

# **Attach Importance to the Role of Interlanguage in Foreign Language Learning**

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**Abstract:** With the development of the global economy, it has become a trend to learn foreign language. A good mastery of foreign language can not only help to increase job opportunities, but also gain advantages during communication. The interlanguage as a bridge between the native language and the target language for foreign language learners is an inevitable path that every foreign language learner needs to take in language practice. Neither completely based on the mother tongue, interlanguage with the characteristics of change, system, imperfection and uniqueness also differs from the target language. Attaching importance to the role of interlanguage in daily foreign language learning is of great practical guiding significance.

Foreign languages as a tool of international communication have exerted tremendous impact on people's lives. Unlike obtaining a certain technique, learning a foreign language well requires people to learn more, practice more and repeat. As a second language, a foreign language is influenced by the user's native tongue. Due to the deep-rooted grammatical structures, it is difficult to master a foreign language proficiently and use it flexibly.

## **1. The Importance of Learning a Foreign Language**

### **1.1 Foreign Language is a Practical Language Tool**

With the development of the global world economy, under the trend of studying or traveling abroad, foreign languages can be people's thinking tool, and a tool for people's communication, as well as an important means for people to know foreign cultures and the world [1-2].

### **1.2 Foreign Languages can be the Stepping Stone to Success in Job Interviews**

In face of the increasingly fierce job-hunting competition, there are more and more outstanding students. At present, under the cooperation between enterprises and developed countries, employers inevitably investigate candidates' language communication skills [3-4]. A mastery of fluent foreign language speaking would undoubtedly make it easier to succeed in job hunting. Therefore, foreign language is a stepping stone to success in job interviews.

### **1.3 Foreign Language Learning has Become a Trend**

In China, English as the most widely used language in the world has been included as one of three main subjects with Chinese and mathematics from the third grade of elementary school to the middle and high school [5]. Students with poor foreign language scores can have serious imbalance in subjects, thus affecting their high school entrance examination results. Therefore, the importance of learning foreign languages well is very obvious [6].

### **1.4 Foreign Language is Essential for Career Promotion and Salary Increment**

With enterprises closely linked with international standards, international cooperation requires international languages as the tool of communication. Bilingual employees are needed for international conferences, business trips and foreign markets. In comparison, people with high second language level have more chances to get promoted in the workplace than ordinary people.

### **1.5 Foreign Languages are the Master Key to Global**

The international exchanges between developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom and China is widespread, covering trade import and export, technical equipment exchanges, and logistics circulation, which has played a major role in China's international trade exchanges. As the most widely used language in the world, English has become one of the dominating global languages with critical effect on language communication in many regions and professional environments[7-8].

Due to the important role of foreign languages in our lives, we must study hard. But it requires to be mastered through a process. Rather than being anxious for success, we must learn step by step, consolidate and apply flexibly.

## **2. Common Problems in Foreign Language Learning**

### **2.1 Correct Concepts in Foreign Language Learning have Not Been Established**

With the increasingly dominate status of China as a major power in the international community, some people in today's society still hold the view that learning their native tongue is enough. They even think it is xenocentric to speaking a foreign language or a kind of cultural insecurity. This wrong concept overlooks the practical functions of foreign languages, leading to incorrect values in foreign language learning and preventing people's self-improvement through learning a second language.

### **2.2 Lack of Necessary Foreign Language Learning Environment**

Most people live in the language environment where people speak their mother tongue, which means people lack the necessary context and environmental conditions to learn a second language. People with poor comprehension cannot achieve mastery through a comprehensive study of foreign language only by rote memorization.

### **2.3 Improper Learning Approaches will make Learners Lose Interest in Learning**

Currently foreign language teaching is conducted by instillation, that is, mainly rely on teacher's teaching. The teacher often explains the simplified formula from beginning to end and then students comprehend during the process of lecturing and then memorize, which is not good for learners to timely adjust their learning plans according to their knowledge mastery situation. In this case, learners feel hard and time-consuming in the learning process, get half the result with twice the effort, thus losing learning interest.

### **2.4 Poor Comprehension and Confusion in Grammatical Structure**

Learners knowing little about the corpus of the target language cannot deeply learn and comprehend the knowledge explained in the classroom. They are not able to review and correct in time after class, resulting in learners' unclear understanding of the abstract and structure of the second language and leading to a failure of mastery. At the same time, influenced by the mother language, learners often define the output mode of the foreign language by using the expression of their native language, leading to the confusion in knowledge and grammatical structure.

Take English as an example. As one of the most widely used languages, when learning English in four aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it is necessary to imitate the communicative scenario, encourage learners to speak boldly and communicate actively. Furthermore, to learn a foreign language well, it is necessary to build a bridge between our native language and the foreign language, which is known as "interlanguage."

## **3. Development of Interlanguage**

The concept of interlanguage proposed by the well-known linguist Selin simply refer to is interlanguage, which refers to a language system formed o through specific learning methods and strategies in the process of learning, different from the native language and foreign languages, such as Chinglish, Pidgin English, etc. With the consolidation and improvement of learners' foreign

language proficiency, the interlanguage gradually converges to the target language.

It can be found that learners would make a diverged grammar mistakes when they start to learn a foreign languages. Even scholars try to help them avoid errors, it turns out the occurrence of such errors is universal and popular, and there are rules to follow. In other words, learners make similar mistakes when learning and applying the target language, which is a language system created when learners learn the target language different from the native language and the target language, also known as interlanguage system. However, interlanguage is regular and systematic to a certain degree in terms of language transfer and language standardization. Experiments indicate that interlanguage is an objective existence.

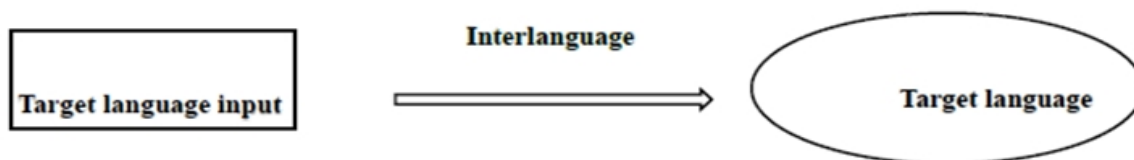


Figure 1. Development of Interlanguage

### 3.1 System Features of Interlanguage

**3.1.1 Interlanguage is a Special Language System between the First Language and the Target Language, which is Established Exclusively by Individuals Due to Different Cultural Background and Way of Thinking.**

**3.1.2 Interlanguage is Never Fixed and it is a Dynamic Language**

Interlanguage is a language system that evolves vertically in the process of learners' mastery of the target language after acquiring part of the target language. Because in the process of transition, learners will keep innovating, interlanguage is dynamic.

**3.1.3 Biased Errors are Intractable and Repetitive**

Interlanguage can be correct or wrong. We call regular errors as biased errors. For example, we would make inaccurate pronunciation when learning spoken English, which are often similar. After repeated trial and error and correction, we will pronounce correctly.

### 3.2 Four Stages of Interlanguage Evolution:

(1) The first stage: irregular error stage. The learner, new to a second language, originally aware that it is a special and meaningful course, is not able to acquire its content and meaning. At this stage, most of the learner's target language output is wrong. However, it is found by research that their mistakes are not all the same. In addition, learners cannot explain or understand the errors at this stage, so that they cannot make corrections of the vocabulary, short sentences, semantic structure and so on.

(2) The second stage: the stage of burst. At this stage, the learner's foreign language output gradually becomes the same with before. With a general mastery of foreign language rules, the learner starts to distinguish the target language system, and make overgeneralization of the foreign language rules. For example, s should be added after multiple nouns. Despite that these internalized rules are not always correct based on the standard target language, learners will learn to summarize through learning and comprehend the language. Perhaps they have no idea about their own mistakes, or even they know the errors, they don't know how to correct because they have not fully established their target language system. However, it is much stable than the first stage.

(3) The third stage: the summary and conclusion of the target language. At this stage, learner's real target language system has been formally established, which is characterized by learners' communication in the target language, with the same grammatical structure as the target language. Despite the incomplete internalized purpose and some rules, it is coherent and closer to the native language. The most obvious feature at this stage is that learners can realize their grammatical errors and try to make corrections.

(4) The fourth stage: the standardized stage. Learners' study has gradually become stable and they would consciously avoid the use of incorrect grammar when applying the language, and they have gained a mastery of the second language system proficiently. At this stage, they can speak the language fluently, have no problem in expressing the meaning, with a high level of target language usage. They can use the language freely when communicating with others, and they change sentence patterns or express with simple sentences and body movements.

#### **4. Analysis of Errors in Interlanguage**

##### **4.1 Language Transfer**

It refers to the process that learners directly apply the teaching methods and grammatical structure of the native language to the target language despite the mismatch between both.

##### **4.2 Over-generalization of the Rules of Target Language**

Learners regard the grammatical rules that they have acquired and summarized as general rules, and they would mistakenly think that they have gained a mastery of all rules of target language, but that is not the case. For example, as told by the teacher, ed should be added to the past tense of verbs, so they would add ed to all English words in past tense, which is obviously wrong.

##### **4.3 Transfer Caused by Training**

This is obviously reflected in spoken language, some learners received nonstandard pronunciation education or training at the voice input stage, resulting in the bias of pronunciation in the learners' subsequent oral output. Some teachers even have pet phrases in the class. As students are teacher-oriented, they also speak with pet phrases, which is a transfer caused by training.

##### **4.4 Learners' Learning Strategy and Communication Strategy**

Learning strategy refers to the general method that learners use in target language study, with problem solving as the entry point, thereby speaking a foreign language proficiently through learning, understanding, summarizing, and application. It can be generalized as purposeful activities and conscious activities. Communicative strategy is often adopted by people through technical language to express his views or ideas when meeting difficulties in communication, which is for the purpose of overcoming communication barriers.

#### **5. The Relationship between Interlanguage and Foreign Language Learning**

##### **5.1 The Effect of Interlanguage in Foreign Language Learning**

Interlanguage, as a transitional bond for learners from their mother language to the target language, plays a positive role in foreign language learning. We must have a correct understanding of the relationship between both. We should not be anxious to deny the role of interlanguage in case of errors. According to trial-and-error learning famous theory proposed by famous psychologist Thorndike, learning is the link between context and response. We need to transit to the target language step by step through stimulation, trial and error.

##### **5.2 How to make Full use of Interlanguage's Effect to Improve the Efficiency of Foreign Language Learning**

(1) Persist in effective language input

Language professors must guarantee their own language and grammar to be accurate, ensure to convey accurate information to students while choosing a language suitable for students' acceptability, and instruct in accordance with their aptitude.

(2) Intensify the positive transfer effect of native language

As sentence pattern and grammatical structure of the native language will positively influence the second language learning, we can compare the sentence pattern characteristics of the native

language with the target language to strengthen the impression and the positive effect of the native language. In the meantime, it is necessary to pay attention to enrich the social and cultural background of both languages, create better conditions for students to use the foreign language, and foster their foreign language thinking pattern and expression capacity.

(3) Convert students' mistakes into teaching resources

When integrating new knowledge into in generative classroom teaching, students make mistakes easily. The teacher should control the correctness rather than asking students to corrects immediately, or turning a blind eye. They should focus on the skills of error correction and emphasize the subject of correction.

(4) Enhance teachers' professional quality

It is of great importance to improve a teacher's professional standard. Students are teachers-oriented and trust their teachers. Similarly, if teacher makes mistakes in teaching, students would input as correct corpus. Therefore, it is urgent to enhance teachers' professional quality.

## 6. Conclusion

To sum up, interlanguage is a foreign language learner's dynamic system for the rules of the target language during learning, which is conducive to learner's better mastery of the target language, as well as an important role in the process of foreign language learning. So, it should be fully used to help learners correctly adopt error analysis method, introduce the differences between the native language and the target language, thereby maximizing the effect of foreign language teaching activities.

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