



French SLA State in Chinese University: A Study Case of CTBU

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Abstract: Considered as one of the United Nations official language, English is widely spoke and learned as a Second Language among the world, after English comes French, German and Spanish. In China, after the introduction of English, other language like French, German, Russian and Japanese also took place in recent years, and French have been one of the most popular second language taught and learned as a subject but also field after English. With that state take into consideration, this article will briefly discuss about French acquisition as a Second language through Chinese undergraduate student in Chongqing Technology and Business University or CTBU.

Keywords: language acquisition, Chinese university, French

1. Introduction

Human is using language to communicate or intercommunicate, therefore there is what we call first language (L1) and second language (L2). First language, referring to mother tongue or native language, is spoken by native speakers. Whereas second language, language(s) one's try to acquire in addition to their mother tongue language (Marina Dodigovic, 2005), is spoken by non-native speakers. Language could be acquire ever in a non-native speaking country or in a native speaking country. This is the case for French in China and lead us to the aim of this article, which is discussing about its acquisition, taking the case of Undergraduate student majoring in French in Chongqing Technology and Business University.

“Language acquisition means somehow absorbing a target language without explicitly thinking about it”[1]. This is to say that once could instantly learn a language but will acquire while learning it, it is a process to another. Learning a language does not mean acquiring a language, learning is a passive action while acquiring is an active one. So to acquire a language one's might use different approach according to learners worldwide and depending on the type of learner they belong to, in this article we will make those points into consideration.

Second language learners will come to the use of «interlanguage», will seek and apply acquired knowledges from L1 or learned languages in order to understand and input relating knowledges. However, this concept is more useful for beginner but seems to be not as relevant when it comes to avoid linguistic errors and master all target language skills especially when it comes to specific terminology. It is to say that at a certain level learners tend to pay more attention on ‘meaning’ rather than ‘form’ (Bialystok, 1993:51), which confirm the fact that language is influenced by culture. Learners while practicing L2 will unconsciously make mistakes, because they are relying to L1 rules, their mother tongue language, and will make an approximate conclusion of what is or not appropriate according to where they were raised (Gilda.A.Schauer, 2009).

2. Study case

University entrance differ in each country depending on its education system. In China, it will be possible while passing the Chinese “National entrance examination” or “Gaokao”, which also concluded Secondary Education.

After passing entrance examination, student will be given a list to be chosen depending to their respective score.

2.1 University

This article took Chongqing Technology and Business University or CTBU as an a research object.

Founded in 1952 and approved by The Ministry of Education in 2002, CTBU is located in Chongqing and covered 18 Schools. In this article we are specifically going to talk about The School of Foreign Languages. The School offer 3 undergraduate programs (English, Business English and French) and a MTI (Master of Interpreting and Translation) program. French as a Foreign Language and as a Field was established in 2003 and CTBU was one of the first University located in Chongqing who set it up. This article will refer to French taught as a field.

2.2 Education

In China, Bachelor degree will be awarded with the completion of 4 years program and respective courses (Elementary, intermediate and advanced French; Interpretation and translation courses; Composition and audio-visual courses; Literature;

Business, Tourism and Law courses, etc.) and undergraduate studying foreign languages and literatures are mostly beginner learners, exception for those who choose french or other language as second language during their “gaokao”.

The two first year will be considered as an elementary stage and a preparatory year for “TFS” language proficiency test (TFS) (National proficiency test for student majoring in french) for student majoring in french literature, in which students have to manage phonetic, grammar and vocabulary while acquiring different language skills like listening, speaking and reading. In their junior and senior year, students will have more specific courses like translation and interpretation, french literature, etc.

3. Discussion

3.1 Courses taught in secondary school

According to the “Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China”, “when reached the age of six, children need to receive compulsory education at school”. Compulsory Education is set in a 12-year of schooling: 6-year in primary school, 3-year in secondary school and 3-year in senior secondary school for academic track.

There are nine courses in the Compulsory Curriculum for the first 6-year of schooling including political education, social studies, science, Chinese language, mathematics, foreign language, physical education, arts (fine arts or music) and labor skills. 13 courses in secondary school which includes the nine courses mentioned above, two choices between humanities courses (history and political science or history and geography) and one for science courses (biology, chemistry or physics).

We would like to outline that the choice of the Foreign language will vary depending on regions and schools in junior secondary, but will be English in the main case.

There are two kinds of track education in high school or senior secondary school, academic and vocational track. This article is considering to talk about academic track.

High school’s curriculum is based on a credit system and according to the new curriculum introduced in 2004[2] by Chinese "Ministry of Education" student will have compulsory and elective courses, which is set according to student interest and needs during national examination entrance. So student will have in common 3 subjects (Chinese, Mathematics and Foreign language) to take and other subjects depending on student’s option. For Humanities, it will be biology, physics and chemistry; while for Science, political science, history and geography.

Foreign language proposed include: English, Russian, German, French and Spanish. Recently schools are encouraged to set up two kinds of languages, English and one of the language proposed above.

3.2 Second language acquisition approach

As we mentioned above students are all at a novice level but they also already have a certain knowledge of at least a foreign language, which will be English in overall circumstances.

English is classified as a Germanic language but is familiar with a Romance language, since 50% of its word take their origin from Latin[3]. This is why it is more easy for students who already acquire Germanic language to learn language originate from a Romance language like French for example.

Moreover while acquiring new language, one’s tend to make comparison and will mostly make some confusion with already mastered language[4], which is a good sign for our learners and a preliminary step of the language acquisition. Language comparison will cause interlanguage, a language transition between already learned and new learned language, a sign that learner is making improvement but also means that passive learners, since they know the language but are not able to do any reproduce it correctly in writing or speaking circumstances. Toward interlanguage, LA will gradually become active. Learner will behave like a baby who naturally acquire mother tongue language through parents and his environment.

3.3 Acquisition state

This part will talk about the study case of french SLA state for student who choose french as a field at CTBU. As mentioned in China, student have to achieve their bachelor in four years, so training programs is also planned as so.

This study will especially focus on the language curriculum for freshman and sophomore year, as basic courses are planned between those two years (Table 1), in which language acquisition is more obvious.[5]

Table 1. CTBU language curriculum course

year	Course type	Course name
First year	Basic course	- Basic French - Basic French Listening - Basic French Speaking - Basic French Reading
Second year	Professional core course	- Intermediate French - Intermediate French Listening - Intermediate French Speaking - Intermediate French Reading - Basic French writing
Third year	Professional core course	- Advanced French - French Translation - French Interpreting - French Audio-visual and Speaking course - Advanced French Writing - Business French
Fourth year		No language courses

3.3.1 Freshman year acquisition state

As we can see in the table below, freshman year language course are based on basic language courses: Basic French, Basic French Listening, Basic French Speaking, Basic French Reading; as most of student are all novice level.

At this stage, student mostly tend to use English and will make some comparison between English and French, as English is the language that they already acquired before French and with the language that is closer to French. The comparison between the two languages will be a transition step for French acquisition, as student will improve their French toward comparison.[6]

This kind of situation is the most obvious on speaking and reading courses.

During speaking classes, student will at the first place use English words to communicate.

Example:

Situation 1: while greeting with teacher, student will say “Hello” rather than “Bonjour”

Situation 2: while speaking, student will unconsciously use an English conjunction, like “and” rather than French conjunction “et”.

Situation 3: during speaking class practice, for self-introduction, student unconsciously go for “ my name is...”, rather than “mon nom est...”

Moreover student will have some difficulties to pronounce some words because of the influence of English language phonology.[7]

Example: *bonjour* [bɔ̃ʒur], student will phonetically pronounce as banzur

3.3.2 Sophomore year acquisition state

Language acquisition will be based on intermediate language courses, except for writing course: Intermediate French, Intermediate French Listening, Intermediate French Speaking, Intermediate French Reading, Basic French writing.

While during their freshmen year, student will be faced on interlanguage situation between English and French. In their sophomore year, student will directly make a comparison between Chinese and French, which is evident in speaking and writing tasks.[8]

As Chinese is student native language, they will on the first place think in Chinese, then will translate in French and most of the time will make some unconscious comparison. Somehow, there is common point between the structure of sentences of the two languages.

Chinese sentence: 我叫玛丽啊。 wǒ jiào mǎ lì a.

S V O

French sentence: Je m'appelle Marie.

S V O

Despite of the common point between the two language, there still differences in grammar knowledge. One of the most obvious point will be in verb conjugation as in Chinese there is not past tense.

4. Conclusion

Language is man's important communication tool, and each country have their one language. In China, people use

Chinese to communicate with each other; while in France or other country, people will use French. So, will local people use their native language to communicate with foreign people? Of course not, people will use English, as it is the first choice language in foreign most country, which makes English one of the most learned language in the world. After English comes French, and this research is about its acquisition in Chinese University for student who choose it as a field. This study took Chongqing Technology and Business University or CTBU as an a research object, and will focus its analyse on bachelor degree student during their freshman and sophomore year, as language acquisition is more obvious between those period. During the acquisition process, as English is the closest language to French, in their freshman year, student will make a comparison between this two languages, which will cause problems with pronunciation tasks. But after a year of learning, student will directly make a comparison between Chinese and French, which will cause big problems in grammar tasks. Research shows that while acquiring new language, student will first go for comparison between language they already acquire and new language they are acquiring, which is the case of Chinese, English and French in this study.

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