Theory of Analogy Strategy Application and Over-generalization

（类推策略应用理论及过度类推）

I. Analogy Strategy Application

According to the theory of second language acquisition, analogy is undoubtedly a commonly utilized skill and strategy for word recognition. Some skills that speakers use to identify printed words are widely acknowledged.

Studies show that mature speakers identify words with remarkable speed and accuracy. Indeed, fluent word identification appears to be a prerequisite for comprehending text. If a speaker must slowly analyze many of the words in a text, memory and attention needed for comprehension are drained by word analysis.

But beginners of foreign language only recognize very few words instantly. Through repeated exposure to the same words, instant recognition vocabulary grows. It is particularly important that developing speakers learn to recognize those words that occur very frequently in print. A mere 100 words make up a full 50 percent of the words read, even by adults. *The, and, to, you, he, it,* and *said* are examples of these high-frequently-used words. Developing speakers also need to learn to recognize high-frequency words instantly because many of them are not phonically regular. Based on phonics generalizations, *to* should rhyme with *go*, *said* should rhyme with *paid*, and so on.

It has been proved to true that teachers' pointing out the words, by a variety of game-like activities, and by writing those words, can develop children’s ability to recognize words. However, it appears that instant recognition of words, especially high-frequency words, develops best when students read large amounts of text, particularly text that is relatively easy for the speaker, according to Cunningham.

There are good evidences for conclusion that students can use meaning or context clues to help identify words and that instruction can help improve their use of such clues, according to Johnson & Baumann.

Three different types of context clues are frequently described as follows:

1. Semantic or Meaning Clues.

There are general semantic clues. For example, when reading a story about dogs, good speakers develop the expectation that it will contain words associated with cats, such as tail, and bite. Sentence context clues are more specific. In the sentence "At home my dog likes to ___," given the sentence context and what most of us know about cats, words like play, jump, and scratch seem reasonable.

2. Syntactic or Word Order Clues.

In the previous example, the order of the words in the sentence indicates that the missing word must be a verb. Other parts of speech, such as adjectives *(big, yellow)* or nouns *(pen, bottle),* make no sense or don't result in what sounds like a real sentence.

3. Picture Clues.

Illustrations can often help with the identification of a word. In the example, if a picture of a dog leaping through the air accompanies the text, word “jump” seems to be a very good possibility.

Context clues are often helpful, but they often are not specific enough to predict the exact

word. Often several choices are possible, as in the example given. However, when context clues are combined with other clues such as phonics and word-part clues (for example, the sounds associated with *j* and *mp*), accurate word identification is usually possible.

Context clues allow speakers to check their identification of words again and again.

For example, a speaker encountering the word *scratch* for the first time should look carefully at the letters of the word, apply what he or she knows about phonics and parts of the word, and then check to be sure that an attempted pronunciation matches the letter clues. In addition, the speaker should always crosscheck in order to be sure that the word makes sense in terms of syntactic and semantic cues.

Another clue for word recognition is word structure. There are many groups of letters that occur frequently in words. These are generally perceived by more mature speakers as clusters of letters. Among these letter groups are prefixes (*un-, re-, in-*), suffixes (*-ful, -ness, -est*), and inflectional endings (*-ed, -ing, -es*). Common prefixes, suffixes, and inflectional endings should be pointed out to students. Associate sounds with a cluster of letters leads to more rapid and efficient word identification.

And analogy is another clue for recognition of words. As speakers build an increasing store of words that they can recognize with little effort, they use the words they know to help them recognize words that are unfamiliar.

For example, a child who has seen the word *will* many times and who knows the sound associated with the consonant *f* will probably have little difficulty recognizing the word *fill*. Building phonemic awareness for onsets and rimes builds a foundation for being able to identify simple words and syllables by analogy. Many teachers encourage developing speakers to use analogy strategies by engaging students in word family (*fan, can, ban*) and initial consonant substitution ("What word would I have if I changed the letter *f* in *fan* to letter *c or b*?") activities.

II. Over-generalization

In the progress of second language's teaching and second language acquisition, the proposing of errors analysis theory has greatly promoted the development of language teaching. Over-generalization is one of the causes of errors in foreign language teaching, and in the development of Chinese teaching, researchers have paid more attention to the influence of over-generalization in language teaching.

Over-generalization, or the regularizing of rules, as termed in language two, is usually considered the most common cause of problem in language learning. Richards once identifies this phenomenon as errors caused by extensions of the target language rules to inappropriate contexts.

Examples of such false application of rules can be seen in the improper forming of words learners like ¨hes¨ or ¨shes¨ for the plural of ¨he¨ and ¨she¨. In an attempt to apply pluralization and past-tense marking rules in a second language, students may overgeneralize and erroneously inject exceptions into the rule system.

This is also a normal occurrence in first-language acquisition as the learner tends to create a hypothesis regarding the rule system based on generalizations. These overgeneralizations are usually perceived as especially deviant and inappropriate in the target language and, therefore, are particularly prone to immediate correction.

On the contrary, however, these errors are valuable clues that show the learning strategies employed by the student. Over-generalizations demonstrate a positive progression in the learner

toward the target language and, therefore, should be considered welcome products in the acquisition process.

According to Stenson, ¨induced error¨ is classified as another type of intralinguistic error. This type of error is represented by the errors derived from presentation of target language items. Syntactic error is anticipated in language and the language learning process. Subtle differences of word order can vary greatly in different language systems. For example, the ¨subject-verb-object¨ pattern in English compared to the flexible order of Spanish can create confusion in production and comprehension. A familiar problem facing native speakers of English learning Spanish is the mistaking of subject for object.

Clearly, direct translation from the mother tongue is the most common cause of such error, but this can not explain all syntactic disordering. In the process of learning new rules of syntax, learners will test hypotheses by experimenting with different word orders. In many cases, overgeneralizations are made in the target language.

Another aspect accounts for intralanguage error is that of overproduction. Schachter and Rutherford isolate this group of errors as target-language features produced correctly but used too frequently[1]. This category is related to the appropriateness of an utterance rather than its grammaticality according to L2 rules. It is common for students learning Spanish, for example, to repeat the subject of the sentence several times while telling a story. The lack of fluency of a learner in a ¨pronoun-drop¨ language such as Spanish can frequently be recognized by the overproduction of subject pronouns that results in a simplified and sometimes ¨child-like¨ dialect. Native speakers and more advanced learners will frequently omit the pronoun due to its redundancy.

Corder once also distinguishes between overt and covert errors. He finds out that those utterances that are overtly erroneous are superficially incorrect, while covertly erroneous formations appear acceptable, but are problematic in some other way, or are correct by chance. [2]

This distinction is important to EA (error analysis) in the sense that a covertly erroneous error may slip by unnoticed without a careful consideration of context surrounding the utterance. Errors of overproduction are covert errors that tend to verify the ¨foreignness¨ of a learner´s IL. The tendency for second language learners to repeat lexicon is likely the result of his impoverished IL. This factor entices the learner to be as creative as possible with a limited body of knowledge. The product of this creativity is the implementation of learner strategies.

III. Conclusion

The use of analogy strategies of communication by second language learners was introduced by Selinker in 1972. A certain type of error was thought to be derived from the processes undertaken by all learners in the development of an IL.

And Corder states that ¨these errors were regarded as a by-product of the attempt of the learner to express his meaning in spontaneous speech (and writing) with an inadequate grasp of the target language system¨.[3] These strategies differ from ¨learner strategies¨ in that communication is associated with output while learning refers to input. In a study of errors, the

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[1]Schachter, Jacqueline. 1974. An Error in Error Analysis. *Language Learning.* 24: 205-214.

[2]See Corder, S. P. (1981). *Error analysis and inter-language.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[3] Corder, S. Pit. 1971. Idiosyncratic Dialects and Error Analysis. *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 9: 147 – 159.

former is applicable on both linguistic and psycholinguistic levels. Communication strategies can be classified into one or more of three categories: avoidance, reduction or simplification, and generalization.

Avoidance behavior is among the most difficult to recognize and document. As a strategy, avoidance techniques imply that a choice is made by the learner not to use a particular element of the target language system. Learners sometimes choose to use those target language structures because with those targe language structures they feel comfortable.

Two distinct forms of avoidance have been identified as ¨topic avoidance¨ and ¨message abandonment.¨ Topic avoidance refers to the conscious decision of a learner not to communicate a certain idea based on its perceived linguistic difficulty, while message abandonment suggests that a learner attempts to communicate, but because of a challenge he encounters the learner gives up and fails to complete the message. Obvious avoidance results from a lack of vocabulary, while true avoidance is that which may be used by advanced learners, teachers, and editors purposefully so as to reduce the content of their intended message. Avoidance and simplification have a tendency to overlap in the description of many learner errors.

Simplification is a learning strategy used by language learners facing difficulties in expressing. Because the relevant language system of a learner is incomplete, communication is reduced to the body of knowledge possessed. Simplification is related to the speeches that are produced but somehow reduced, while avoidance refers to the language patterns intentionally not used by the learner,. Avoidance behavior and simplification occasionally go simultaneously. When a learner neglects a word or message deliberately, rather than abandon the thought, he may simplify his expression with a related word, concept or syntactic structure.

According to Meisel, simplification can be divided into two categories. ¨Elaborative¨ simplification attempts in a wrong direction to bring the learner´s IL grammar closer to the target norm by overgeneralizing a form to environments where it is inappropriate. A good example of such behavior is the incorrect use of perceived synonyms. The other, ¨restrictive¨ simplification, is a strategy utilized to get the message across by reducing the grammar so it is easier for the learner to deal with.

And still there are several ways in which a learner can control his production around difficult target language structures. The most common replacement strategies are approximation, synonymity, and circumlocution or paraphrase.

Approximation is the substitution of familiar vocabulary for unknown structures.

Synonymity, As the name implies, is the use of certain semantic structures understood to have the same meaning as others. In the substitution of true synonyms the result is only that of repetition, which, although not native-like, is still considered appropriate. However, many pairs of synonyms share some components of meaning but differ in appropriate usage.

A simplification or avoidance strategy that is common to language learners and native speakers alike is circumlocution and paraphrase. Native speakers make use of such strategies when they find themselves unable to come up with the exact words for which they are searching. Their use by second language learners is similar, but the result will commonly be the production of an utterance with a different meaning than that which was intended. The learner may frequently have no choice but to attempt to come as close as possible to intended meaning through circumlocution.