How to Deal With Chinglish Problems Appeared in the English Writings by Vocational College Students

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Abstract

Chinglish is one of the common problems appeared in the English writings by vocational college students. There is no logic in some of the Chinglish sentences, not mention the meanings. Although there are no grammatical mistakes in some Chinglish sentences, they still confuse the native-speakers. Chinglish hinders the improvement of English writing and might mislead the students if they are not corrected in time. The aim of this essay is to improve English writing of vocational college students by analyzing the reasons and figuring out the solutions.

Key words: Chinglish; English writing ability; Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Chinglish is a common problem in vocational students' writing English. Existence of Chinglish hinders improvement of students' English writing skill. If it is not fixed on time, students will be misled.

1. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHINGLISH AND ENGLISH

Chinglish is different from English, Deng (1989) thought that Chinglish might be correct in respect of grammar, but the choice of words and expressions do not meet English habits. Although it may not affect the exchange, a native speaker will not accept it. Pinkham (2000) defined Chinglish as a transformed and mixed language, which is neither complete English nor complete Chinese, which is English with Chinese characters. Li (2003) believed that sentences and words of Chinglish seem to be Chinese in the format of English, which is formed as a result of unskilled mastering in English, bad habit in Chinese writing, and uncritical thinking. Baidu Encyclopedia refers Chinglish to deform English, which is irregular in English communication or substandard to English cultural habits, as a consequence of that Chinese English learners and users rigidly applied rules and habits due to interference and influence of the mother tongue. Such English usually are not acceptable and incomprehensible to native speakers.

Chuangui Ge is the first who proposes Chinglish as a formal concept. When he pointed out the difference between Chinese English and English Chinese, he said that

> different countries have different situation. In our regard, no matter in new China or old China, speaking or writing English will have something unique in our country to express, for instance imperial examinations, the Four Books, the May Fourth Movement, and the Four Modernizations, which are not belong to English native speakers common words should be called China English.

Wang (1991) defined Chinglish as "English with Chinese characters that is used by Chinese in China and based on standard English", and further pointed out that "it mainly constructed from transliterated words, translated loanwords and unique sentences and discourse". Li (1993) published *Chinese English and Chinglish* which proposed

that Chinese Englihsh is not limited in China. He defined Chinese English as

> Chinese English refers to words, sentences and discourses with Chinese characters, which is based on standard English, free from interference and influence of the mother tongue, that applied in English communication through transliterated words, translated loanwords, semantic regeneration and other methods.

Chinese English is able to be used to communicate internationally, which will benefit dissemination of Chinese culture, but Chinglish is not capable to communicate. In English writing, one should distinguish Chinese English and Chinglish. It is encouraged to use Chinese English with Chinese characters and promote Chinese culture. Also one should avoid using Chinglish which makes native speaker confused.

2. CHINGLISH IN ADVANCED VOCATIONAL STUDENTS' WRITING

2.1 Replacement and Addition

Recently, shopping on line **is became a fashion**, many young people, if they want to **shopping**, they will **open** computer or phone at once.

The example above comes from starting part of student's "Discussion on advantages and disadvantages of online shopping". A single short sentence has exposed the weakness of advanced vocational students' writing, which includes soft foundation, mastery in the vocabulary, meaning, grammar master is not enough, and obvious "patchwork". "Recently" means "a short time ago". However, online shopping is not popular only in recent. The student wants to express "in recent years", thus in the correct expression it should replace "recently" by "in recent years". The sentence right after it should be the present perfect, thus "is became a fashion" should be rewritten to "has become fashion". Since "fashion" is an uncountable noun, the article "a" is removed. In "if they want to shopping", the "shopping" is a noun that means to do purchasing. Many students only memorize meaning of the word but part of speech. "Want to" should be followed by a verb that is in the original format. Thus it should be corrected as "if they want to go shopping". Though there are a couple of mistakes in part of speech and grammar, those sentences at the beginning are still understandable. However, the last sentence "open the computer or phone" will confuse English native speakers. "Open" refers to "unclose" in Chinese. However, objects of "open" usually are "door, window, cap, and document". In English, in the case of electronics, one should use "turn on". Thus the last sentence should be "they will turn on the computer or phone at once"

2.2 Redundancy

Redundancy is a common Chinglish phenomenon in writing as a result of that student does not understand the word correctly. It is reflected in the use of words that are not needed or reuse words that have similar meaning.

a) Redundant noun

Living standards for the people in both urban and rural areas continued to rise. ("Living standards" are only suitable for people, nor for animals，thus "for the people" is redundant.)

b) Redundant verb

My father is very fond of catching fish.

(fishing means catching fish, catch is redundant)

c) Redundant adjective and adverbial

Please repeat again.

("repeat" itself has the meaning of "again", thus again here is redundant)

2.3 Grammar Mistakes

a) Pronoun mistake

I love she very much. ("she" should be replaced by her)

In the Chinese, pronouns have no difference between being nominative or accusative. For example, "I, you, he," are the same whether they are subject or object. However, in English, they do have differences. Many students do not master it, which results in the use of pronouns in wrong form.

b) Tense mistake

He studied English for two years.

(This sentence wants to express that it has been two years since he started to study English, to which we should apply to present perfect tense. Thus it should be "he has studied English for two years")

Chinese students often make mistakes on choosing tense. There are ten tenses in English. Chinese students usually are able to use simple present, simple past and simple future correctly. However, they usually make mistakes on present perfect and past perfect and use simple past to replace present perfect or past perfect. In Chinese, we use words such as 'le', 'guo' to suggest something happened in the past, while in English we use different formats of verb to show different states.

c) Preposition mistake

Rose is married with Philip.

(Though in Chinese "one is married with someone", however in English "to" is the correct preposition for "marry", thus we should say "Rose was married to Philip")

He is waiting his friend.

(In the sentence above, the mistake is that there is no preposition after an intransitive verb. Though in Chinese we say "wait someone", "wait" in English is an intransitive verb. When it is followed by an object, it should have a preposition between them. Thus it should be He is waiting for his friend.)

d) Conjunction mistake

Because it is raining, so the meeting was canceled.

(To make it correct, either "because" or "so" should be deleted.)

Although it was raining heavily, but he still came.

(To make it correct, either "although" or "but" should be deleted.)

In Chinese habit, when we are saying "because…so", "although…but", two conjunctions are used together. Lots of students follow Chinese thinking habit and use two conjunctions together.

3. REASON OF CHINGLISH IN ADVANCED VOCATIONAL STUDENTS' WRITING

In regard of Chinglish, Lin (2001) proposed, basing on interlanguage theory, that "Chinglish" is an interlanguage variant, which is an inevitable transient phenomenon, that generated during processes of Chinese people learning and using English, which are affected by Chinese culture and language. Zhuang (2000) concluded "Chinglish" as a misuse in Chinese structure as a result of deficient understanding in English. Wang (2003) provided "fill up" hypnosis that explains the formation mechanism of Chinglish in aspect of language environment, which thinks that Chinglish is a product of English format combined with the Chinese environment. Ma and Ji (2003) analyzed cause of formation of Chinglish in respect of cognition and proposed that it is the learner who assimilates Chinese rules and leads to Chinglish. Though Chinese English learners have different situations, behind most of confusion of English learners, there is a popular issue: negative transfer effect of mother tongue. Negative transfer means in the process of learning a second language, when the learner is facing different rule from mother tongue, he will transfer the mother tongue rule to the new language, which will affect learning a foreign language. In this situation, mother tongue has a negative effect on foreign language, which is called negative transfer. From Chinglish in advanced vocational students' writing, students show intense negative transfer on the level of vocabulary. They are usually regardless of different nature of the two languages and directly apply expression in the mother tongue to English mechanically, which leads to sentences that formed by English words with obvious characters of Chinese structures. The reason can be concluded into three aspects as follows.

3.1 Memorizing Vocabulary in Wrong Way

Many Chinese students memorize English words using "spoon-fed" method in an English-Chinese approach, in alphabetical order to go to recite vocabulary book, and mechanically. They will compare Chinese meaning and English spelling simply and be satisfied by being able to understand the meaning of words in a sentence without understanding further meaning and how to use those words. All of them result English reading and other

passive use of English are strong, however speaking and writing which need active skill are weak. Thus, when lots of English learners need to use English, they are actually searching memory to find the corresponding English words that have same meaning to Chinese words and then replace those Chinese words by the English in the same order as Chinese. This learning method in the early stages of learning English seems to bring a sense of accomplishment to the learner quickly because they need to master only limited amount of words to express a complete English sentence in a relatively short period of time. However, this comparison and fill-up based crash accomplishment will lead the learner to be unfamiliar with pronunciation, vocabulary, meaning, and grammar and to apply Chinese meaning and use directly to English, which will disobey rule of English, which will also finally make Chinglish inevitable.

3.2 Lack of Adequate Amount of English Reading

Because of the characteristics of Chinese long-oriented education, English learners have been carrying out 'targeted' memorization of vocabulary, understanding of essays, choosing of words to fill in the blank and so on, which are at the unusual states of language learning process. In additions, Chinese students have large amounts of homework from various academic courses, preventing most of the English learners from extensive and much English reading. Thus, they are lack of English language input. Without the knowledge of authentic English, students will naturally become dependent on their native language, which causes the negative acculturation of Chinese while translating between these two languages and results in the existence of Chinglish.

3.3 Overlook Cultural Studies of English

The cultural differences between English and Chinese are the source of interference for English learners, which resulted in a negative acculturation, and it is also the most fundamental cause of Chinglish. Dai and Zhang (2000) have pointed out,

> Acculturation refers to cultural interference caused by cultural differences. It is observed during cross-cultural communication, where people use their cultural norms and values to guide their own behaviors and thoughts subconsciously and use them as a standard to judge the behaviors and thoughts of others.

During the process of English learning, Chinese learners, who are affected by the way they think in Chinese, together with a lack of understanding of the socio-cultural traditions of English-speaking countries or are unfamiliar with the Western way of communication, tend to judge the culture of English-speaking countries from their perspectives and express themselves in the native Chinese way. By doing so, they ignore the cultural factors implied in English learning, which leads to cultural conflicts and causes the appearance of Chinglish.

4. STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH THE PHENOMENON OF CHINGLISH IN VOCATIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS' ENGLISH WRITING

4.1 Memorizing Vocabulary in the Right Way

When memorize English words, students should not stick to the lexical level between Chinese and English, but to enlarge the comparative analysis on sentences and paragraphs. During the use of English and conversion, process between Chinese and English, students need to avoid condemnation and should appropriately change part of the speech, switch the order of words, add or take out words, change between passive and active tension and so on. Meanwhile, English teachers can use comparative analysis between the two languages, let students recognize the distinctions between these two languages in the lexical level, syntactic level and level of cultural differences. It is important for students to understand these differences in order to reduce mistakes made due to intellectual interferences. English teachers should make an effort to collect typical Chinglish errors made by students during their learning, point out the distinction between Chinglish and English in order to deepen students' understanding of the expressions in Chinglish.

4.2 Guide Students Toward Large Amount of English Reading

English language learners should perform a lot of language input, training themselves to think in English. American Psychological linguist and methodologist Krashen put forward the summary on language acquisition and language learning as a psychological process: input-filtration-absorption-organization-monitoring-output. The larger the amount of language input, the better they can use English to express themselves. Reading is the best way for language input. Students should pay attention to accumulate materials on cultural characteristics, customs and habits, social relations and other aspects while reading. During the process, students should try to avoid using native languages as much as possible in order to reduce their dependency on their mother language and gradually develop a direct sense of intuition to use English for conversions. Meanwhile, they should also accumulate more English vocabs and sentences during readings, think actively and exercise more frequently, expand their vocabulary collections, and pay extra attention to sentences which have the same meaning but are expressed differently in both languages. By doing so, students can try to avoid Chinglish and express themselves with authentic English during any use of this language.

4.3 Offer Western Culture Courses to Deepen Their Understandings of Cultural Differences

The school can offer courses on appreciation of Western literature, cross-cultural communication, religion and other issues involving Western cultures to ensure that students can master English and cultural knowledge at the same time. Varied cultural information is also absorbed imperceptibly into students' knowledge system. At the same time, during English teaching, teachers should reinforce the introduction of cultures in the classroom and increase their cross-cultural teaching awareness. During the traditional English teaching, teachers would emphasize more on the external forms and grammatical structure of the language and they often overlooked cultural differences of the language which often results in that although most students know a large amount of knowledge on the foreign language, they cannot properly communicate cross-culturally. In fact, if teachers consciously combine language teaching with teaching of the conditions of the nation, cultural practices and other background knowledge together, this will not only increase students' sensitivity toward Western culture and stimulate their learning motivations, but also will help students understand the context better. Teachers should obtain a large collection of the typical errors of Chinglish and use the analysis of it comparatively in English teaching in order to avoid the existence of culturally wrong Chinglish.

CONCLUSION

Because vocational college students' English in high school is generally poor, Chinglish in their English writing appears much frequently. Therefore, teachers and students need to work together to correct their Chinglish, and on the other hand, to improve their English writing skills by showing them standardized English more often and making sure they use the correct expressions.

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