A Study on the Fossilization of Oral English and English Writing in Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract. As we all know, language fossilization is a common topic in second language acquisition research. There is no doubt that fossilization hinders the learning process and learner effectiveness. Researchers have analyzed the underlying causes of fossilization both internally and externally, and the manifestations of fossilization are multifaceted and multilayered. It has gradually drawn many linguists and researchers who had made a great number of discussions and researches about it. Oral English and writing are essential outputs in acquiring English, and the most specific contexts in which fossilization manifests itself are oral English and writing. Therefore, this paper further explores the causes and manifestations of fossilization and the teaching strategies and tools used to regulate it by analyzing previous theories and fossilization that often occurs in oral and writing.

Keywords: Second language acquisition · Fossilization · Oral English · English writing

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Effectual speaking and writing output predominantly affect learners' English proficiency. Most learners experience a phenomenon of stagnation in their writing and speaking skills during the process of learning English. American linguist Larry Selinker refers to this as language fossilization, and in 1996, Selinker classified fossilization. Selinker classifies it into individual fossilization and group fossilization. Depending on the nature of fossilization, he classifies fossilization into temporary fossilization and permanent fossilization. Selinker also divided it into temporary fossilization and permanent fossilization.

Fossilization is very common in the language learning process of language learners. Most people experience a rapid improvement in their English language proficiency at the beginning of their learning process and then enter a stage where it is challenging to improve, no matter what. They make mistakes in vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and parts of speech that are difficult to correct. Most fossilization in English speaking and writing are temporary fossilization that can be reduced or eliminated by specific methods. Otherwise, they may become permanently fossilized, and improving their English is

difficult. Therefore, a study on the phenomenon of fossilization in English speaking and writing is needed to investigate the current situation of fossilization, understand the causes of fossilization, and propose teaching and learning suggestions to reduce or eliminate fossilization in English learning, which will not only help learners' English learning but also help teachers improve their teaching methods.

1.2 Research Gap

Interlingual fossilization is one of the topical issues in SLA and one of the most popular ones. To some extent, this study is of great theoretical and practical interest. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on empirical language fossilization research and is a support for the causes of language fossilization proposed in the literature review.

The previous studies, most of them were mainly theoretical studies, and fewer papers were analyzed through case studies; and even if case studies were conducted, they would focus on the aspect of writing and the percentage of speaking fossilization in the process of learning English is second only to writing, but nowadays there are far fewer studies on the fossilization of spoken English than writing.

1.3 Research Objective

Based on previous research on the causes of the fossil phenomenon and considering the current state of rigidity in spoken and written English, this thesis uses a combination of theoretical analysis and case studies. The leading causes of fossilization in verbal and written English are analyzed.

So far, the paper has comprehensively studied the theoretical explanation of the fossil phenomenon and its primary task. Based on the theoretical analysis, an attempt is made to investigate some interlinguistic fossilization tendencies of English learners and then to give some relevant strategies.

The main objectives of this paper are (1) to analyze the causes of fossilization as well as to analyze the current situation of language learning; (2) to analyze the causes of fossilization through examples further; and (3) to suggest some strategies and recommendations that can be used to avoid and prevent fossilization.

2 Concept of Fossilization in Second Language Acquisition and Related Research

2.1 Definition of Fossilization

Fossilization was first formally introduced by linguist Larry Selinker in 1972 in his Inter-language paper. In this paper, Selinker noted that fossilization encompasses incorrect linguistic forms and correct linguistic expressions. Subsequently, Selinker's definition of fossilization evolved into three versions as his research progressed. According to Selinker's research, he pointed out that the fossilization of a second language learner means that some markers, rules, or usages of their native language are stuck in the language system to be learned. He argued that the vast majority of second language learners

do not fully reach the same level of native speakers' language competence in the process of second language acquisition [3].

In 1978, Selinker developed a new understanding of fossilization. He noted that the stagnation in language acquisition experienced by second language learners in learning a second language before reaching the same level as the target language is a phenomenon known as fossilization. Selinker and Lamendella defined in term of: "Fossilization is the permanent cessation of IL learning before the learner has attained TL norms at all levels of linguistic structure and in all discourse domains in spite of the learners' positive ability, opportunity or motivator to learn or acculturate into target society." (Selinker,1978:187) In 1996, Selinker took the definition of fossilization a step further. Selinker noted that fossilization is an inevitable psychological mechanism in the interlanguage that is difficult to change, even as one age or learns more about the language. Selinker pointed out that fossilization is a psychological mechanism in the interlanguage that cannot be eliminated or avoided, and he pointed out it as a linguistic phenomenon that will persist over time.

Later, due to its complexity, Fossilization has so far lacked a unified definition in China and abroad. Weinreich sees fossilization as a permanent transfer. Ellis argues that a fossilized language can be both wrong and correct. He points out that a learner's fossilization arises when a feature of their language system is identical to that of the target language. In this process, correct fossilization occurs if the learner's language has reached a high level. Conversely, incorrect fossilization occurs if the learner's tongue has a low level of unity with the target language. Halo points out that fossilization is mainly due to the difficulty of eliminating specific native language parameter settings from the acquired target language. Among these definitions, Selinker, the originator of fossilization, argues that fossilization refers to a process. In learning the target language, the second language learner's language level gradually stagnates and does not continue to develop [7]. In addition, Selinker points out that no second language learner is as proficient in the target language as they are in their native language. This definition is highly regarded and respected by many linguists in second language acquisition and has a strong influence. Therefore, this paper will use Selinker's definition of fossilization to investigate fossilization.

2.2 Fossilization Categories

In 1996, Selinker classified fossilization in the process of redefining fossilization. Fossilization can be divided into permanent fossilization and temporary fossilization. According to Sinlinker's research, fossilization can be grouped into two categories: group fossilization and individual fossilization.

2.2.1 Permanent and Temporary Fossilization

Temporary fossilization is a predictor or sign of permanent fossilization in second language learners. It is a stage in the language learning process where the second language learner's language level remains stagnant. In this stage, the second language learner's language level appears to stasis. This phenomenon can be changed if the learner is aware

of stagnation and tries to overcome and correct it. Under such conditions, the second language learner's language level will progress and break through.

If second language learners are exposed to authentic corpus or are in the target language environment in the process of learning the target language, their language proficiency will also improve significantly. On the other hand, if the rules or features of the target language that are different from those of the target language emerge in the process of learning the language, no matter how much instruction is given, the temporary fossilization of the learner's language may accumulate and develop over time to form permanent fossilization.

2.2.2 Individual and Group Fossilization

In Selinker's classification of fossilization as learner-based, individual fossilization can be further divided into two subcategories: error reappearance and language competence fossilization. Error reappearance refers to the recurrence of errors that have been corrected many times during the language learning process and that have been fully corrected. In contrast, language competence fossilization refers more specifically to the phonological, syntactic structural, and lexical fossilization of a second language learner's language. The former refers to the emergence of a new language or dialect when the linguistic competence of second language learners becomes a widespread phenomenon throughout society. The emergence of Indian English is a typical example.

2.3 Related Research

From a review of the literature, in recent years, most domestic research on the phenomenon of rigidity has focused on a theoretical study of the causes of rigidity. Based on different theoretical bases and research methods, researchers have also proposed various factors that lead to the phenomenon of rigidity. Some other researchers have conducted empirical studies based on the interpretation of foreign theories and applied some of these theories to study and analyze the specific manifestations of rigidity in different language skills. In general, the research on rigidity in China has developed rapidly in recent years and has yielded pedagogical insights that are useful and valuable for practical teaching.

3 Cause of Fossilization

3.1 Biological Factors

Lenneberg (1967) proposed the Critical Period Hypothesis, which suggests a period in children's development when language is most efficiently acquired (2–13 years old) and a critical period for language learning until 12 or 13. Beyond this period, language development is limited due to the loss of plasticity in lateralizing brain functions. By the time adults begin to learn a second language, learners have already missed the critical period for language acquisition, so they subconsciously apply many of the rules of their native language to the regulations of the target language in second language acquisition, and fossilization is naturally formed [13]. This hypothesis explains the cause of fossilization mainly from the perspective of biological growth.

3.1.1 Language Transfer

Language transfer is an important cause of fossilization. The working definition of transfer is that "transfer is the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired." (Odlin,1989:27). And "The basic concept of 'transfer' in SLA is when you learn an L2, you transfer some or all of the properties of the LI into the L2." (Cook,1996:43).

Selinker thinks of it as the most prominent factor in his five central processes, ranking it at the top of his list. Moreover, similar patterns, rules, and components between the mother tongue and the second language have beneficial and positive effects on second language acquisition, the transfer would be positive, and it helps to promote learners' mastery and use of the foreign language. However, differences between the mother tongue and the second language, such as differences in phonology, vocabulary, syntax, culture, and way of thinking, have negative effects on second language acquisition, transfer would be negative.

3.1.2 Transfer of Training

Transfer of training also plays a vital role in second language acquisition theories. Transfer of training not only leads directly to errors but also reinforces the incorrect forms. Thus, inappropriate training methods may cause non-target language forms. Second language learners may have done so much training on some wrong interlanguage structures that they cannot successfully move on to develop new systems. For example, a language learner who has been trained extensively on structures containing the tense verb "be" will create the habit of using "be" in even unnecessary sentences, or a learner who has been trained too much on the pronoun "he" will develop the habit of using "he" as in "He is a good mother of two children," regardless of the gender of the character.

3.1.3 Strategies of Second Language Learning

According to Selinker's theory, strategies of second language learning refer to the various plans, behaviors, steps, and procedures that learners adopt to effectively acquire, store, retrieve, and use information, such as figuring out the meaning and use of words, grammar rules, and other language items, and is an essential indicator of the learner's understanding of the input language and it's linguistic An important marker of the process of developing the learner's knowledge of the input language and its language. Properly used learning strategies can facilitate the learning of a foreign language. Simplification by omission, for example, is a shared learning strategy used by learners who are new to English and often omit the third-person affix for the singular verb or the -s affix for the plural concept of the noun, resulting in sentences such as "She enjoys the linguistic lecture. Linguistic lecture." or "There are two glasses of water.

3.1.4 Strategies of Second Language Learning Communication

Strategies of second language communication refer to how learners of a second or foreign language express their meanings. Because the learner does not have a complete

command of the target language, they are forced to use verbal or non-verbal communication when they need to express something that is beyond their current knowledge or skills. For example, avoidance and paraphrasing are two strategies of second-language communication that second-language learners commonly use to produce fossilization.

3.1.5 Over-Generalization

In second language learning, learners always make full use of grammar rules and words they learned in the incorrect context. And it is named the over-generalization of the target language. When learning a second language, some learners use some rules as the general rules so that the structures of TL are simplified and some non-target-like structures are formed, such as "standed" and "geted". These structures have no features of the native language but the interlanguage. If these errors can't be corrected at once, it will fossilize the interlanguage.

3.1.6 Feedback on Learners' Use of Second Language

Feedback in linguistics refers to the reaction of the listener or viewer to the learner as he uses the target language. Vigil and Oller claim that fossilization occurs due to the absence of corrective feedback. (1976). They distinguished two dimensions of feedback: affective feedback and cognitive feedback. Affective feedback conveys information through body language and paralinguistic means such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures. Cognitive feedback transmits information about facts, assumptions, beliefs, and so on, usually encoded by linguistic devices such as words, phrases, and sentences. In their view, the two feedback dimensions can be negative or positive. Moreover, Vigil & Oller emphasize that the interactive feedback received by learners has a controlling influence on fossilization. They proposed that a combination of positive cognitive feedback and negative affective feedback mainly promotes fossilization. Still, a combination of negative cognitive feedback and positive affective feedback causes learners to modify their language knowledge.

4 Fossilization in Oral English and English Writing

4.1 Fossilization in Oral English

Beginning learners have a habit of communicating in English by first thinking about what they want to explain in their minds in their native language, then using the Language Zone to translate word by word, and finally expressing it verbally. This process is time-consuming, with many errors, frequent pauses and hesitations, and severely impaired fluency. At the same time, learners often misunderstand that English and Chinese are "one-to-one" in terms of word formation and that they only need to translate one by one according to the Chinese order due to the migration effect of their native language.

Error:

a. I very much like singing.
b. Today's sun is very big.

c. People talk country's important things.

In the above three examples, the language problem of sentence a is that the rhetoric is not positioned correctly, following the Chinese order of expression and ignoring the English language habit. Sentence b is that the use of the adjective "big" is completed in Chinese style with improper wording. Sentence c reflects that the learners ignore the preposition in "talk about," In addition, it can be seen that the learner made up a phrase to try to express "national events," which is due to the limited language level [2].

Moreover, the choice of vocabulary can be too broad, too concentrated, and too much of it can be used in speaking [6]. For example, learners may use "many" to refer to all concepts related to "many, large number, large scale," or use "eat" to express all actions related to "eating" in Chinese, "eat lunch/fruit/medicine/ice-cream." There is also the possibility of using regular verbs or nouns in irregular verbs or nouns, such as childrens, maked, shoping. In addition, learners may misuse sentence patterns, such as "how to…" as a question. In addition, the term "有 (have)" in Chinese has become "there be" in many learners' English words [9].

4.2 Fossilization in English Writing

4.2.1 Grammar

English grammar can be divided into two main categories: lexical and syntactic. Since learners do not have a solid basic knowledge of grammar, it is easy for them to make lexical and syntactic errors.

First, lexical includes both real and imaginary words. Nouns involve singular and plural changes, and coronals do not exist in Chinese, so in English writing, learners often make mistakes in using these words [1]. In addition to the misuse of the crown and countable and uncountable nouns, confusion of word properties, abuse of transitive and intransitive verbs, misuse of modal verbs, and confusion between regular and irregular changes of verbs in the past tense and past participle are also common errors in English writing [4].

Error:

a. He had an accident last night because he drived *uncarefully*.
b. Different people have different *suggestion*.

Correction:

a. He had an accident last night because he drove *carelessly*.
b. Different people have different *suggestions*.

Secondly, the syntax is more complex than lexical, including sentence composition, sentence tense, inflection, tone, and emotion. Subordinate clauses, fixed sentence patterns, emphatic sentences, and inverted sentences are also difficult points in syntax [1]. The common syntactic errors in college students' English writing include incomplete sentence components, redundant sentence components, subject-verb inconsistency, misuse of verb tense and inflection, improper use of sentence tone, confusion of preposition

to and infinitive, confusion of non-verbal verbs, wrong collocation of verbs and objects, confusion of subordinate clauses' guiding words, etc.

a. There are a lot of people like to watch romantic movies.
b. To end up with, our own life *also should* be valued.
c. I want to work with some of the local companies to *get* money for old people.

Correction:

a. There are a lot of people *who* like to watch romantic movies.
b. To end up with, our own life *should also* be valued.
c. I want to work with some of the local companies to *raise* money for old people.

4.2.2 Vocabulary

The first is the singular-plural problem of nouns. The singular-plural problem often occurs in the writing process [12].
Error:

a. we main agronomic characters of the marriage as a typical case in books.
b. The hero and heroine are like Darcy and Elizabeth such
c. Love, intelligence, economic condition, educational background as well as family background have an influence on marriage matches.

Then there is the improper use of the coronary, which has been a long-standing problem.
Error:

a. even a not pleasing to begin their mutual see each other bias.
b. And suddenly with the outbreak of the WW
c. It feels to them like murder.

4.2.3 Chinglish

Many learners have this phenomenon when writing in English: they think of Chinese sentences and then translate them into English. Since there is a big difference between English and Chinese, college students are influenced by Chinese thinking when they write English and write English with Chinese characteristics [11]. "Chinese English" is also manifested in both words and sentence structure. Words are expressed by using redundant nouns, verbs, or modifiers, such as "there have been good harvests in agriculture," such as innovation, and the creation of word meanings, such as the third industry. The sentence structure is shown in the noun swelling, such as "The prolongation of the existence of this temple is due to the solidity of its construction," correctly expressed as This temple has endured because it was The prolongation of the existence of this temple is due to the strength of its structure, the correct expression is "This temple had suffered because it was solidity built, "such as" At the age of 12, Tom's family moved to England, the modifier

"At the age of 12" in this sentence is not accurately associated with the logical object "Tom" should be modified, the correct expression is "When Tom was 12, his family moved to England;" the common pronoun for the subject, such as "Taking Boeing 767 plane, we went to Shanghai," the sentence does not have grammatical errors, but is not authentic English, because English is used to nouns or noun phrases as the subject, so the authentic expression is " A Boeing 767 flew us to Shanghai."

5   Strategies for Fossilization Avoidance

5.1   Improving the Quality and Quantity of L2 Input

Language learning is done through language input, so the quality of language input should be ensured in the process of second language acquisition, and when second language learners reach a certain level of language proficiency, the quality of the target language input should be improved in terms of interest, variety, and difficulty. In our study, we found that implementing CBI teaching methods in English classrooms can effectively enhance the quality of language input, avoid language transfer and transfer of training, and prevent language rigidity to a certain extent. CBI teaching emphasizes the organic integration of subject knowledge and language skills and the improvement of learners' language skills while teaching specific subject knowledge, which avoids most language teaching models that sever the organic integration of subject knowledge and language skills [10]. According to the CBI teaching philosophy, subject knowledge dominates instruction in second language acquisition classrooms, and language is the means of learning. Language is the means of learning, not the language itself. In the learning process, subject matter knowledge challenges students' cognitive abilities and stimulates students' interest and enthusiasm for learning, and helps to promote students' spontaneous reading, communication, and learning. In learning, subject matter knowledge challenges students' cognitive abilities, stimulates their interest and enthusiasm for learning, and helps them develop spontaneous reading, communication, writing, etc.

Therefore, language skills are acquired through subject-specific content and authentic, systematic language instruction. Authentic and systematic language teaching materials provide a meaningful context for effective language learning or acquisition. Students learn specialized subject knowledge while their language proficiency and learn technical subject matter while improving their language skills and communicative competence.

5.2   Focus on the Training of Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are also a factor closely related to fossilization. The correct and reasonable use of learning strategies will improve language learning efficiency. In contrast, the improper use of learning strategies will induce fossilization and thus mislead learners' language learning. Therefore, in the language teaching classroom, teachers should focus on training students to use learning strategies reasonably and correctly while imparting knowledge so that students can improve their learning concepts and methods through training in learning strategies, helping them to grasp the direction of learning, choose a scientific learning path, improve the efficiency of learning, and develop their ability to learn independently, thus laying the foundation for lifelong learning for second language learners [8]. The foundation for lifelong learning is laid.

5.3   Developing Students' Cross-Cultural Awareness

The purpose of foreign language education is to cultivate students' linguistic competence at the micro level, communicative competence at the micro level, and socio-cultural competence at the macro level (Hu, 1997). For a long time, English education in China has been stagnant at the level of language proficiency training, neglecting the cultivation of communicative and cultural competence, severing the link between language and culture, cultivating students who generally lack cultural communication skills, easily inducing linguistic rigidity, and hindering the development of students' foreign language skills. Therefore, in English teaching, on the one hand, we should abandon the traditional "language tool theory" and pay attention to cultivating students' cultural awareness and strive to integrate language teaching with cultural teaching [5]. We should also actively conduct comparative studies of Chinese and Western cultures. We should also actively carry out comparative studies of Chinese and Western cultures and explore the differences between Chinese and Western cultures in terms of personal views, values, worldviews, and ways of thinking. This will not only enhance the interest of the classroom, stimulate students' enthusiasm and initiative in learning, but also draw students' attention to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, avoid fossilization to the greatest extent, and improve students' language proficiency and intercultural communication skills.

6   Conclusion

6.1   Conclusion of Your Key Findings

Based on the causes of fossilization, this paper examines the fossilization of English learners in speaking and writing and concludes that:

a.   Fossilization in speaking and writing does exist in the English learning process.
b.   The causes of fossilization are complex, and the analysis of specific cases shows that teachers' feedback on errors is also one of the causes of fossilization. In addition, language transfer, the quantity and quality of language input, and learning strategies often have essential effects on fossilization in oral English and writing.

6.2   Research Significance

From the theoretical point of view, understanding the causes of English learning rigidity not only helps to enrich and develop the theory of language learning rigidity and view fossilization from a new perspective but also facilitates the scientific view and evaluation of the phenomenon of language learning rigidity by teachers and learners.

From the practical aspect, the suggestions on the causes of fossilization in speaking and writing not only help to improve the quality of teaching and learning and reduce the phenomenon of fossilization but also help pedagogues to improve their teaching methods, and teach scientifically. It can also help learners acquire accurate and authentic English and promote the solution to the problem of students' English fossilization in the actual teaching process. To some extent, it promotes the development of the English subject area.

6.3 Limitations and Future Studies

Although this research on the phenomenon of rigidity in English writing for high school students was completed under the supervisor's guidance and efforts, there are some shortcomings in the research process, and this thesis concludes with an analysis of the research process, research tools, and research methods.

First, the selection and classification of errors in the composition texts were made by the author alone. Due to many composition texts and the length of the writing texts, individual errors at the lexical, grammatical, or discourse levels may inevitably be omitted. Therefore, in future research, the analysis of errors in composition texts can be tried by professional error correction software or error analysis software to ensure more accurate scientific data.

Second, for the causes of fossilization in spoken and written English, this study focuses on the seven common factors. However, with the development of the times, the causes of language fossilization have gradually taken on contemporary characteristics. For example, age and the teaching environment of online multimedia. Therefore, future studies can be more open, with more questionnaires and more open questions in the questionnaire, instead of just limiting to the content of the questionnaire itself, so that more reasons for the fossilization can be found and countermeasures can be proposed, thus making this study on the language fossilization more scientific.

Thirdly, the scope of the study is not broad enough in terms of the manifestations and suggestions of fossilization in spoken and written English. The scope of English learning is extensive, and fossilization has characteristics in the four aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The causes of fossilization in different aspects of the English language are also different, so the proposed countermeasures are also relevant. Therefore, the suggestions made in this study do not necessarily apply to listening and reading fossilization in English, nor to the whole phenomenon of English learning fossilization. Therefore, future research can be conducted based on summarizing the current results on this fossilization among high school students and researching other aspects of the English learning process of high school students, such as the causes of listening fossilization and reading fossilization their countermeasures.

In future research, the author will summarize the experience and shortcomings of this survey study and look for special error analysis software to analyze the data. Secondly, in the design of the questionnaire and interview outline, more openness and topicality will also be considered to ensure that the survey research will have more possibilities. In addition, based on the results of the current survey research, the author will also strive to conduct further research on different aspects of linguistic fossilization in the English language so that the research on fossilization will be more relevant.

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