views, there is a growing consensus on the view that UG is available via the L2 (White, 1989). Based on these four views, the constraint of UG on IL is studied from three stages of L2 acquisition: the initial state, the developing stage, and the ultimate attainment.

As a new approach to investigate IL, learner corpus has attracted researchers' interest. In recent decades, a considerable number of learner corpora are launched at home and abroad. In this thesis, after examining major learner corpora in China, we discuss contrastive interlanguage analysis (CIA), which is a new method investigating IL, and suggest limitations of learner corpus study. In the end, this thesis seeks to explore the implications of IL study for English Language Teaching (ELT).

1.2 Purpose

Since Selinker proposes IL, a considerable number of researches have been conducted on it. However, whether IL should be treated as a natural human language with its own grammar and structures is still an open question. In this thesis, after reviewing previous theories and empirical studies, we attempt to explore this question. Meanwhile, this thesis seeks to discuss IL from different perspectives, for instance, pragmatics, UG, and corpus linguistics. In the end, this thesis seeks to highlight the implications of IL study for ELT.

1.3 Organization

Chapter 1 gives a brief introduction to the research background, purpose and organization of this thesis.

In chapter 2, after discussing what Standard English is, we introduce the term IL, and review the development of IL and current studies of Chinese-English IL.

Chapter 3 examines learner language in the framework of L2 acquisition study.

Chapter 4 examines a hybrid branch of IL and pragmatics: ILP. A general introduction is given to this new branch, including its definitions, theories, research domains, approaches, research situation and limitations.

After explaining the differences between two linguistic universals, Chapter 5 deals with Chomsky' UG, especially the relationship between Chomsky's UG and IL, that is, whether UG is available in L2 acquisition. Some controversial issues about the relationship between UG and IL are also discussed.

Learner corpus, as a new branch investigating IL, is introduced in chapter 6. Follows a review of main learner corpora in China and abroad, CIA and limitations of corpus research are reviewed in this chapter.

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