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Crosslinguistic Influence of Chinese EFL learners on English Acquisition

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By Weijia Tang

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Crosslinguistic Influence of Chinese EFL Learners on English Acquisition

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in

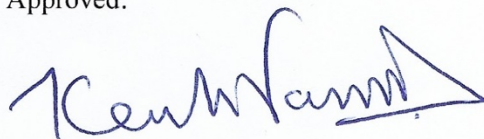TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

by

Weijia Tang

May 2018

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

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Finally, I wish to devote this thesis to my beloved family, who have given me life and love, and have been unconditionally supporting me.

ABSTRACT

This thesis introduces both positive and negative crosslinguistic influence of Chinese EFL learners on English Acquisition. Most Chinese EFL learners have difficulties in English acquisition due to the negative crosslinguistic influence caused by the differences between mother tongue and the target language. In order to help Chinese EFL learners to tackle this problem, comparative analysis is done between English and Mandarin Chinese in terms of phonetics and phonology, morphology, part syntax, and pragmatics.

The focus of this thesis is to investigate both the positive and negative crosslinguistic influence phenomena in the process of English acquisition conducted by Chinese EFL learners and the strategies of how to utilize the positive crosslinguistic influence and minimize the negative crosslinguistic influence on English learning. Both Chinese EFL teachers and learners will benefit from this thesis by acknowledging the crosslinguistic influence of their mother tongue on English acquisition and learning various English study methods.

1. Introduction

In the process of acquiring English as foreign language (EFL), crosslinguistic influence is a common phenomenon and it is of universal significance. Not only second language learners or foreign language learners but also linguistic researchers and linguistic teachers have to confront with this challenge. As a student who came from China and learned English as a foreign language since my primary school and also an EFL teacher who used to work for New Oriental School[1], an English educational institute in China, I realize that most Chinese EFL learners including myself are impacted greatly by the rules of Mandarin Chinese and tend to apply these rules into the English learning process unconsciously. Once the EFL learners try to apply the rules of their native language to the target langue, cross-linguistic influence comes into being. Note that, the terms "cross-linguistic influence" and "language transfer" are regarded as a similar concept in this thesis. Ortega (2009) claims that all second language learners own the complete system of the knowledge of their native languages, and sometimes some fragmental knowledge of other languages or dialects when learners start to acquire another new language. All the language knowledge preowned by the leaners becomes a crucial source of influence on the target language acquisition. This being so, the native language universally has a strong impact on the acquisition and outcomes of the target language

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[1] New Oriental Education & Technology Group Inc., which is also called New Oriental School, is currently the largest institute providing private educational services in China.

learning. On the top of that, Ortega (2009) states that the concept of language transfer is a very complicated situation. According to Ortega (2009), language transfer can be brought about not only by the similarities between native tongues but also by huge differences. Because of the similarities and differences between two different languages involved, crosslinguistic influence can be divided into two categories: positive crosslinguistic influence and negative crosslinguistic influence. Positive crosslinguistic influence, which is caused by the similar points between the target language and the mother tongue, plays a positive role in English learning, while negative crosslinguistic influence, which is caused due to linguistic differences, is just the opposite of positive crosslinguistic influence and causes a lot of difficulties.

Similarly, it is clear that for Chinese EFL learners, the first language has an impact on the foreign language's performance greatly. On the one hand, the similarities can stimulate the positive influence of the native language to the target language. On the other hand, millions of students encounter difficulties due to negative influence when language learners apply their implicit knowledge of Chinese to English. For the purpose of helping Chinese EFL learners to acquire English better, it is essential for the EFL teachers and learners to comprehend the similar points and different points between the target language English and the native language Mandarin Chinese. In view of the variety of Chinese dialects in Chinese language system, Mandarin Chinese is mainly discussed in the comparison in this thesis.

On the basis of crosslinguistic influence, this analysis is done by comparative method between English and Mandarin Chinese in terms of phonetics and phonology, morphology, parts of speech, syntax, and pragmatics. The focus of this thesis is to investigate both the positive and negative crosslinguistic influence phenomena in the process of English acquisition conducted by Chinese EFL learners and the strategies of how to utilize the positive crosslinguistic influence and minimize the negative crosslinguistic influence on English learning.

2.   Review of Literature

2.1 Definition of Crosslinguistic Influence

The notion of "crosslinguistic influence" was tightly connected to the theories of behavioristics at the very beginning of its use. Researchers made an assumption that language learners have the tendency of transferring the inner rules of their mother tongue and codes of language as well as their culture backgrounds into the target language and culture while they were acquiring a new language and their implicit knowledge of native language has a great impact on the learning process of their target language.

Faerch and Kasper (1987) define crosslinguistic influence (often referred as 'language transfer') as the course that second or foreign language learners' active knowledge in acquiring or utilizing their interlanguage which is the linguistic system between the native language and the target language) and indicate that the course can either have

positive crosslinguistic influence or negative crosslinguistic influence from language acquisition. There are four manifestations of transfer: facilitation (positive influence), errors (negative influence), avoidance and over-use.

Additionally, according to Odlin (1989), crosslinguistic influence is the influence caused by the similar points and the different points between the target language and any other language or languages that have been pre-acquired more or less.

2.2 Positive Crosslinguistic Influence

There are more than five thousand kinds of languages around the whole world, and they are all different in terms of certain aspects to some extent. However, the inherent rules of a language are not random or arranged without any reason. Linguists find that all the languages follow certain objective rules. In view of language is the tool to express our thoughts, these inner rules of language are usually considered to connect with human's thinking patterns. Due to the fact that human beings do share a lot of similarities in terms of the way of thinking, there are some similar points between different languages. In that case, positive crosslinguistic influence means that foreign language learners can take advantage of the knowledge of their native language system efficiently in the target language acquisition.

In other ways, positive crosslinguistic influence may proceed when a language leaner realizes that there are similarities between the target language and his/ her mother tongue. Moreover, positive crosslinguistic influence helps to promote language acquisition.

2.3 Negative Crosslinguistic Influence

Negative crosslinguistic influence refers to the phenomenon that during the process of learning the target language, learners may make some mistakes and errors because of their knowledge of their native language. (Gass & Selinker, 2001). On the contrary of positive crosslinguistic influence, it is caused by the different language patterns between the mother tongue and the target language, and negative crosslinguistic influence brings about mistakes, errors, inaccurate or inappropriate language use in the target language.

English belongs to the Germanic family, which is part of the Indo-European family, whereas Mandarin Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family. Undoubtedly, there are huge differences between English and Mandarin Chinese. In truth, these differences can cause negative crosslinguistic influences leading to different errors, which will be discussed in details in this thesis. Such impact can become a huge obstacle when it comes to ESL/EFL learning. Negative crosslinguistic influence is commonly found in many different aspects, such as phonology, morphology, parts of speech, syntax, and pragmatics.

2.4 Research on Crosslinguistic Influence in China

Since the 1980s, Chinese scholars have begun to introduce contrastive analysis (CA) theory, which is a kind of earlier methodology of crosslinguistic influence. It was primarily used to support the assumption that differences between the target language,

English and the mother tongue, Mandarin Chinese were responsible for the difficulties of English acquisition. Professor Gui Shichun (1988) points out that researchers should pay more attention to analyze the actual learners' language through error analysis (EA). Error analysis and later performance analysis became popular researching methodologies. Scholars who dealt with the topic include Wen Qiufang (1998) who stated that trains of thought in native language had a negative impact on target language writing achievements; Gan Li, whose research (1999) claimed the importance of activating the positive crosslinguistic influence to English writing instruction; and Liu Donghong (2002), who observed that Chinese learners at the beginning level of English acquisition relied heavily on Chinese in the learning process.

Now thanks to modern technology, there are several corpora which can be used as the database to study the phenomenon of crosslinguistic influence between Mandarin Chinese and English. For example, Chinese scholars Gui Shichun and Yang Huizhong set up Chinese Learner English Corpus (CLEC) in 2003; scholars Wen Qiufang, Wang Lifei and Liang Maocheng established College Learners' Spoken English Corpus(COLSEC) in 2005. In the same year of 2005, Spoken and Written English Corpus of Chinese Learners (SWECCL) was established by scholars Yang Huizhong and Wei Naixing. These corpora are also used as the database for further research of language transfer on Chinese EFL learners.

Based on the CLEC and my teaching experience with Chinese EFL learners, I will discuss Chinese linguistic influence in English acquisition in terms of phonetics and phonology, morphology, part of speech, syntax and pragmatics.

3. Phonetics and Phonology

Phonology studies the sound patterns of languages and phonetic describes the actual physical sounds.

3.1 Phonetic Inventory: Chinese Pinyin VS. International Phonetic Alphabet

Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, often called Chinese Pinyin or Pinyin, is the Romanization system for Mandarin Chinese. In the 1950s, linguists including Zhou Youguang used the Latin alphabets as the reference and developed this system to meet practical use in China. Therefore, there are similarities between Pinyin and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which also uses Latin alphabets extensively. Pinyin is very common in China since it is used as a tool for primary school teachers to teach students the pronunciation of Mandarin Chinese.

Modern Chinese Pinyin system consists of 23 initial consonants, 6 monophthongal simple finals, and 28 complex finals.

3.1.1 Initial Consonants in Chinese Pinyin System

Li and Thompson (1981) explain Mandarin Chinese sound system in great detail in the book *Mandarin Chinese*. The chart below illustrates the IPA equivalence of Pinyin

symbols. The corresponding English consonants are included in parenthesis. These IPA symbols represent the description of Mandarin Chinese and English initial consonants in terms of place of articulation, manner of articulation, and the voicing status of the glottis. "NE" stands for Non-Existence, shown in table 1.

Pinyin	IPA		Example		
	Chinese	English	Chinese character	Pinyin	English meaning
b	[p]	[p] ([p] as in 'spot')	爸爸	bà bà	dad
p	[pʰ]	[pʰ] ([pʰ] as in 'pot')	葡萄	pú táo	grape
m	[m]	[m]	妈妈	mā mā	mom
f	[f]	[f]	风筝	fēng zhēng	kite
d	[t]	[t] ([t] as in 'stop')	东方	dōng fāng	east
t	[tʰ]	[tʰ] ([tʰ] as in 'top')	淘汰	táo tài	eliminate
n	[n]	[n]	奶奶	nǎi nǎi	grandma
l	[l]	[l]	劳动	láo dòng	labor
g	[k]	[k]	歌唱	gē chàng	sing

		([k] as in 'skid')			
k	[kʰ]	[kʰ] ([kʰ] as in 'kid')	科学	kē xué	science
h	[χ]	NE	彗星	huì xīng	comet
j	[tɕ]	NE	姐姐	jiě jiě	older sister
q	[tɕʰ]	NE	祈祷	qí dǎo	pray
x	[ɕ]	NE	谢谢	xiè xiè	thanks
z	[ts]	NE	字体	zì tǐ	font
c	[tsʰ]	[tsʰ]	瓷器	cí qì	china
s	[s]	[s]	丝绸	sī chóu	silk
zh	[tʂ]	NE	智慧	zhì huì	wisdom
ch	[tʂʰ]	NE	赤道	chì dào	equator
sh	[ʂ]	NE	石头	shí tóu	stone
r	[ʐ]	NE	日历	rì lì	calendar
y	[j]	[j]	月亮	yuè liàng	moon
w	[w]	[w]	玩耍	wán shuǎ	play

- table 1-

3.1.2   Monophthongal Simple Finals

As in section 3.1.1, the chart below gives examples of Mandarin monophthongal simple vowels in IPA. The equivalent English vowels in IPA are provided in parenthesis. "NE" stands for Non-Existence, shown in table 2.

Pinyin	IPA		Example		
	Chinese	English	Chinese character	Pinyin	English meaning
a	[Ḁ]	NE	娃娃	wá wá	doll
o	[o]	NE	我	wǒ	I, me
e	[ɤ]	NE	快乐	kuài lè	happiness
i	[i]	[i]	大米	dà mǐ	rice
u	[u]	[u]	乌鸦	wū yā	raven
ü	[y]	NE	金鱼	jīn yú	goldfish

- table 2-

3.1.3   Complex Finals

In table 3 below, the corresponding between the Pinyin and IPA of Mandarin complex finals are listed.

Pinyin	IPA	Example		
		Chinese character	Pinyin	English meaning
Ai	[ai]	爱情	ài qíng	love
Ei	[ei]	雷	léi	thunder
ao	[ɑu]	棉花	mián huā	cotton
ou	[ou]	海鸥	hǎi ōu	seagull
an	[an]	平安	píng ān	safety
en	[ən]	恩惠	ēn huì	favor
in	[in]	音乐	yīn yuè	music
ang	[ɑŋ]	方向	fāng xiàng	direction
eng	[əŋ]	风	fēng	wind
ong	[uŋ]	游泳	yóu yǒng	swimming
ing	[iŋ]	英雄	yīng xióng	hero
ia	[ia]	夏天	xià tiān	summer
iao	[iɑu]	学校	xué xiào	school
ian	[iæn]	线	xiàn	string
iang	[iɑŋ]	香水	xiāng shuǐ	perfume
ie	[iɛ]	裂缝	liè fèng	crack

iong	[yŋ]	熊	xióng	bear
iu（iou）	[iou]	六	liù	six
ua	[uɑ]	花	huā	flower
uo	[uo]	骆驼	luò tuó	camel
uai	[uai]	帅	shuài	handsome
ui(uei)	[uei]	后悔	hòu huǐ	regret
uan	[uan]	短	duǎn	short
uang	[uɑŋ]	黄	huáng	yellow
un(uen)	[uən]	运动	yùn dòng	sports
üe	[yɛ]	邀约	yāo yuē	invitation
üan	[yæn]	圆	yuán	circle
ün	[yn]	晕倒	yūn dǎo	faint

-table 3-

3.2 Positive Crosslinguistic Influence

Based on the above-listed comparative charts, the sounds of Mandarin Chinese represented by Pinyin system and English share a lot of similarities. That means it is relatively easy for Chinese EFL learners to grasp the pronunciation in English by simply relating to their previous knowledge of Chinese. Besides, these similarities can also help EFL learners to build up their confidence at the beginning level of English acquisition.

3.3 Negative Crosslinguistic Influence

Being different languages there are a lot of differences between Mandarin Chinese and English. The effects caused by the negative crosslinguistic influence of Mandarin Chinese on the target language are of huge influence that one can not ignore them. Only when Chinese EFL learners understand these influence, can he or she minimize these negative effects, and learn English better.

3.3.1   Negative Influence on Pronunciation

Some sounds of English which are not in Mandarin Chinese are one of the concerns for negative influence on the part of English learners. Each language has a special phonetic system and a set of specific pronunciation rules, but most of the foreign language learners tend to build up their path of English language acquisition with the help of their mother tongue. This practice would prevent foreign language learners from having a standard pronunciation. In table 4 below, all the consonants of English that Chinese do not have are presented.

Manner of Articulation	Place of Articulation						
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop **+voiced** **-voiceless**							
Affricate **+voiced** **-voiceless**		v			dʒ tʃ		
Fricative **+voiced** **-voiceless**			ð θ		ʒ ʃ		
Nasal **+voiced**							
Liquid **+voiced**							
Glide **+voiced**							

-table 4-

According to the chart，there are no / v /, / dʒ /, / tʃ /, / θ /, / ð /, / ʒ / and / ʃ / in Mandarin Chinese, so some learners at beginning level cannot pronounce these eight

sounds well. Especially, the sound 'th' as / θ /, which involves the biting of the tip of the tongue, is arguably the most difficult sound for Chinese learners to pronounce. When I was a teacher in New Oriental school in Shanghai, I noticed that many students of mine simply used / s / instead of using / θ / and / ʃ /, therefore they pronounced the same as the word 'sank' quite often, while they actually intended to pronounce the word 'thank'. Similarly, a lot of Chinese students mix up the / v / sound and / w / sound because there is no /v/ sound in Mandarin Chinese. In that case, it usually turns out to be 'willage' when they intend to pronounce the word 'village'. As the same, the word 'vacation' is usually pronounced as 'wacation'. This disadvantage of their native language becomes burdens for them to master the accuracy of sound production.[2]

Moreover, due to Chinese language habits, a lot of Chinese EFL learners make a common mistake that using the long / i / sound instead of short / ɪ /. In Chinese pronunciation, there is no difference between longer sounds and shorter sounds. In that case, the word 'pit' [pɪt] is pronounced as 'pitt' [pit], the word 'tick'[tɪk] is pronounced as 'tiick'[tik] and the word 'pill' [pɪl] is often pronounced as 'piill'[pill]. Also, Chinese learners tend to add a released sound at the end of some English words. For example, the word 'come' [kʰʌm] would be pronounced as [kʰʌmə] In addition, the silent letters and the aspiration in English pose some challenges to Chinese EFL learners.

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[2] Even though, there are consonants/ z /, / c /, / s /, / zh /, / ch /, / sh /, and / r / in both Mandarin Chinese and English. Many speakers from southern China have trouble with distinguishing blade-alveolar sound and retroflex，which will become a challenge in English acquisition.

3.3.2 Negative Influence on Stress and Rhythm

For most intermediate-level or even high-level Chinese EFL learners, their language barrier usually comes from language rhythm in spoken English. Even though they may have acquired the knowledge and the accuracy of pronunciation and the appropriate grammar, their speech can hardly be understood because they have no English rhythm or their rhythm is not on point.

As a matter of fact, Mandarin and English have different rhythm; the rhythm of Chinese mandarin is syllable-timed rhythm, while the rhythm of English is stress-timed rhythm. Because Chinese learners are accustomed to the rhythm of their mother tongue, it is difficult for them to keep the same pace with English rhythm. Meanwhile, word stress doesn't matter in Chinese speaking. Chinese EFL learners tend to ignore the importance of stress in English. The unawareness of word stress also damages the rhythm of the speaking. For example, once I asked some of my students to read the sentence "What size would you like to try on". The stress in this sentence ought to be on the word "size" to emphasize different sizes that you can choose from. The result turned out to be widely divergent. One of the students put the stress on the word "what", one of the students put the stress on the word "you", while another student put the stress on the word "try".

3.3.3 Negative Influence on Tones and Intonation

According to Crystal (2008), the term "tone" in phonology refers to the distinctive pitch level of a syllable, and the term "intonation" refers to the distinctive use of patterns of pitch, or melody. Mandarin Chinese has four basic tones: yin, yang, shang, qu, also known as the first tone, second tone, third tone and the fourth tone. The Pinyin with the same combination of initial and vowel can be totally different meaning because of this unique rule. A good example is an antithetical couplet in Mandarin Chinese "童子打桐子，桐子落，童子乐。妞儿骑牛儿，牛儿缓，妞儿欢。" [tóng zǐ dǎ tóng zǐ, tóng zǐ luò, tóng zǐ lè. niū ér qí niú ér, niú ér huǎn, niū ér huān], which means that "The little boy is trying to get the seed of tung tree. The seed falls down, and the boy is happy. The little girl is riding a cow. The cow walks slowly, and the girl is happy". When Chinese EFL learners begin to learn English, they usually happily find out that there is no complicate tone difference in English. However, even though English does not have lexical tones like Mandarin Chinese, intonation matters a lot in English. Intonation in English affects the meaning of what is said. With the usage of different intonation, people are able to express different kinds of emotion. For example, you may say "A lot of people like↗ the movie" with a rising pitch, which shows that you have doubts or you feel surprised. Many learners need to be taught all the intonation rules in order to convey intended message in English in addition to English phonological patterns.

4. Morphology

Morphology is the study of word structures in terms of morphemes and their different forms, and the way that they combine in word formation. Morphology of Mandarin Chinese is strictly bound to the morphemes with a comparatively precise construction. Li and Thompson (1981) illustrate detailed language rules of three morphological processes in Mandarin Chinese, which are reduplication, affixation and compound. Compared to English, reduplication is widely used in Mandarin Chinese. Reduplication means that the original morpheme is repeated and the repetition with the original morpheme together form a new word. For example, the Mandarin Chinese expression of "have a look" is 看看 [kàn kàn] or 看一看 [kàn yī kàn]. The crosslinguistic influence of English affixation and compound on Chinese EFL learners will be further discussed in this chapter.

Morphemes in Mandarin Chinese can be classified on the basis of whether the morpheme can be used independently to answer questions. Those morphemes can be used alone to answer questions are classified as independent morpheme, for example, 好 [hǎo]. The independent morpheme is highly productive in lexical formation because it can not only be used independently but also work with other morphemes in word formation. The morphemes which can not be used alone but have to be combined with other morphemes to form a word are bound morphemes.

4.4 Positive Influence on Morphology

Both English and Mandarin Chinese share some similarities when it comes to word formation in morphology, for example, compound, conversion and affixation. Here are some examples of common methods of word formation between English and Mandarin Chinese.

4.4.1　Positive Influence on Compound

A compound refers to that two or more free morphemes are combined together to arrange a completely new word. As an illustration, the words "黑板" [hēi bǎn] (blackboard), "网站" [wǎng zhàn] (website), "足球" [zú qiú] (football) are composed in this similar way. The table 5 below lists some subtypes of the compound in Mandarin Chinese and they can all be found in English compound. In fact, all sixteen kinds of formation in English compound can be seen in Mandarin Chinese. Note that, there is a negative crosslinguistic influence of the compound on English acquisition, and this will be discussed in detail in 4.2.1. As in English old compounds, for example, 'alone'= 'all'+ 'one', "old" compounds in Mandarin Chinese pose difficult challenges to explain how it gave rise to the compound from the combination of different morphemes.

Formation	Chinese example	English meaning	English compound in the same formation
noun+ noun	朋友 [péng yǒu]	[friend+ friend] friend	basketball
adjective+ noun	铁路 [tiě lù]	[rail+ way] railway	whiteboard
verb+ noun	鼓掌 [gǔ zhǎng]	[pat+ palm] applaud	breakwater
noun+ verb	发夹 [fà qiǎ]	[hair clip] hairpin	haircut
noun+ adjective	身高 [shēn gāo]	[body+ high] height	skyblue
adjective+ adjective	明亮 [míng liàng]	[clear+ bright] brightness	royalblue
verb+ adjective	击败 [jī bài]	[beat+ losing] defeat	knockdown
adjective+ verb	高喊 [gāo hǎn]	[loudly+ shout] shout loudly	highlight

verb+ verb	计算 [jì suàn]	[count+ calculate] calculate	frozen-dry
preposition+ noun	凭证 [píng zhèng]	[by+ evidence] voucher	online
noun+ preposition	神往 [shén wǎng]	[spirit+ toward] be charmed	lineup
preposition+ verb	从来 [cóng lái]	[from+ come] since	bypass
verb+ preposition	借给 [jiè gěi]	[lend+ to] loan	drive-through
preposition+ adjective	除非 [chú fēi]	[except+ wrong] unless	overripe
adverb+ preposition	老到 [lǎo dào]	[always+ to] sophisticated	forthwith
preposition+ preposition	至于 [zhì yú]	[until+ at] as for	inbetween

-table 5-

4.4.2 Positive Influence on Affixation

An affixation refers to that a bound morpheme, which is also an affix, in this case, is

added onto a root word. There are many affixes, including prefixes and suffixes in

English as well as in Mandarin Chinese. Li and Thompson (1981) list several commonly used prefixes and suffixes in Mandarin Chinese. For example, the prefix "第[dì]" can be added to the front of the numerals to form ordinal numbers. That is to say, "第一[dì yī]" means "first", and "第一百[dì yī bǎi]" means "(one) hundredth". Similarly, there are plenty of words formed with the prefix "re" in English, for example, return, recall, review. Another good example is the suffix "学[xué]", which is the counterpart of the English suffix "ology" as in "biology", "ecology". For example, "心理 [xīn lǐ]" means "mentality", while "心理学 [xīn lǐ xué]" means "psychology"; "社会 [shè huì]" means "society", "社会学 [shè huì xué]" means "sociology".

From above examples, it is obvious that the similar points between English and Mandarin Chinese in terms of word formation will benefit Chinese EFL learners to build up their vocabulary in a better way. However, there is a negative crosslinguistic influence of affixation on English acquisition, and this will be discussed in detail in 4.2.2.

4.4.3   Positive Influence on Conversion.

A conversion means that the changes of the word class without changing of the actual form of the word. For instance, in Mandarin Chinese, the word 准 [zhǔn] can be used as a verb, an adjective as well as a kind of auxiliary verb:

(1) (a) 不准乱扔垃圾。

[bù zhǔn luàn rēng lā jī]

No Littering.

In this sentence, "准[zhǔn]" is used as a verb, and it means "permit".

(b) 他的射击很准。

[tā de shè jī hěn zhǔn]

His shooting is very accurate.

In this sentence, "准[zhǔn]" is used as an adjective, and it means "accurate".

(c) 他准能完成任务。

[tā zhǔn néng xiě wán zuò yè]

He must be able to finish his assignments.

In this sentence, "准[zhǔn]" is used a kind of auxiliary verb, meaning "must".

Another example that is commonly seen in Mandarin Chinese is the word 回答[huí dá] can be converted from verb to noun:

(2) (a) 同学们回答了教授的提问。

[tóng xué men huí dá le jiāo shòu de tí wèn]

The students answered the professor's questions.

In this sentence, "回答[huí dá]" is used as a verb, and it means "answer/ respond".

(b) 你的回答不正确。

[nǐ de huí dá bú zhèng què]

Your answer is not correct.

In this sentence, "回答[huí dá]" is used as a noun, and it means "answer".

Note that, the word "answer", which is the corresponding meaning of "回答[huí dá]" can be converted from verb to noun, too.

As illustrated above, conversion is a common phenomenon in Mandarin Chinese. For instance, words like "工作[gōng zuò]"(work) "帮助[bāng zhù]"(help) "梦想[mèng xiǎng]"(dream) "计划[jì huá]"(plan) can work both as nouns and verbs with no change of the actual word form.

Similarly, there are many English words that can play different roles in the sentences with different meanings. For instance, the word "back" can be converted into a noun, a verb, an adjective as well as an adverb without any changes on the word form. Here are some example sentences.

(3) (a) It is important to keep your back straight while you are sitting.

In this sentence, the word "back" works as a noun, and it means a part of the body.

(b) Her assumption is backed by some scientific evidence.

In this sentence, the word "back" works as a verb, and it means to support.

(c) I was sitting in the back seat.

In this sentence, the word "back" works as an adjective, and it refers to the opposite of the front.

(d) I will put the book back soon.

In this sentence, the word "back" works as an adverb, and it means to return to the original place.

4.5 Negative Influence on Morphology

Vocabulary is the foundation of all kinds of languages and language learning process. Due to the differences between English and Mandarin Chinese in morphology, there is a significant negative influence on English learning for Chinese learners. Chinese EFL learners can easily mix countable noun and uncountable noun up; they may also not know the proper tense marker or misuse the meaning of a word as well as misuse the singular and plural form of words. Words are the elements of a sentence and sentences are the elements of a large discourse, so grasping the usage of words and getting to understand the different points between English and Mandarin Chinese is of great importance.

4.5.1   Negative Influence on Compound

In the section 4.1.1.，sixteen subtypes of compound in English that can also be found in Mandarin Chinese compound are discussed. Actually, there is another subtype of compound, which is noun plus measure word (also known as the quantifier) compound. The formation of this type of compound is "noun+ measure word", for example, the word "人口" [rén kǒu], which means "population" in English. Correspondingly, the morpheme "人" [rén] means "people", and the morpheme "口" [kǒu] is the measure word of people. This is a challenging aspect for EFL learners since English only uses quantifier as a noun phrase, not as a compounds. For example, there is a phrase "a bunch of people" in English, and it can not be used as "people's bunch".

What is more important is the involvement of stress in English compound word. As we discussed in phonology section, English is a stress-based language whereas Mandarin Chinese is a tone-based language. Tones usually do not change in Mandarin Chinese compounds. As opposed to this, stress matters a lot in English compounds. Here are some stress patterns:

A. Compound nouns are usually stressed on the first morpheme in the compound, for example, "football" ['fʊtbɔl], "sunrise" ['sʌnraɪz].

B. Compound verbs are usually stressed on the second morpheme in the compound, for example, "overwhelm" [ovɚˈhwɛlm], "outstand" [ˌautˈstænd].

C. Compound adjectives are more likely to stress on the second part of the compound, for example, "halfway" [ˌhæfˈweɪ]. However, there are a few exceptions. A case in point is the compound adjective "catlike" ['kætlaik], which is stressed on the first syllable.

Using syllable stress correctly is always a problem for EFL learners to tackle.

4.5.2 Negative Influence on Affixation

Based on section4.1.2, there are some affixes in Mandarin Chinese. However, those affixes in are not as commonly used as in English, only a few of them are often used. As a matter of fact, Affixation is the most common way of deriving new words in English. Consequently, the uniqueness of English affixation is another obstacle for Chinese EFL learners. Building up vocabulary is usually the first step when it comes to English

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acquisition. It is a very common phenomenon that Chinese EFL learners tend to memorize vocabulary letter by letter rather than trying to find out the connection between words and their derivations. Another problem is translation. English derivative words can be easily used to describe abstract relations, actions, and objects. For example, the word "demystify" is formed as "de-mysti-fy". In this word, the prefix "de-" is used to indicate privation, separation, and negation; "-mysti-", which comes from "mystery", is the root word; and the suffix "-fy" means "to make, to become". Even though Mandarin Chinese has a corresponding meaning of the word "mystery", which is "神秘的" [shén mì de], it is almost impossible to find one single word in Mandarin Chinese as the translation of "mystify" or "demystify". Another good example is the word "legitimize". Although Mandarin Chinese has a corresponding meaning of the word "legal", which is "合法的" [hé fǎ de], it is impossible to use only one corresponding word as the translation of "legitimize". When it comes to translation, a few words are used to make it clear in Mandarin Chinese. There are tons of English words that are difficult to explain or translate into Mandarin Chinese accurately, and vice versa.

4.5.3　Negative Influence on Collocation

Chinese EFL learners often arbitrarily apply Chinese word meanings into their English sentences before they fully master the meaning of English vocabulary. However, there are not a lot of words in both languages with exact corresponding meanings, and a word of one language may have a few different meanings in the other language. This has posed

some problems to EFL learners especially in beginning level in mastering the meaning of words. Hence, collocation in English becomes one of the most difficult parts for EFL learners. There is some established and conventional collocation in a certain language. Some collocation in Chinese cannot find a counterpart in English. The condition is the same with that in English. As a result, English learners of China tend to make mistakes when they are using English collocation because of the way collocations are used in Mandarin Chinese. When an EFL learner cannot precisely express his or her thoughts due to the limited knowledge of vocabulary, he or she may mechanically use those English words with similar meanings in Chinese. For examples, Chinese English speakers tend to use the phrase "make business" instead of "conduct business" because in Chinese the corresponding expression is "做生意" [zuò shēng yì] and the verb "做" [zuò] is often simply translated into "make". Another mistake which is commonly made by Chinese EFL learners is using "open the light" and "close the light" instead of "turn on the light" and "turn off the light". In Mandarin Chinese, the corresponding expression "开灯" [kāi dēng] "关灯" [guān dēng] is often erroneously translated because the Chinese character "开" [kāi] means "open" as well as "turn on" and the Chinese character "关" [guān] means "close" as well as "turn off". This type of mistakes made by learners is the result of simply linking up the literal meanings of Chinese and English and translating word by word from Chinese into English which causes the negative influence of the mother tongue.

4.5.4   Negative Influence on Distinction of Singular and Plural Form

The difference between the singular-plural form in Mandarin Chinese and in English puts another obstacle in the way of Chinese EFL learners trying to acquire English. In Mandarin Chinese, the form of singular and plural nouns remains the same. Even though there is a rule in Mandarin Chinese about adding measure words like "们" [men], which is a quantifier and a plural marker for nouns that refer to people and a few animate nouns, this morpheme is optional in many instances. On the contrary, the plural marker is a vital part of English and the plural morpheme "s" is the suffix to the end of most plural nouns. Regular plurals, near-regular plurals, and irregular plurals are huge challenges in spoken and written English for Chinese EFL learners. An example you may hear from a Chinese EFL learner is that "I spent three dollar on seven potato", whereas the proper expression is "I spent three dollars on seven potatoes".

4.5.5   Negative Influence on tense marker

The form of the verbs stays the same with the various change of different tenses in Mandarin Chinese. Rather than changing the verb tense according to the voice grammar, adverbials of time are used to indicate the present tense, past tense, or future tense. Such difference leads to a fact that Chinese EFL speakers can easily forget the English verb inflection. The table 6 below shows some possible mistakes that Chinese EFL learners make and the corresponding English expressions.

Tense	Chinese expression	Wrong expression from Chinese learner	Correct expression
Past tense	我昨天回家。 [wǒ zuó tiān huí jiā]	I come home yesterday.	I came home yesterday.
Future tense	我明天回家。 [wǒ míng tiān huí jiā]	I come home tomorrow.	I will come home tomorrow.

-table 6-

Similarly, verbs do not make any changes to the subject in Mandarin Chinese. English verb inflection of third-person singular is another issue for Chinese EFL learners. The wrong expression like "Tom eat an apple every day" is often carried out in English by Chinese EFL learners instead of the correct expression "Tom eats an apple every day".

5. Parts of Speech

The parts of speech are essential elements in both English and Mandarin Chinese. They indicate how the words function in meanings as well as indicate the words play similar roles within the grammatical structures of sentences. The parts of speech in Mandarin Chinese are usually divided into content words and function words. Content words consist of nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, numeral and measure words (also known as quantifier); while function words consist of adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliaries, onomatopoetic words, and interjections.

5.1 Positive Influence on Parts of Speech

Mandarin Chinese and English share a lot of similarities on parts of speech. Therefore, the knowledge of Mandarin Chinese grammar lays a solid foundation for Chinese EFL learners to acquire English grammar knowledge on parts of speech.

5.2 Negative Influence on Parts of Speech

5.2.1 The Misuse of Part of Speech

Still, there are many challenges for Chinese EFL learners. For example, in Mandarin Chinese word can be used as a noun or a verb of the same spelling. For instance, the word "发展" [fā zhǎn], "经济" [jīng jì], "成功" [chéng gōng]. But that is not necessary the case with English word formation. When there is a shift of the parts of speech in English, variation of the word formation need to be done in most of the cases. For example, the word "发展" [fā zhǎn] in Chinese means "to develop" as a verb, and "development" as a noun in English. Also, there are four varieties of the equivalent of the word "经济" [jīng jì] in English: "economy" as a noun; "economize" as a verb; and both "economic" and "economical" as adjectives. Many Chinese EFL learners overlook the difference of the part of speech between Chinese and English, and only memorize the Chinese meaning of a certain English word. Therefore, they may make some wrong expressions, such as "with the develop of the economic". It is due to the negative influence on parts of speech in the process of English vocabulary acquisition.

5.2.2 The Absence of Article

It is worth noting that a kind of parts of speech in English does not exist in Mandarin Chinese, which is the determiner. According to Keith S. Folse (2016), articles are problematic for certain ESL/ EFL learners because some languages have no articles. For example, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Malay, Polish and Russian lack the grammatical class of "articles", some have only the definite articles like Arabic; and others have the same articles as English but their usage does not overlap exactly like French, German and Spanish. Even though the articles are just a few little words, they can become a major problem for Chinese EFL learners. On the one hand, a lot of Chinese EFL learners do not know whether they should use the article or not. On the other hand, it is difficult for them to distinguish the usage of definite articles and infinite articles. Due to the fact that Mandarin Chinese does not have any article at all, Chinese EFL speakers inevitably tend to omit or misuse the articles when they construct sentences in English. For example:

(4) (a) 月亮绕着地球转。[yuè liàng rào zhe dì qiú zhuǎn]

(The moon goes around the earth.)

Moon goes around earth.　　✕

The sentence above is grammatically incorrect because based on the rules in English grammar, definite articles ought to be placed in front of unique objects in the world. For

instance, the Mars, the earth, the sun, the moon, and so on. In this case, the correct expression is:

(b) 月亮绕着地球转。[yuè liàng rào zhe dì qiú zhuǎn]

The moon goes around the earth.

Following is another example:

(5) (a) 我妈妈正在弹钢琴。[wǒ mā mā zhèng zài dàn gāng qín]

(My mom is playing the piano.)

My mom is playing piano.   ×

The sentence above is also grammatically incorrect for the reason that definite articles should be attached to the instruments in English grammar. So the correct English expression is:

(b) 我妈妈正在弹钢琴。[wǒ mā mā zhèng zài dàn gāng qín]

My mom is playing the piano.

5.2.3　The Confusions of Adjective Word Order

When multiple adjectives describe a noun, the adjective word order in Mandarin Chinese is relatively free. Still, there are a few general points that need to be mentioned. According to Yip and Rimmington (2005), normally the adjective word order in Mandarin Chinese is 1. possession, 2. location, 3. time, 4. scope, 5. numeral, 6. state or activity, 7. characteristics, 8. shape, 9. color, 10. material, 11. function.　Different from this, the adjective order in English is 1. quantity or number, 2. quality or opinion, 3. size,

4. age, 5. shape, 6. color, 7. proper adjective including nationality, place of origin, or material, 8. purpose or qualifier ("Order of Adjectives - Rules & Examples | Ginger", 2018). For EFL learners of beginning level, the adjective word order is really difficult to remember. Note that, in Mandarin Chinese, two-syllable descriptive adjectives are usually used to describe two-syllable nouns and single syllable descriptive adjectives are usually used to describe single syllable nouns. For example,   both "漂亮女生" [piāo liàng nǔ shēng], and "美女" [měi nǔ] mean "pretty girl". In this case, the word "漂亮" [piāo liàng] (pretty) cannot be used in front of the word "女" [nǔ] (the female, woman), and the word "美" [měi] (beautiful) cannot be used in front of the word "女生" [nǔ shēng] (girl). On the contrary, English does not have such restriction.

5.2.4   The Confusions of Prepositions

Keith S. Folse (2016) who suggests that the followings are common ESL/EFL errors of prepositions: 1. lack of preposition, 2. extra preposition, 3. wrong preposition.   Chinese EFL learners sometimes get trapped in the same straits. In English, the usage of prepositions (at, on, in) in terms of times is totally different. For instance, "at noon", "in May", and "on Friday". Also, the usage of these prepositions (at, on, in) in terms of places in English is distinct. For example, "at the airport", "on the street", "and in the classroom". However, the word "在" [zài] is simply used as the same meaning of covering all these prepositions (at, on, in) regarding times and places. Additionally, phrasal verbs pose a challenge in the practice and usage in Chinese EFL acquisition process. Mistakes like "I

am waiting you" instead of "I am waiting for you" are commonly made by Chinese EFL learners. Many times, Chinese EFL learners simply substitute Chinese preposition (e.g. "with" for "under"). For example, they would say, "under his help" or "below his help" instead of "with his help", as illustrated below.

(6) (a) 在哥哥的帮助下，我按时完成了任务。

[zài gē gē de bāng zhù xià，wǒ àn shí wán chéng le rèn wù]

(With my brother's help, I completed the assignment on time.)

Under my brother's help, I completed the assignment on time.　　×

Below my brother's help, I completed the assignment on time.　　×

The two expressions above are incorrect and they can be easily found from Chinese EFL learners. Owing to the confusion of prepositions, they may just translate word-by-word and make a mistake. The correct expression should be:

(b) 在哥哥的帮助下，我按时完成了任务。

[zài gē gē de bāng zhù xià，wǒ àn shí wán chéng le rèn wù]

With my brother's help, I completed the assignment on time.

Sometimes, Chinese EFL learners can easily get confused by the subtle differences between prepositions. Here is an example:

(7) (a) You can just talk to me about what's on your mind.

(b) You can just talk to me about what's in your mind.

For most Chinese EFL learners, the two sentences above share exactly the same meaning. Yet, there is a subtle difference between the phrase "something on your mind"

and "something in your mind". "Something on your mind" means a load on your mind, and something to worry about. "Something in your mind" simply means something you are thinking about.

Even for intermediate or high-level English language learners, the confusion of preposition is always a difficult problem to tackle.

5.2.5　The Distinction of Subject Pronoun and Object Pronoun

In Mandarin Chinese, the form of the pronoun stays the same with both subject pronoun and object pronoun, whereas some subject pronouns and object pronouns are distinct in English. As a result, Chinese EFL learners are likely to use subject pronouns when they ought to use object pronouns. The table 7 below indicates a comparative list of pronouns in Mandarin Chinese and English regarding subject pronouns and object pronouns.

Chinese Pronouns	English Subject Pronouns	English Object Pronouns
我 [wǒ]	I	me
你 [nǐ]	you	you
他 [tā]	he	him
她 [tā]	she	her
它 [tā]	it	it
我们 [wǒ men]	we	us

你们 [nǐ men]	you	you
他们 [tā men]	they	them
她们 [tā men]	they	them
它们 [tā men]	they	them

<p align="center">-table 7-</p>

6. Syntax

In linguistics, the notion syntax means the set of grammatical rules that govern the structure of sentences. With the knowledge of English syntax, ESL/EFL learners are able to put what they have learnt including morphology, phonology, and parts of speech together to form meaningful sentences. There are some similarities and differences between Mandarin Chinese and English on syntax.

6.1 Positive Influence on Syntax

There are five basic sentential structures, which are the base of all complicated sentences, and they can be found in both English and Mandarin Chinese.

(8) (a) Subject + Verb + (Adverb)

　　e.g. 我们学习刻苦。　[wǒ men xué xí kè kǔ]

　　　　We study hard.

(b) Subject + transitive Verb +Object

e.g. 她演奏小提琴。 [tā yǎn zòu xiǎo tí qín]

She plays the violin.

(c) Subject + transitive Verb + indirect Object + direct Object

e.g. 我给她一本小说。 [wǒ gěi tā yī běn xiǎo shuō]

I gave her a novel.

(d) Subject + transitive Verb + Object + Complement

e.g. 妈妈教我弹奏钢琴。 [mā mā jiāo wǒ dàn zòu gāng qín]

My mom taught me to play the piano.

(e) Subject + Linking Verb + Complement

e.g. 他是一位教授。 [tā shì yī wèi jiāo shòu]

He is a professor.

These examples above show some similar sentence structures between Mandarin Chinese and the target language English, and the similarities can accelerate the learning process of syntax in ESL/ EFL.

6.2 Negative Influence on Syntax

Grammar can be easily misunderstood in the language learning process by Chinese EFL learners because there are a lot of grammatical differences between Mandarin Chinese and English. There is no denying that acknowledging those grammatical differences is time-consuming not only for beginning-level learners but also for experienced language learners. When Chinese EFL learners learn English grammar, they

often use Mandarin Chinese as their base. As a result, the negative influence happens in ESL/EFL learning.

6.2.1 Confusion of Word Order in a Sentence

In Mandarin Chinese, the word order in an interrogative sentence is highly similar to the word order in the corresponding declarative sentence. The simplest way to form an interrogative sentence in Mandarin Chinese is to add one interrogative, for example, "吗" [ma], "呢" [ne] to the end of the declarative sentence. For instance, the declarative sentence "我妈妈常常弹钢琴" [wǒ mā mā cháng cháng dàn gāng qín] (My mom usually plays the piano) can be transformed into an interrogative sentence by adding the question marker "吗" [ma], so the interrogative sentence is "我妈妈常常弹钢琴吗" [wǒ mā mā cháng cháng dàn gāng qín ma] (Does my mom usually play the piano). Unlike the rules in Mandarin Chinese, the rule of transforming a declarative sentence into an interrogative sentence requires a certain formula in English. For example, the word order changes from "Subject+ Auxiliary+ Verb" into "Auxiliary+ Subject+ Verb". For instance, the declarative sentence "She couldn't sleep last night" is formed following the word order "Subject- Auxiliary- Verb- Adverbial". When it is transformed into an interrogative sentence, the sentence turns out to be "Couldn't she sleep last night?" by following the word order "Auxiliary- Subject- Verb- Adverbial".

When it comes to wh-questions, the word order in Mandarin Chinese also differs from the word order in English. In fact, there are some question markers sharing the same

meanings of English wh-question markers in Mandarin Chinese. For example, "什么 [shén me]" means "what", "谁[shuí]" means "who", "哪儿/哪里[nǎ er /nǎ lǐ]" means "where", "为什么[wèi shén me]" means "why", and "如何/怎么样[rú hé /zěn me yàng]" means "how". What is different in Mandarin Chinese is that such question markers can simply replace the questioning part to form an interrogative sentence, as examples illustrated below.

(9) (a) 我打算明天去公园。[wǒ dǎ suàn míng tiān qù gōng yuán]

I am going to the park tomorrow.

(b) 我打算明天去哪儿？[wǒ dǎ suàn míng tiān qù nǎ er]

Where am I going to tomorrow？

The sentence above shows that the word orders in both declarative sentence and interrogative sentence in Mandarin Chinese are the same, and the question marker "哪儿" [nǎ er] simply replaces the part that is questioned and maintains intact the declarative sentence. As opposed to this, the word order in English expression is totally different.

Additionally, adverbs are typically placed in front of the verb in Mandarin Chinese (Sun, 2006). However, most adverbs in English can be placed after the verb, and if the verb has a corresponding object, the adverb is placed after the object. Such difference is often neglected by Chinese EFL learners. For example, in the Chinese expression "我每天早早地起床" [wǒ měi tiān zǎo zǎo de qǐ chuáng] (I get up early everyday), the adverbs "每天" [měi tiān] (every day) and "早早地" [zǎo zǎo de] (early) are placed right in front of the verb "起床" [qǐ chuáng] (get up). Conversely, in English expression,

the adverbs "every day" and "early" are supposed to be placed after the verb "get up", so the correct expression in English is "I get up early every day".

6.2.2　Omission of Subject

In Mandarin Chinese, speakers sometimes tend to omit the subject of a sentence if the meaning that sentence conveys is clear even without the subject. Consequently, tons of sentences with the omission of subjects are produced by Mandarin Chinese speaker in oral conversation, which is not the case in English. One situation of omitting the subject is non-subject sentence, which is a special sentence structure in Mandarin Chinese. Non-subject sentence means that an incomplete subject-predicate sentence can convey a complete meaning even in the absence of context. For example, the sentence "下雨了" [xià yǔ le] (It is rainy) lacks the subject of the sentence, which is "天" [tiān] (the sky). In this case, the subject of the sentence is extremely obvious, so adding the subject "天" [tiān] (the sky) can be redundant in Mandarin Chinese. The other situation is elliptical sentence, which means that the subject of a sentence can be omitted and the meaning of the sentence is not ambiguous with the hint of context. For example, in daily conversion, Mandarin Chinese speakers often say "吃了吗" [chī le ma] (Have you taken your meal) as a greeting, where the subject "你" [nǐ] (you) is omissible. That is, it has the same meaning where the subject "你" [nǐ] (you) is not omitted, as in "你吃了吗" [nǐ chī le ma] (Have you taken your meal).

Both situations cause negative crosslinguistic influence on Chinese EFL learners and they often produce English sentences with the omission of subject, such as "Have taken meal". Obviously, the sentence that has no subject is ungrammatical in English. The correct form should be "Have you taken your meal" with the overt subject "you".

6.2.3   Null Pronouns VS. Real Pronouns

In English, a null pronoun, also known as a grammatical pronoun, means that it does not work as the real subject in the sentence, and it usually happens especially when the subject or object in the sentence needs to be emphasized or needs to be shifted from its original order in the sentence. The pronoun "it" working as the formal subject in English is very common. For instance, in the sentence "It is important to listen to the others", the pronoun "it" is the formal subject in this sentence, while the real subject is "to listen to the others". So the sentence can be rewritten into "To listen to the others is important". However, in Mandarin Chinese, a real subject usually comes the first in a sentence or it can be omitted in some occasions as section 6.2.4. discussed. As opposed to English syntax, there is no similar concept like formal subject as well as formal object in Mandarin Chinese, exemplified by the following conversation.

(10) A: 是谁呀？ [shì shuí ya]

   A: Is who?

   (Who is it)

   B：是我。 [shì wǒ]

B: Is me.

  (It's me)

In the example above, Mandarin Chinese does not maintain null pronouns, but the English equivalence requires the null subject and object. That is, the pronoun "it" works as a formal subject in the answer to maintain a complete sentence structure in English.

A lot of Chinese EFL learners struggle with the use of formal subject and they might produce some English sentence affected by the negative crosslinguistic influence from Mandarin Chinese. For example, when Chinese EFL learners want to say "学生们很难完成这项任务" [xué shēng men hěn nán wán chéng zhè xiàng rèn wù] (It is hard for the students to accomplish this assignment) in English, they might transliterate the sentence based on word order in Mandarin Chinese and neglect the use of formal subject in English. In that case, they might say "The students are hard to accomplish this assignment" because in Chinese expression "学生们" [xué shēng men] (the students) is the subject of the sentence. However, the proper expression is "It is hard for the students to accomplish this assignment" because in English "to accomplish this assignment" is the real subject of the sentence and the pronoun "it" serves as the formal subject to keep the structure of the sentence in balance. Sentence structures like "It is important/ necessary/ natural… that…", "It is said/ reported/ suggested/ required… that…", and so on are needed to be explained in detail to Chinese EFL learners.

6.2.4　Serial Verbs in one Sentence

Serial verb construction means that two or more verbs or verb phases work as predicate verbs in one simple sentence, which is not grammatically correct in English. This sentence structure is commonly used in Mandarin Chinese. More specifically, the verbs or verb phases work equally as predicate verbs, but in terms of semantics, they can be purpose VS. method, reason VS. result, or in precedence order. Therefore, the order of the verbs or verb phrases in serial verb construction in Mandarin Chinese cannot be reversed. For example,

(11)(a) 我去机场接一个朋友。[wǒ qù jī chǎng jiē yī gè péng yǒu]

I went to the airport to pick up a friend.

As the example illustrated above, it shows a serial verbs construction in Mandarin Chinese, in which the verbs "去" [qù] (go) and "接" [jiē] (pick up) work equally as predicate verbs. However, in English expression, the verb "went" is the only predicate verb in this sentence, and the infinitive "to pick up" serves as a non-predicate verb to indicate the purpose of the predicate verb. Chinese ESL learners, especially those at the beginning level, often convey serial verbs construction into English. Therefore, they might produce the example sentence as "I went to the airport picked up a friend", and it is grammatically incorrect in English.

(b) 他骑自行来学校。[tā qí zì háng lái xué xiào]

He comes to school by bike.

The example above presents a serial verbs construction in Mandarin Chinese, and the verbs "骑" [qí] (ride) and "来" [lái] (come) are the predicate verbs. Different in the English sentence, the verb "comes" plays the only role as the predicate verb. Affected by serial verbs construction in Mandarin Chinese, Chinese EFL learners can easily make a mistake by saying "He rides a bike comes to school" or "He ride a bike come to school" even without the change of tense.

6.2.5   Misuse of Tense, Person and Number

It is a huge obstacle for Chinese EFL learners to differentiate tenses as well as singular and plural numbers. In Mandarin Chinese, the verbs remain their forms unchanged in different tenses or singular and plural number whenever or whomever the sentence refers to. For example, the sentence "她走回家" [tā zǒu huí jiā] (She walks home) stays in the same form no matter when this action happens. However, in English, verbs have inflectional changes with the change in tense or singular/ plural numbers. According to Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, (2016), there are 12 basic English tenses. Take the sentence "她走回家" [tā zǒu huí jiā] (She walks home) as an example, it can be expressed in 12 different ways based on the change of tenses in English as it is shown in table 8.

Time	Tense	Example Sentences
Past	Simple Past	She walked home.
	Past Continuous	She was walking home.
	Past Perfect	She had walked home.
	Past Perfect Continuous	She had been walking home.
Present	Simple Present	She walks home.
	Present Continuous	She was walking home.
	Present Perfect	She has walked home.
	Present Perfect Continuous	She has been walking home.
Future	Simple Future	She will walk home.
	Future Continuous	She will be walking home.
	Future Perfect	She will have walked home.
	Future Perfect Continuous	She will have been walking home.

-table 8-

When Chinese ESL learners need to produce English sentences, they always seem to be under the influence of the language habits in Mandarin Chinese, and easily forget to change the verb forms according to the different tenses. Although a lot of learners try to remember this grammar rule in English, they may get confused by so many different

tenses, and misuse the tenses. For example, they might say "She walk home yesterday" or "She walks home yesterday", which are both grammatically wrong in English.

Another grammar rule in English is that predicate verb and its subject must agree in person and number. Due to the fact that predicate verb in Mandarin Chinese remains unchanged regardless of the person and number of its subject, such grammar rule in English becomes challenging for Chinese ESL learners. For example,

(12)(a)她走回家。　[tā zǒu huí jiā]

　　She walks home.

(b) 她们走回家。[tā men zǒu huí jiā]

　　They walk home.

As in the examples above, the predicate verb in Mandarin Chinese is 走[zǒu](walk) remains unchanged with different subject. However, the predicate verb in English changes from "walks" in example (12) (a) to "walk" in example (12) (b) because the subject of the sentence changes from third person singular "she" in example (12) (a) to third person plural "they" in example (12) (b).

Moreover, some particular sentence structures in English can make it even harder for ESL/ EFL learners to keep the subject-verb agreement. For instance, "not only… but also…", "not… but…", "either… or…", "neither… nor…", "whether… or…", and "there be…". As a matter of fact, these sentence structures all need to be applied with the principle of proximity, which means the predicate verb agrees with the noun or pronoun closest to the verb. For example, when Chinese EFL learners want to express "Neither

she nor you are wrong", they might say "Neither she nor you is wrong", and obviously it is grammatically incorrect in English. In English, the linking verb "are" agrees with the pronoun "you" which is closest to the verb.

6.2.6　Misuse of Voice

Active voice means that the action of the predicate verb is derived from the subject and applied to the object. On the contrary, in the passive voice, the predicate action is acted or affected on the subject. Active voice and passive voice are commonly used in both English and Mandarin Chinese. However, there is a difference between Mandarin Chinese and English on passive voice. Even though there are a few passive markers like "被" [bèi], passive marker is dispensable in Mandarin Chinese. Such difference leads to a negative crosslinguistic influence. When Chinese EFL learners try to produce passive voice in English, they often tend to omit the passive markers, namely "be" For example, they might say "The assignments write on the blackboard" instead of the correct expression, which is "The assignments are written on the blackboard".

It is noteworthy that there is a special structure of active voice in Mandarin Chinese, which is "把" [bǎ] construction. Basically, "把" [bǎ] is a marker that indicates the change of position on the object in a sentence. The basic structure of "把" [bǎ] construction is usually subject+ "把" [bǎ]+ object + predicate verb, which is used to emphasize behavioral outcomes or behavioral patterns. For example, the sentence "我喝了一杯牛奶" [wǒ hē le yī bēi niú nǎi] (I drank a glass of milk) can be rewrite into "把" [bǎ]

construction, which is "我把一杯牛奶喝了" [wǒ bǎ yī bēi niú nǎi hē le] (I drank a glass of milk). Note that, because all the sentences with the marker "把" [bǎ] can be rewritten into the primary structure of active voice, which is subject+ predicate verb+ object, the "把" [bǎ] construction will not cause as much negative crosslinguistic influence as the "被" [bèi] construction.

6.2.7   Mismatch of Conjunctions

There are around 120 conjunctions in total in Mandarin Chinese, and a lot of them often work in pairs, for instance, "如果……那么……" [rú guǒ…nà me…] (If…then…), "尽管……然而……" [jìn guǎn… rán ér…] (Although… however). For example, the sentence "如果你邀请我，我会去参加派对" [rú guǒ nǐ yāo qǐng wǒ, wǒ huì qù cān jiā pài duì] (If you invite me, then I will go to the party) shows a complete causal logic in Mandarin Chinese by using the conjunction pair "如果……那么……" [rú guǒ…nà me…] (If…then…). Such language habit turns out to be a kind of negative crosslinguistic influence to mismatch conjunctions in English, since the way English structures its conjunctions in sentences is quite different from Mandarin Chinese. With this kind of negative influence, Chinese EFL learners might produce a sentence like "If you invite me, then I will go to the party". In English spoken discourse, the proper expression is "If you invite me, I will go to the party". Chinese EFL learners should pay more attention to distinguishing English conjunctions that can work in pairs and conjunctions that can work alone.

6.3 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the study of how languages are used in contexts. Owing to plenty of practical factors like cultural background and personal life experience, there are lots of differences in terms of language use in English and Mandarin Chinese. These differences result in causing negative crosslinguistic influence for Chinese EFL learners, and even worse, pragmatic failure can happen among different levels of learners, from the very beginning level to advanced level.

Take the case of greetings. When Chinese speaker come across a friend or an acquaintance, they might greet by saying "吃了吗" [chī le ma] (Have you eaten your meal) or "去哪儿" [qù nǎ er] (Where are you heading to), rather than "你好" [nǐ hǎo] (Hello). In Chinese culture, it is a way to show care and kindness, and the answers of these questions do not matter at all. However, when Chinese EFL learners convey these greetings into English, English native speakers can feel awkward towards these. That is because these questions invade others privacy to some extent in English speaking countries.

Besides, the boundary of privacy differs from Chinese to English native speakers. In Chinese culture, topics such as age, family, health condition, and personal experience can be some effective icebreakers in daily conversation, and sometimes these topics can even be discussed between strangers. In this case, Chinese EFL learners might ask questions

like "How's your salary" or "Are you married" when they mingle with native English speakers, which is inappropriate in English.

Furthermore, Mandarin Chinese speakers are considered being extremely modest when they are faced with a praise. For example,

(13) A: 您看上去真年轻。[nín kàn shàng qù zhēn nián qīng]

You look so young.

B: 过誉了，我已经有白发了。[guò yù le ， wǒ yǐ jīng yǒu bái fā le]

You praise me too much. I already have grey hair.

(14) A：这项任务你完成得很好。[zhè xiàng rèn wù nǐ wán chéng dé hěn hǎo]

You did a great job on this assignment.

B：碰巧罢了,下次就不一定了。[pèng qiǎo bà le, xià cì jiù bú yī dìng le]

I just happened to be lucky. I am not sure about the next assignment.

As illustrated by the examples in example (13) and example (14), Mandarin Chinese speakers try their best to minimize the praise and to maximize the dispraise. In Chinese culture, it indicates one's immodesty to take others' praise for granted. However, in English speaking countries, being too modest seems to be insincere or self-contemptuous. So Chinese ESL learners should pay more attention to the differences of cultural values between China and English speaking countries.

7. Recommendation

It is inevitable for language learners to be affected by crosslinguistic influence because mother tongue is a part of a speaker's identity. We need to be aware that the study of crosslinguistic influence of Chinese EFL learners on English acquisition is helpful for both teachers and learners to better understand the impact of positive crosslinguistic influence and negative crosslinguistic influence. Additionally, it will be able to help English teachers and learners to figure out some methods to utilize positive crosslinguistic influence and reduce negative crosslinguistic influence in order to have a better grasp of acquiring English.

7.1 Making Contrastive Analysis between English and Mandarin Chinese

Although it seems that there are more types of the negative crosslinguistic influence than the positive crosslinguistic influence in the process of Chinese EFL learners' English acquisition, one can not ignore the effect of positive influence. There are many common features between English and Mandarin Chinese. If one can find and master these features, it will help him/ her to learn English. In this case, having a better understanding of Mandarin Chinese and Chinese culture is beneficial for Chinese EFL learners. Therefore, in the process of English acquisition, making contrastive analysis between the native language and target language is valuable. English teachers can start with the similarities between English and Mandarin Chinese to lay a solid foundation for English

acquisition and help to build students' confidence. Then they can help learners to analyze the causes of errors mainly by the negative crosslinguistic influence. With that the teachers could guide the students to pay more attention to the differences which will further help avoid mistakes.

7.2 Increasing the Amount of Language Input and Output

The reason why many learners are easily influenced by the negative crosslinguistic influence of their native language is the lack of the input of the target language. Therefore, Chinese EFL learners should be given a large amount of English language input. It is an effective learning method to expand the amount of English reading and listening input. English teachers can choose authentic English materials like TV programs broadcasted in English or English novels with suitable difficulty levels according to language skill levels of the students in order to broaden students' horizons, cultivate their interests, increase their language senses, and most importantly accumulate knowledge of the target language. As a result, learners will be able to produce English in both oral and written forms naturally and effortlessly.

The process of English output needs to be paid more attention as well. Increasing the amount of language output not only helps consolidate the existing English knowledge, but also contributes forwards awareness of some details that are often overlooked by language learners. These will eventually lead the leaners in the right direction to improve their overall English skills.

7.3 Enhance the import of cultural background

The fundamental purpose of foreign language learning is to achieve certain level of cross-cultural communicative competence with people from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it is important to help foreign language learners to build their comprehensive language abilities which integrate language skills, language knowledge, learning strategies and cultural consciousness. During the process of English acquisition, some learners are confronted with the difficulty that they have a hard time understanding English materials and communicating with English speakers even though they have already acquired adequate English vocabulary and grammar. That is because they are lacking cultural background knowledge of English speaking countries. Teaching materials that include cultural aspects such as historical stories, legends of the target language would be a part of the solution as it will help learners to cultivate their awareness of cultural differences, to avoid the use of native cultural norms for English communication, and to enhance their knowledge of English culture and intercultural communication competence.

8. Conclusion

Crosslinguistic influence is one of the essential elements in the process of English as foreign language acquisition. Both positive crosslinguistic influence and negative crosslinguistic influence cannot be ignored by language learners and language teachers

because one cannot completely eliminate the impact from the native language. Language learners can take advantages of positive crosslinguistic influence serving as a good starting point of English acquisition. Meanwhile, they should not be intimidated by the negative crosslinguistic influence. Under many circumstances, negative crosslinguistic influence is caused by linguistic distance, which is a psychological state between language learners and the target language. Sometimes English as foreign language learners feel that their English expression is not fluent enough because of this psychological distance. For instance, reading a sad story in English seems not to be that sad because it is written in English. In this case, the reader and the story seem to be separated by a distance. In other words, this is because the target language does not merge with the reader's real-life experience together. Making better use of crosslinguistic influence will help Chinese EFL learners to bridge the linguistic distance between English and themselves.

ESL/ EFL teachers should make the comparative analysis of mother tongue and the target language in various aspects, such as, phonetics and phonology, morphology, parts of speech, syntax, and pragmatics. Having been exposed to such comparative analyses, learners will pay more attention to these similarities and differences, increase the amount of target language input and output, and enhance the import of cultural background. So leaners can not only get familiar with the two languages, but also gain a better understanding of the differences between the two modes of thinking in different cultural

backgrounds, minimizing the negative influence of native language and social norms on foreign language learning.

The methods presented in this thesis is limited, so more efforts are needed from not only researchers but also teachers to find more possible and effective ways to utilize the positive crosslinguistic influence and overcome the negative crosslinguistic influence from mother tongue.

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