

Analysis of the Impact of Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue on Students' English Listening Comprehension

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 11 Sep 2025; Received in revised form: 07 Oct 2025; Accepted: 10 Oct 2025; Available online: 14 Oct 2025 ©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). Keywords— Negative mother tongue transfer; Listening comprehension ability</p>	<p><i>The negative transfer of mother tongue exerts an objective influence on English listening comprehension. This paper mainly explores the causes of such negative transfer and its processes of influence from the two perspectives of pronunciation and culture, and briefly elaborates on its implications for teaching practice.</i></p>

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I. INTRODUCTION

The study of language transfer can be traced back to the 1950s, which refers to "the influence of one language on the learning of another language" (Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics 2011). Mother tongue transfer refers to the phenomenon that the language rules, thinking modes, cultural factors, etc. of the mother tongue have some favorable or unfavorable influences on the learning of a new language when we learn other languages except the mother tongue. Among them, the beneficial and positive influence is called positive transfer, and the unfavorable and negative influence is called negative transfer. Mother tongue transfer is a very important internal factor affecting

the effect of second language acquisition, which has been widely concerned by language scholars at home and abroad.

The learning of English by Chinese students takes place on the premise of their basic mastery of the mother tongue, so they are inevitably affected by the mother tongue and other cultural knowledge and experience related to the mother tongue. To understand the cognitive process of Chinese students learning English and scientifically analyze the factors affecting the development of students' comprehensive English ability, it is necessary to consider language transfer, especially the key issue of negative language transfer.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF NEGATIVE MOTHER TONGUE TRANSFER ON ENGLISH LISTENING COMPREHENSION

As we all know, in English learning, the ability of listening comprehension is particularly important. Listening is the first of the five core skills reflecting English language ability - listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, and its status in English acquisition is self-evident. And understanding English is a very complex cognitive and psychological process. In the process of listening comprehension, the listener needs to rely on multiple knowledge reserves and comprehensive skill literacy to quickly and effectively analyze, judge, process and filter the received information, so as to realize the information iteration at the cognitive level. Listening comprehension is essentially the capture of a dynamic signal, which has the characteristics of instantaneity and cannot be repeated. If it is not captured timely and accurately, it is easy to lead to information transmission 断裂 (break) or decoding distortion. This paper will analyze the influence of negative mother tongue transfer on English listening comprehension from two aspects of pronunciation characteristics and cultural differences.

1. Negative Transfer at the Pronunciation Level

In a sense, listening comprehension is a linear process of acquiring underlying language elements and gradually constructing meaning. Therefore, the listening process starts from the most basic speech recognition. The listener needs to distinguish the phonemes heard and quickly and accurately associate the corresponding words and meanings according to the captured pronunciation. The vowel and consonant phonemes in English are rich and diverse, which are very different from the pronunciation system of Chinese. Chinese attaches importance to the tone phonetic system, which has four different tones: flat, rising, falling-rising and falling, and the meanings expressed are also different. English is a stress language, and the stress position of words and the intonation change of sentences play an important role in expressing meaning and emotion. The stress

position of English words is different, which may lead to changes in parts of speech and word meaning. For example, "record" as a noun has the stress on the first syllable, pronounced as /'rekɔ:d/; as a verb, the stress is on the second syllable, pronounced as /rɪ'kɔ:d/.

This difference is bound to interfere with students in English listening. Students may unconsciously bring Chinese pronunciation habits into English vocabulary acquisition, resulting in inaccurate pronunciation of English words, which will inevitably affect students' listening comprehension; affected by Chinese pronunciation habits, many students cannot grasp the stress of English words accurately, resulting in wrong understanding of the part of speech and meaning of the heard words, and then misunderstanding the meaning of the sentence.

2. Negative Transfer at the Cultural Level

Language is the carrier of culture. When the cultural environment of the learner is similar to that of the target language, culture will produce positive transfer in language acquisition. On the contrary, the greater the difference between the cultural environment of the learner and that of the target language, the more detrimental culture is to language acquisition, and the more likely negative transfer is to occur. The lack of cultural background knowledge is an important factor leading to negative mother tongue transfer. Different countries and regions have their own unique cultural customs and local conditions, so English listening materials often contain vocabulary, idioms, customs, allusions and other contents under specific cultural backgrounds. If students lack awareness of this specific cultural knowledge, it will be impossible for them to properly comprehend the listening materials

In addition, the difference in thinking modes between English and Chinese is also an important incentive for negative mother tongue transfer. English articles and materials are mostly linear thinking, usually going straight to the theme, making the main idea clear at the beginning, and then expanding the discussion around the theme, and often using a lot of connecting words and transitional words to clarify the logical relationship, with clear logical structure and

distinct layers. Chinese, on the other hand, is more circuitous and implicit, often making preparations first and then slowly introducing the theme. Moreover, Chinese pays more attention to showing the logical relationship through semantics and context, and does not use connecting words as frequently and massively as English. In listening comprehension, these two completely different thinking modes will greatly affect students' grasp of the logical relationship of listening materials, and then affect students' understanding of the content of listening discourses.

III. ENLIGHTENMENT FOR THE CULTIVATION OF ENGLISH LISTENING COMPETENCE

To sum up, negative mother tongue transfer has a certain interference on students' English listening comprehension, and this interference is multi-level and multi-dimensional, which also reflects the necessity and urgency of intervening through effective means to reduce the negative impact of negative mother tongue transfer on listening comprehension.

At the teaching level, teachers should strengthen phonetic teaching, improve students' awareness of phonetic learning, and form good phonetic habits. And teachers can enrich teaching content and arouse students' interest in phonetic learning by means of modern information technology. Teachers should also deeply integrate cultural teaching into teaching, and improve students' awareness of cultural learning and their ability to understand the cultural connotation of listening discourses by carrying out rich and colorful theme activities of cultural backgrounds of English-speaking countries.

At the same time, teachers should also pay attention to the cultivation of students' learning strategies, guide students to learn independently and actively, and cultivate the awareness of self-supervision and the methods of self-evaluation, increase students' after-class English learning time, improve learning effects, truly realize the "seamless connection" between in-class and after-class learning, maximize the conversion of the learned listening skills

into "learning productivity", and promote the improvement of students' listening comprehension ability.

IV. CONCLUSION

Language transfer is a complex cognitive process, and its influence on second language acquisition is also an objective existence that cannot be ignored. For learners, they should first be able to recognize and correctly view the negative impact brought by negative language transfer, and aim at the crux of the problem to find effective intervention means to reduce its interference with language acquisition. Teachers should serve as the guiding light and strong backing for students in overcoming difficulties. By providing effective supervision and guidance to students, they should make every effort to reduce the interference of negative transfer, thus enhancing students' language acquisition outcomes.

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