IMPLICATIONS ON PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHING BY

ANALYSING THE CAUSE OF CHINGLISH

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Abstract

IMPLICATIONS ON PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHING BY

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Under the Supervision of Dong Isbister, Ph.D.

This paper first introduces standard English and Chinglish and analyzes the causes of Chinglish at primary school level, such as misuse of grammar, lack of practical application ability, and lack of humanity in English teaching. It also puts forward some suggestions and strategies to deal with the problem of Chinglish in primary school English teaching.

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Chapter I Introduction

Chinglish is more and more concerned by English teachers and learners in China. It is the irregular English language situation which is influenced by mother tongue of Chinese and causes misunderstanding and ineffective communication. Although some scholars have done some research on this topic, it deserves more attention especially for the teachers who teach primary school English, because younger learners need more instructions on English learning to form a good learning habit. Furthermore, language learners between the ages of 4 and 12 are at a crucial point of developing their proficiency in English. For students in this age group, the stored language will be considered as their mother tongue by the brain and is likely to be mastered and used effectively in the future.

In this paper, the author analyzes the causes of Chinglish among primary school students and discusses some strategies that would help teachers teach younger learners of English effectively.

Statement of the Problem

The author finds that most of the literature on Chinglish is based on the experiences of college students. However, it is very important to help beginners form correct pragmatic habits as the use of Chinglish in primary school students' English compositions is very common. It is easy to find language errors in vocabulary, grammar, and verbal tenses. To solve these problems and avoid the acquirement of Chinglish, the following research questions have been put forward:

1. What are the differences between Chinglish and English?

2. What are the causes of Chinglish?

3. What are the strategies to deal with Chinglish problems when in primary school English classes?

Definition of Terms

Chinglish "is a nonsensical form of language, identifiable as an attempt at English, but usually produced by deficient translation devices or speakers/writers with a low skill level" (Eaves, 2011, p. 65). "It is understandable in some ways and may not affect normal communication. But it cannot be accepted by native speakers" (Deng, 1989, p.115). For instance, "due to the interference and influence of the mother tongue, Chinese learners and users of English rigidly apply Chinese rules and habits, resulting in abnormal English which does not conform to English norms or English culture in English communication" (Li, 1993, p.18).

Interlanguage is the transitional language constructed by second language learners, which is between the mother tongue and the target language, is in the process of continuous development and change, and gradually approaches to the target language (Selinker, 1969).

Inner circle is made up of countries in which English is the first or the dominant language. These countries include Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United States. Also called the core English-speaking countries (Richard, 2019).

Negative Transfer: It occurs when previous L1 knowledge impedes L2 learning (Shi, 2015). When two languages are widely different from each other, it will cause negative transfer (Weinreich, 1953). It is also called interference. Negative transfer will interfere with learners' second language acquisition (Zheng, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to give primary school English teachers a better understanding of Chinglish. Strategies will be recommended to help English teachers prevent errors caused by Chinglish commonly made by primary school students.

Significance of the Study

Chinglish is a problem for Chinese learners of English at the primary school level. Although there has been some research on this topic, the precautionary measures for lower-grade EFL teaching are still limited. By learning causes of Chinglish and some strategies for primary school English teaching, interested teachers will gain some new perspectives on improving English efficiency.

Methodology

The seminar paper is based on library research. Scholarly sources include papers on causes of Chinglish, such as influence of mother tongue, language fossilization, language environment, and teacher's teaching methods.

Chapter II Review of Literature

1. Standard English and Chinglish

Standard English is defined as a variety of English commonly used in publishing, printing, English learners and learning education, which is widely used in news broadcasting and educated people (Liu, 2016). There is a wide debate about what standard English is. For British linguists, standardized English refers to inner circle English used by countries as the primary language. Examples of standard English include British English, American English, Canadian English, and Australian English. Kachru (1985), an American linguist, proposed a three-circle model when discussing world Englishes. In addition to the inner circle model, he also used the outer circle model that includes British colonies in which English is used in social life, and the expanding circle model that includes countries in which English is a foreign language taught and learned for communication purposes (Mutairi, 2020).

Chinglish can be described as English with Chinese characteristics (Pinkham, 2000). For Pinkham, Chinglish is that misshapen, hybrid language that is neither English nor Chinese but that might be described as English with Chinese characters. Yang (2020) stated that sentences students create are "grammatically correct", but they make either no sense or mean something very different from native speakers' intentions. The main reason for this problem is that students use English words but still think in Chinese. Actually, Chinglish is difficult to avoid because it is deeply under the influence of students' native language.

Besides, Chinglish is caused by lots of reasons. In terms of customs, the appellation in English is much less than that in Chinese. In addition, the differences of religious belief and history can also lead to Chinglish. Through the comparative study of Chinese and Western

cultural differences, people will have a deeper understanding of the two cultures, which helps

ELF learners to master the two languages. When learning English, the learners should

understand its cultural background and social customs and compare it with their mother tongue at

any time, to enhance the understanding of using standard language.

2. The Causes of Chinglish at Primary School Level

The first one is misuse of grammar. There are many Chinglish problems caused by

grammatical structure. Here the author lists some common Chinglish problems caused by

grammatical errors. The second one is the lack of practical ability. English learning should not be

limited to the classroom, but should be applied. The last one is cultural competence in English

teaching. The learning of the cultural background knowledge of the target language also affects

the students' mastery of the language. Whether or not the students really learn and master a

language also depends on the mastery of the cultural background knowledge behind the

language. Because when students really understand the cultural significance of the target

language, she can distinguish the difference between the target language and her native language,

to avoid the occurrence of Chinese English problems better.

2.1 Misuse of Grammar

College students are easy to be interfered by Chinese or other national languages in the

use of singular and plural nouns and possessive cases (Liu,2014). In primary school, there are

two grammatical points: singular and plural nouns and possessive case, which the author will pay

close attention to.

Because of the limited understanding of grammar knowledge or mastery of grammar,

students often make grammar errors. For instance, Liu (2016) found that primary school students

often have negative transfer in the expression of adjective order. Instead of "long curly hair",

some students might say "curly long hair". Another typical error which often appears might sound like "I night sleep, daytime study". This is deeply influenced by Chinese expression habits. It should express as "I sleep at night, and study in the daytime." "Chinglish is completely influenced by Chinese, which is a typical manifestation of interlingual negative transfer. It completely transfers Chinese wording to English, resulting in errors" (Liu, 2016, p. 33).

Overgeneralization is another typical grammatical error. It refers to the fact that students have learned some grammar rules of the second language, but not all of them. For example, a student might say, "Cats has soft fur." Because the teacher specially emphasizes the third person singular of verbs, students will give priority to the third person singular of verbs to reduce errors. This kind of error over generalizes the rule scope of the third person singular usage of verbs, which is caused by students' wrong analogy.

2.2 Lack of Practical Application Ability

Lack of practical application ability is that English education in China is exam oriented. The disadvantages of exam-oriented teaching are reflected in the following two aspects, which are among some important factors of Chinglish.

Many people learn English in China to meet the needs of taking exams and getting higher education. Yang (2017) proposed that in English examinations at all levels, students' skills such as spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and reading are mainly tested, and the practical application ability of students related to speaking and listening is ignored. This is more prominent in primary school English learning, because at present, there are oral English tests in secondary schools but not in primary schools. As a result, many primary schools neglect the cultivation of English communicative competence in teaching. This leads to the use of Chinglish by primary school students.

2.3 Lack of Cultural Competence in English Teaching

Chinese English class always overemphasizes the method of "reciting", reciting words, texts, and sentence patterns, and neglects the analysis and appreciation of English cultural background and discourse. Therefore, the cultural competence here refers to the teaching of the culture and background knowledge of the target language.

At present, English education only emphasizes the basic knowledge of English language, neglecting the cultivation of students' language culture and critical thinking ability (Yang, 2017). As a result, students only learn the language knowledge such as phonetics, lexicology, and grammar, etc., but lack the understanding of the cultural knowledge behind the language. Language is a part of culture. They are interdependent, interactive, and inseparable. Learning a language is strongly related to learning the culture of the language. If you want to learn a foreign language well, you must understand its culture (Yang, 2020).

Language records the historical track of the development of a country and a nation. It permeates the national culture and is the carrier of cultural communication. For example, customs, ways of thinking, religious beliefs, cultural forms and so on (Xie, 2016).

Additionally, Guan (2007) proposed two major contributing factors of Chinglish. The first one is the influence of interlanguage on English learners. According to Guan, learners start with simple grammar and limited vocabulary, but over time they put more and more rules, words, and associations into their mind. In their performance, they sort out proper forms. During the process, they gradually approach the target language and abandon the interference of Chinese. The author also proposed that Chinglish cannot be avoided because the first language and first culture are intertwined. The thinking pattern predominance shadows its influence over whatever comes later in mind.

3. Strategies for Solving Chinglish Problems

3.1 Strategies for Solving Chinglish Problems Caused by Misuse of Grammar

A survey has indicated that verbs, nouns, pronouns, and tenses are the weak grammar points of primary school students, accounting for 34.97%, 12.02%, 10.38% and 10.15% of the total errors respectively (Liu, 2016). So, it is made obvious that teachers should pay more attention to these aspects when teaching grammar. Here we take the verb errors with the most errors as an example. There are four kinds of verbs: action verbs (also called notional verbs), modal verbs, copulas, and auxiliary verbs. The grammatical points related to notional verbs include the third person singular, verb collocation, verb prototype, verb past tense, and verb present participle. Liu (2016) listed some typical examples of verb errors, the third person singular errors of verbs account for the highest proportion. It accounts for 40.85% of the total number of verb class errors which needs us more attention. On the one hand, the reason may be that the students do not realize that these words are the third person. Another reason may be that students know these words but due to the influence of interlingual negative transfer, students write in the way of Chinese. In Chinese, verbs such as "Shi", "like" and "feel" do not change in form due to the change of subject. According to Taylor (1975), in the early stage of second language acquisition, interlingual transfer is the main source of second language learners' errors. Therefore, teachers should let students know which are the first person, the second person, the third person singular and the third person plural. In addition, teachers should compare the differences between Chinese and English when teaching the concept of the third person singular.

Teachers should make contrast between English and Chinese expressions and let students know the differences between the two languages. Lv (2005) stated,

the most useful help for Chinese students is to let them understand the differences

between English and Chinese. In every specific problem such as word form, word

meaning, grammatical category, and sentence structure. they should try their best to

compare Chinese with English, so that they can get a deeper understanding through this

comparison. (p. 1)

For example, a teacher could show students these two sentences: "I like swimming" and "He

likes swimming". Then, let students find the differences. At this time, students can find that the

forms of "like" in English change with the subject. The teachers can then teach what kind of

subject is the third person and what form verbs should use when the subject is in the third person.

Teachers also need to design various grammar exercises. Because some grammar points

are complex and diverse, it's easy for students to make mistakes. Teachers can set up oral

contrast exercises and written training exercises to make gaining knowledge interesting, which is

especially important for primary school students. Teachers can make full use of school resources,

network resources and student resources to design interesting situations, so that students can

imperceptibly master grammar knowledge in a meaningful environment. It is also mentioned in

the new curriculum standard that "one of the characteristics of English teaching is to enable

students to learn real, vivid and practical English through different channels and forms and

directly experience and use the language" (Li, 2005, p. 1).

3.2 Strategies for Improving Practical Application Ability

The overall goal of English curriculum in the compulsory education stage in China is to

cultivate students' preliminary comprehensive language ability, promote students' mental

development and improve students' cultural competence through English learning. The basic

function of language is communication. It is an important task to improve students'

communicative competence and change "dumb" English in teaching (Yang, 2017).

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In the classroom, the teacher should use more oral English, and the students will naturally understand the basic instructions after listening to them. In addition to the teacher's oral expression, text listening, listening materials of teaching materials, video discs and so on can act as very good listening resources. Students need to be encouraged to listen more and imitate more. Ask the students to read the text or English materials aloud and sing the ballads in the textbook. To increase students' interest, educators can also collect some English songs and movies suitable for students. Teachers should make use of situational communicative teaching methods to teach, create situations and provide students with an opportunity to speak English. Game teaching is also a good teaching method. Teachers can use many kinds of games, such as playing "you do I guess", learning English songs, reciting poems, telling stories, and performing plays to stimulate students' interest in learning. What's more, we should always connect English teaching content with students' real life, so that students can find the existence of English everywhere in life, and help students expand the application of English, which is of great benefit to improving students' English application ability. However, the limited time in class is not enough for communication practice. English corner can be utilized regularly for students to choose their favorite roles or situations, speak English as much as possible with the help of teachers, and communicate in the language they have learned (Liu, 2014).

Group cooperative learning is a popular way for many primary school teachers. Applying it to teaching can better highlight the dominant position of students in the classroom, promote students' autonomous learning and improve the application efficiency.

Timely summary can consolidate the practical effect of students, the application of primary school English training is not a temporary, but a complete and coherent process. In this

process, teachers need to find problems, summarize them in time, find ways to improve, so as to achieve the effect of teaching progress (Ji, 2014).

To summarize, teachers of primary school English should design a teaching style that pupils are willing to accept according to their physiological and psychological characteristics, and train them to develop the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. What's more, English learning should be applied in the end. Only by paying attention to application in teaching process and grasping each link to implement application, teachers can deepen students' application consciousness and realize the application of primary school English under the guidance of teachers.

3.3 Strategies for Including Cultural Competence in English Teaching

When learners encounter difficulties in exchanging ideas due to the lack of necessary target language resources, they will resort to language priority to make up for the deficiency (Cohen, 2000). When students do not understand the target language, they will produce Chinglish. Acquiring basic language knowledge is the first step in learning English.

From the perspective of students, they can contact and experience culture by listening to English radio, watching original English movies, and reading English materials. If students have enough financial stability, they can go abroad to study and experience cultural differences. Both at home and abroad, students should be exposed to the target language as much as possible. Only in this way can they have a good understanding of cultural differences. To seize and create opportunities to communicate with foreign friends will inevitably lead to some misunderstandings due to cultural differences and different ways of thinking. This is an opportunity to correct Chinglish so that they can have a good understanding of cultural differences in communication and make great progress in English.

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From the perspective of teachers, they should teach students basic language knowledge, such as words, grammar, phrases, sentences, and discourse. As far as words are concerned, teachers should teach students their literal meaning, figurative meaning, collocation, and usage in context. Teaching a language is not only about acquiring knowledge, but also teaching necessary skills (e.g. speaking, listening, reading, and writing) and developing cultural competence.

From the perspective of the teaching materials, it is important to establish a classroom that promotes cultural competence (Zhao, 2014). English teaching is a field integrating the creation and dissemination of Chinese and foreign cultures. Therefore, foreign language teaching is not equal to teaching phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar knowledge. It should also impart cultural knowledge about mother tongue and English to meet children's thirst for knowledge. Teachers should be conscientious people everywhere. At the same time of imparting knowledge, they should pay attention to digging out the interest of teaching materials, using game method, performance method, competition method, creating scenes, etc. to stimulate students' interest in learning. So that the original dry textbooks can be activated and sublimated, so that the English classroom becomes a stage for students to publicize their personality and improve their personality.

Chapter III Conclusions and Recommendations

The analysis of the causes of Chinglish at primary school level in chapter II can lead to the following conclusions and countermeasures. Firstly, misuse of grammar can cause Chinglish, which requires that teachers use variety ways to practice specific grammar points and let them fully grasp the different usages of grammar in different situations and distinguish easily confused grammar points. Secondly, lack of practical application ability also causes Chinglish. Teachers need to create and simulate real communication scene to help students practice their communicative competence, let them apply what they learn to real life. Students also need to grasp more chances to practice their English in the real life. Thirdly, lack of cultural competence in English teaching and learning. Teachers should attach importance to the teaching of cultural knowledge behind the language. This requires teachers not only to teach students language knowledge, but also to make them understand cultural differences. Only in this way can students reduce the occurrence of Chinglish problems.

There may be other causes which can cause Chinglish, so teachers need to put forward different strategies for different situations. For the primary school students, it is very important to cultivate their interest when teaching, because educational psychology shows that when teaching can arouse students' interest, students will be able to concentrate their attention in learning, better perceive, remember, think and imagine, so as to obtain more solid knowledge and skills. Primary school English teachers should make the teaching content vivid, interesting, and attractive. They can also utilize strategies for active learning in the classroom and stimulate students' curiosity about English learning through games, songs, pictures, and other interesting activities. In order to cultivate students' interest in English learning, the most important thing is to organize English classroom teaching by diversifying teaching methods.

Zhao (2014) states that it has been proved that in the English classroom with a focus on cultural competence, students are more likely to maintain their interest in English, so that they don't feel the pressure of language learning and can develop the language ability of listening, speaking and reading in a relaxed atmosphere. English classroom with a focus on cultural competence is the necessity of English teaching and the development of students' thinking ability. In the process of enriching their life experience, a class without attention to cultural competence is a word and sentence class which is mechanically adapted from the life situation of English itself. Therefore, in the actual operation of our teaching process, efforts need to be made to study and actively explore, find every bit of culturally relevant knowledge in the teaching materials, and carefully prepare lessons.

Besides, English teachers can also sing English songs, tell jokes, create situations, practice dialogues, organize competitions to teach English. It can not only eliminate learning fatigue, but also experience learning fun. It can also improve students' learning efficiency. Only in this way can students learn efficiently.

Last but not the least, do not ignore the role of encouragement, timely and appropriate feedback and encouragement can help students build self-confidence and enhance their sense of achievement. All in all, the proper use of the right strategies for students' situation can help teaching achieve twice the result with half the effort, lay a good foundation for students' English learning, and reduce Chinglish problems.

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