

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of this study will be discussed. In section 5.1 the findings will be analyzed based on my theoretical framework of interlanguage system. Next in section 5.2, linguistic implications will be examined. Then in section 5.3 some suggestions for further studies will be made. Finally in section 5.4 the major points of this chapter will be summarized.

5.1 Interpretation of the Results Based on My Theoretical Framework

As mentioned in chapter 2, the present theoretical framework of interlanguage system can be formulated as follows:

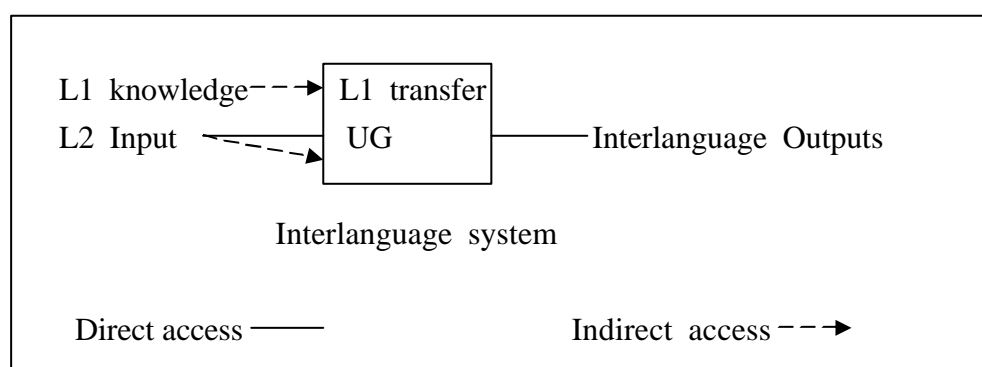


Figure 14: my theoretical framework of the operation of interlanguage system

Hypothesis:

1. L1 transfer occurs if any of the following conditions is met:
 - a. L1 features are unmarked
 - b. L1 features overlap with the outputs of a developmental stage

c. L1 features form a superset of L2 subset

- ? the more conditions the L1 features match, the more transferable these features are.
2. Direct input (explicit triggering data for parameter resetting) and indirect input (implicit triggering data) determine the relative difficulty of incorporating L2 inputs into the interlanguage system. That is, direct inputs enter the interlanguage system more easily than do indirect ones. L2 inputs can be made more direct (explicit) via input enhancement or other techniques. Only when the L2 inputs enter the interlanguage system will UG operate in L2 acquisition

The two hypotheses were formulated based on the three SLA theories—L1 influence, UG, and the subset principle—as well as some empirical interlanguage studies. This framework assumes that the interlanguage system consists of two major processes-- L1 transfer and UG. However, some conditions must be met before the two processes actually operate. For L1 transfer to occur, there are three possible conditions. The more conditions which are met, the more likely L1 transfer will happen. On the other hand, for UG to take place, the nature of input is important. The more direct (explicit) the input is, the more likely it is to enter the interlanguage system.

As mentioned in chapter 3, the four topic structures--LD, TOP, DS, DP--are subject to L1 (Chinese) transfer since they form a superset of L2 (English) topic structures. As the topic structures, they also conform to the features typical of the early developmental stage. Therefore, they all meet two conditions of L1 transfer. If any of them meet the third condition--markedness, it will be more transferable.

I will show how the framework of interlanguage system explains the results of

this study, as presented in table 20.

Table 20: summary of the results

TP score (error)	Non-TP score	Relative difficulty	S/O asymmetry
Generally no significant differences across levels (except for TOP in the GJ task level 2>>level 1)	Level 1 outperformed other levels	LD>>DP>>DS(B), TOP>>DS(A)	Chinese: Non-DP(S)>> Non-DP(O); Level 2: DP(O)>>DP(S)

TP scores suggested clear evidence of L1 transfer of the four topic structures, and there were virtually no significant differences in the responses of all levels.

Non-TP scores, on the other hand, revealed the existence of UG, especially in level 1.

Thus, TP and non-TP scores proved the operation of L1 transfer and UG in the interlanguage system, though the latter process seemed to occur in the later state of development.

As for the relative difficulty of LD, the nature of inputs can offer the explanation.

By searching the contents of the Chinese subjects' textbooks during their first and second year in the junior high school (The Standard English Textbook for junior high schools, 2001-2002), I found that the following structures had corresponding positive input--DP, TOP, DS(B), DS(A)--as shown in (37)-(40).

(37) DP: incorrect form—null subject and null object

Positive input: all the sentences in the textbooks had overt subject and overt object

(38) TOP: incorrect form—OSV

Positive input: all the sentences in the textbooks had canonical word order—SVO

(39) DS(B): incorrect form—two nouns in a part-whole relation (possessor-possessed)

Positive input: the possessive form 's before a possessor

(40) DS(A): incorrect form—two nouns in a part-whole relation (location-located)

Positive input: the addition of a preposition before the first noun (e.g., *In* my family, I am the youngest.)

However, the positive input for LD was only indirect (implicit), as shown in (41).

(41) LD: incorrect form—a noun plus a co-referential pronoun in the following clause

Indirect positive input: the correct usage of pronoun, i.e., a pronoun should refer back to a noun in the previous clause(s), rather than to an adjacent noun.

Since the textbook only offered indirect evidence in LD, this may explain why LD was the most difficult structure for the Chinese subjects. The second hypothesis-- the nature of input affects the existence of UG--is thus supported in this respect. Since the input available to unlearn LD is indirect, it is less likely to enter the interlanguage system for UG to operate.

On the other hand, the relative difficulty of DP may be explained by markedness.

Zobol (1984), based on the typological version of markedness¹, proposes that L1 must meet three criteria to be unmarked and thus transferrable—productive in L1, frequently used, and not be endangered of disappearing, as particular structures have historically done in languages. Namely, the more unmarked the L1 structure, the more

¹ Ellis (1994) points out that another version of markedness was based on Chomsky's universal grammar, which differentiates core rules and peripheral ones. The former consist of marked, i.e., idiosyncratic rules, and the latter include both marked and unmarked rules.

likely it will be transferred. Since the four topic structures are all productive and not historically endangered, I must compare their frequency in order to determine their relative markedness.

In a small-scale corpus study conducted by the author²(Huang, 2002), I found that DP was the most frequent (86 times in 4000 words), then followed by LD (3 times in 4000 words), then by TOP (2 times in 4000 words), then DS (one time in 4000 words). Since the DP was found to be more frequent than all the other structures, it was the most unmarked and thus most likely to be transferred. The results indicated that DP was more frequent in the subjects' interlanguage than DS and TOP. My first hypothesis -- the more conditions of L1 transfer are met, the more likely L1 transfer will occur--is supported here. Since DP met three conditions and the other structures only met two, DP should be the most transferable structure. However, LD, being less frequent in L1, was found more frequently than DP. This relative difficulty of LD, as mentioned earlier, may be attributed to my second hypothesis--the input to unlearn LD, being indirect, is less likely to enter the interlanguage system for UG to operate.

Finally, the subject/object asymmetry in DP suggested that the DP(S) was easier than DP(O), since non-TP scores of DP(S) were higher in DP(S) than DP(O) and TP scores were higher in DP(O) than DP(S) (although only the scores in level 2 achieved

² This corpus was composed of four genres—interview, speech, conversation, call-in program; each text contained 1000 words.

significant differences). This result is consistent with Yuan's (1997) and Ou's (1998) findings, suggesting that learners' responses to null subjects are more correct than to null objects. Yuan explains the asymmetric responses by proposing that Chinese null subjects have positive evidence in English such as tense and agreement but null objects don't. However, Ou does not offer any explanation for this phenomenon. In this thesis, it is argued that indeed positive evidence was available for null subjects and null objects in English by the occurrences of overt subjects and over objects. English tense and agreement may have enhanced the existence of overt subjects, thus improving the subjects' responses in negating null subjects. Therefore, with the additional enhancement of input through tense and agreement, the nature of positive input for DP(S) is more direct (explicit) than that for DP(O). Again, the second hypothesis is supported here.

The interpretation of the results was outlined in table 21.

Table 21: the interpretation of the results based on my hypothesis

Hypothesis	TP score	Non-TP score	Relative difficulty	S/O asymmetry
1. L1 transfer	v (all levels)		DP:v (markedness)	
2. UG		v (level 1)	LD:v (input)	v(input)

In sum, the results of TP scores and non-TP scores have confirmed my hypothetical operation of L1 transfer and UG in the interlanguage system, although UG seemed to occur more obviously in level 1. In addition, the relative difficulty of LD can be explained by its indirect nature of positive input, supporting the second

hypothesis. On the other hand, the relative difficulty of DP can be attributed to its more matched conditions of L1 transfer via the addition of markedness condition, supporting the first hypothesis. Moreover, in the subject/object asymmetry in DP, the second hypothesis is confirmed. Since the nature of input available to DP(S) is more direct than that to DP(O), more correct and less incorrect performances were found in DP(S) than in DP(O).

Since L1 transfer and UG were observed in different stages (levels), my theoretical framework of the operation of interlanguage system was revised, as shown in figure 15.

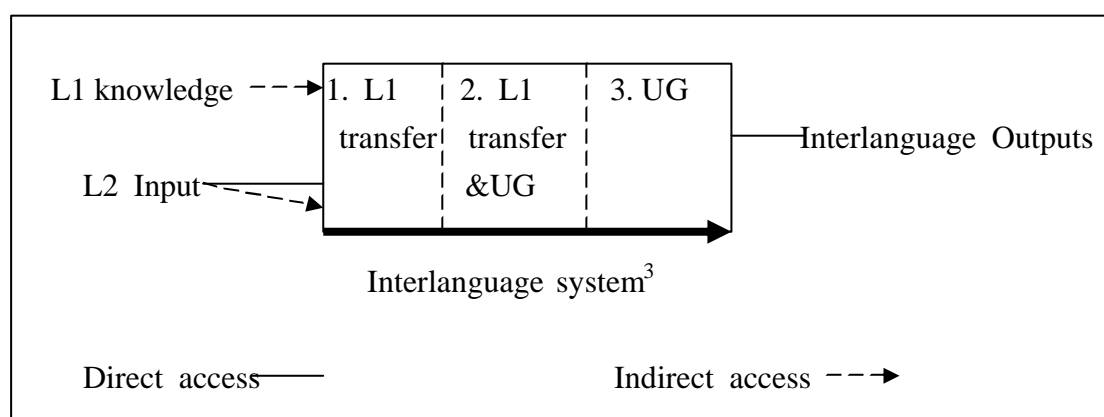


Figure 15: my revised framework of the operation of interlanguage system

Figure 15 suggested that there were three stages in the interlanguage development—L1 transfer, L1 transfer and UG, and UG (without L1 transfer). The subjects in level 1 were assumed to have achieved the second stage, since they

³ The progress through the three stages is a continuum. In stage one, L1 transfer is dominant in the outputs. In stage two, L1 transfer and UG are equally dominant. In stage three, UG is dominant.

generally showed no significant differences in the TP scores from other levels. That is, although they showed the correct usage without the topic structures, they also showed evidence of L1 transfer, without significant differences from other levels. Learners in the other levels (level 1 and level 2) seemed to stay in the first stage, since L1 transfer was dominant in their interlanguage. However, no learner was found to have achieved the most advanced stage, in which UG is dominant without any L1 transfer.

I will turn now to discuss the important factor that was found to have affected the overall responses of the subjects—the task effect.

5.2 Task Effect

The issue of task effect has been discussed by many researchers (Flynn, 1986; Crookes, 1991; Ringbom, 1992; Ou, 1998; Shi, 1988; Liao, 1999). Some of them claim that production tasks elicit more correct responses (Ou, 1998), while some of them argue for the opposite (Shi, 1988). My findings are consistent with the former claim. As mentioned in chapter 4, the controlled production task (TR), except for LD(S) and LD(O), elicited less TP features and more non-TP features than did the controlled comprehension task (GJ) (although they both tended to induce more TP features than non-TP ones), as illustrated in figure 16-17.

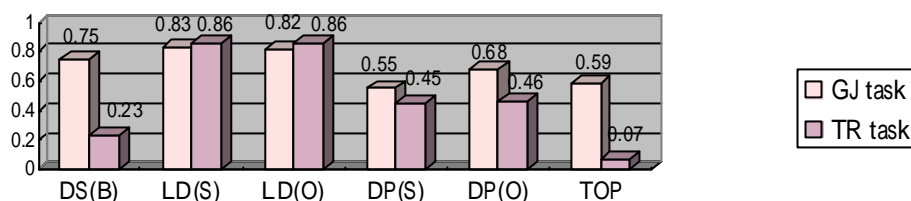


Figure 16: **TP** mean scores in GJ and TR tasks (Chinese)

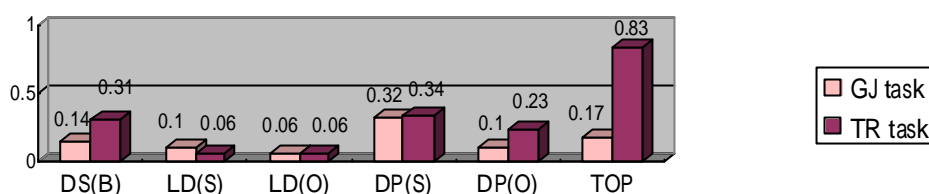


Figure 17: **non-TP** mean scores in GJ and TR tasks (Chinese)

The free production task (GW), in which non-TP responses were more frequent than TP responses, elicited more non-TP and less TP features than did the controlled tasks (GJ and TR), as shown in figure 18.

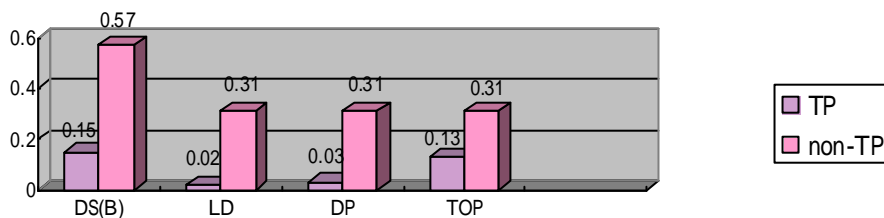


Figure 18: the TP and non-TP mean scores in the guided writing task (Chinese)

Therefore, it was inferred that the production tasks elicited more correct responses than the comprehension task in this study.

Ringbom (1992) claims that transfer in comprehension is overt transfer, while that in production includes both overt and covert transfer. Overt transfer means the obvious L1 influence revealed in learners' responses, while covert transfer means the L1 influence on learners' avoidance i.e., underproduction of L2 items. To see if the

less percentage of incorrect responses were attributed to the avoidance phenomenon, it is necessary to compare the rate of missing data in the three tasks, as seen in figure 19-20.

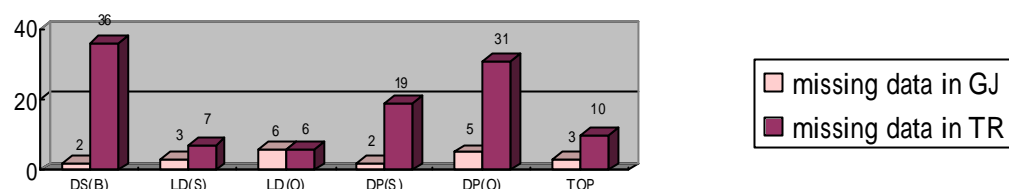


Figure 19: the frequency of missing data found in GJ and TR

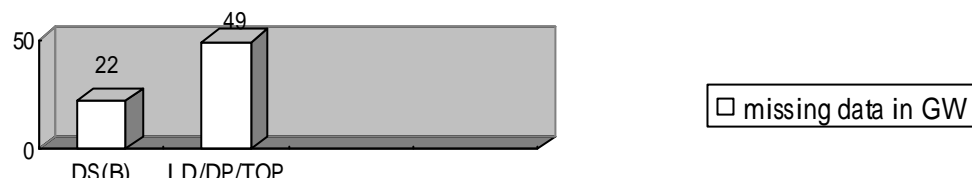


Figure 20: the frequency of missing data found in GW

It is clear that the missing data was found more frequently in the production tasks (TR and GW) than the comprehension task (GJ). Therefore, the less incorrect performances (TP scores) of the production tasks may partially result from the relatively more missing data in TR and GW, especially in GW, than in the GJ task. This high percentage of missing data in GW may be attributed to the structural complexity of the test sentences, especially those to elicit LD/DP/TOP. In the guided writing task, the relatively few occurrences of the most difficult structures--LD and DP--were partly due to learners' avoidance of them, resulting from the structural complexity underlying the test sentences, as shown in table 22. The test sentences in the GW task consisted of a main clause plus a subordinate one, while those in the

other tasks were all simple sentences.

Table 22: the test sentences of TOP/DP/LD in GW task

Tested feature	Table information (topic: “the girl”)	
2. TOP or DP or LD	4.many classmate see	go out with her boy friend
	5.her friends think	a happy girl

This avoidance of LD and DP were observed from the relative few occurrences of them in the guided writing (GW) task in contrast to the frequent occurrence of them in the other two tasks (grammaticality judgment task and translation task). The avoidance here is also called ‘double ignorance’--“ignorant of the TL item and ignorant of a possible L1 substitute (James, 1998: 176)”--resulting from L2 learners’ discovery that L1 does not help due to the lack of L1 counterpart or to their ignorance of the L1 counterpart. The avoidance of LD and DP in the findings may be attributed to learners’ ignorance of the L1 equivalent⁴.

.Moreover, it is proposed that young beginners are more receptive than productive (Laurel, 1988). This claim was supported by the Chinese subjects’ higher response rate (i.e., fewer missing data) in the comprehension task (GJ) than in the production task (TR, GW).

However, it is inadequate to attribute the less production rate of TP features in production tasks (TR and GW) solely to the missing data, since our English control group, who responded no missing data, also suggested the similar pattern—more TP

⁴ Since the avoidance of target forms is also possible here, the avoidance of L1 counterpart can only partially explain the missing data.

and less non-TP in the comprehension task (GJ) than in the production tasks (TR and GW), as seen in figure21-22.

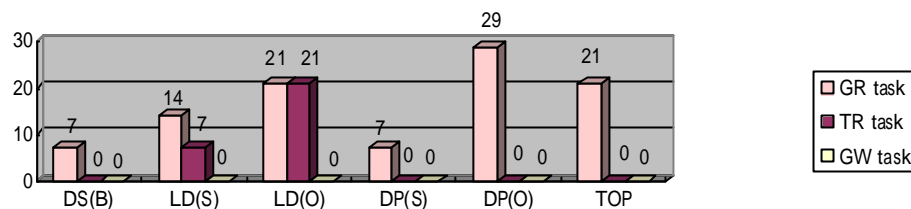


Figure 21: the mean TP scores in the three tasks (English)

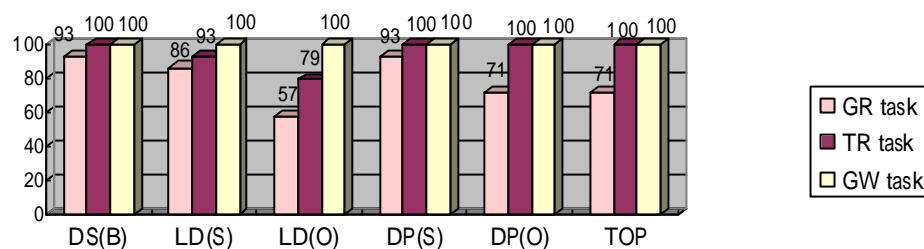


Figure 22: the mean non-TP scores in the three tasks (English)

It seems that the comprehension task indeed elicited more incorrect responses (TP) and less correct ones (non-TP) than did the production tasks in this study. It is likely that in the comprehension task both the English group and the Chinese group tended to adopt their intuition of the colloquial knowledge (i.e., topic prominence) in judging the grammaticality of the test sentences, but became more conscious of the written grammar in finishing the production task.

In sum, I have found an obvious task effect, in which the production tasks elicited more correct responses and less incorrect responses than did the comprehension task. Although the cause could be partially attributed to the more percentage of missing data in the production tasks, the English group's same tendency

to produce more TP features and less non-TP features in production tasks further supported this observation—the subjects tended to produce more TP and less non-TP features in production tasks.

5.3 Linguistic Implications

In this section we will analyze the structural complexity of the four TP structures in 5.2.1, then discuss the parameters Chinese learners need to reset and the necessary negative evidence in section 5.2.2, and then interpret the asymmetric responses to subject and object in LD and DP in 5.2.3.

5.3.1 Structural Complexity of the Four Structures

I have discussed the theoretical basis of the relative difficulty of the four structures and claimed that UG can explain the relative difficulty of LD by its nature of positive evidence (indirect), and that L1 influence can explain the relative difficulty of DP in terms of its typological markedness (most unmarked) and more matched conditions. However, I have not discussed the other source of difficulty—structural complexity.

The four topic structures found in the learner's interlanguage and the corresponding positive inputs are listed in (42)-(45).

(42) drop (DP):

- a) DP(S): *I have *a girl friend* _i. \emptyset_i Very beautiful.
- b) DP(O): **That restaurant* _i is cheap and has good food, so we like \emptyset_i very much.

Positive evidence: overt subject/object pronouns

(43) topicalization (TOP):

*That book, I read last week.

Positive evidence: canonical word order--SOV

(44) double-subject construction (DS):

a) *My family, I am the youngest.

Positive evidence: the addition of a preposition 'In'

b) *The girl, eyes are big.

Positive evidence: the possessive form 's

(45) left-dislocation (LD):

a) LD(S): **My daddy, he* plays basketball every day.

b) LD(O): **The guy, Mary* saw *him* last week.

Indirect positive evidence: the correct usage of pronoun

It was found in (42)-(44) that the negation of the three topic structures--DP, TOP, DS-- involves only sentence-level modifications—the addition of overt pronouns, the reordering of word order, and the addition of preposition or possessive morpheme. However, the unlearning of LD involves supra-sentential modification. Namely, the scope of the correction is larger than a sentence. Thus, students need to know that the correct usage of pronouns involve supra-sentential references. This sentential and supra-sentential distinction of modifications may be the structural explanation for the relative difficulty of LD compared with all the other structures.

5.3.2 Parameter Resetting and Necessary Negative Evidence

As mentioned in chapter 3, the main difference between Chinese and English topic structures lies in the presence and the absence of syntactically marked topics and unmarked topics in the form of zero. This observation is similar to previous findings of two typical topic structures--base-generated topics (Chafe, 1976) and topic-controlled deletion (Tsao, 1979)--which are claimed to differentiate Chinese and English topic structures. In fact, base-generated topics (i.e., topics which are originated from the sentence-initial position) are included in my syntactically marked topics (e.g., LD and DS) and topic controlled deletion (i.e., a topic serves as the controller of the following omitted topics within the same semantic domain) is the same with the unmarked topics in the zero form. Based on these observations, researchers have proposed some parameters to describe Chinese and English topic structures, such as Huang's (1984a, b) empty topic parameter and zero subject parameter (1984a, b, 1989), Huang's (1992) morphosyntactic parameter, and Yuan's (1997) [\pm topic drop] parameter.

Huang's framework (1984a, b, 1989) stipulates the obligatory presence of the topic in Chinese, which is not true for the existence of non-topic sentences such as existential constructions and sentences with weather verbs, as shown in (15)-(16) respectively.

- (15) [s[s[VP_[cop] you_N ren]] ma]? 'Are there any people?'
 have people Q

(16) [_S [_S [_{VP} [_V xia _N yu]] le]. ‘It is raining.’
 fall rain PFV

On the other hand, Huang's (1992) morphosyntactic parameter is divided into two settings, one is [+syntax] and the other is [+morphology]. According to him, a language with weak morphology such as Chinese relies heavily on syntax to single out the definite element by fronting it to a clause-initial position, and allows null elements recoverable in discourse. Thus, the Chinese setting of this morphosyntactic parameter is [+syntax]. By contrast, English has some morphology markers for tense and agreement and disallow null elements. In addition, English has definite articles (e.g, this and that) to emphasize the focused element and thus there is no need to front them to achieve the same purpose. Therefore, the English setting of this morphosyntactic parameter is [+morphology]. However, Huang (1992) only discusses the topicalization in Chinese. He does not mention the other kinds of syntactically marked topics (e.g., base-generated topics such as LD and DS) in Chinese. Moreover, as mentioned in chapter 3, Chinese indeed have morphological markers of topics. Thus, his framework cannot form a complete picture of the Chinese topic structures.

Similarly, Yuan' (1997) [\pm topic drop] parameter explains only the null subjects and null objects in Chinese, which are licensed by the process of topic-controlled deletion. However, he does not mention the type of syntactically marked topics. His proposal again does not achieve the descriptive adequacy in characterizing Chinese

topic structures.

In order to better characterize Chinese topic structures, I modify Huang's (1992) morphosyntactic parameter by including more types of syntactically marked topics to work together with Yuan's (1997) [\pm topic drop] parameter. Both the two parameters form supersets of the English topic structures, as illustrated in figure 23-24.

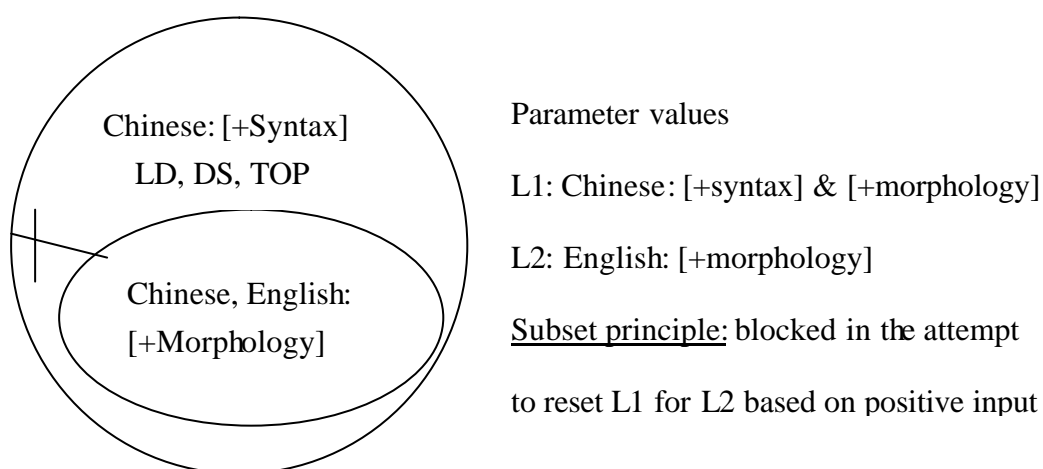


Figure 23: the morphosyntactic parameter

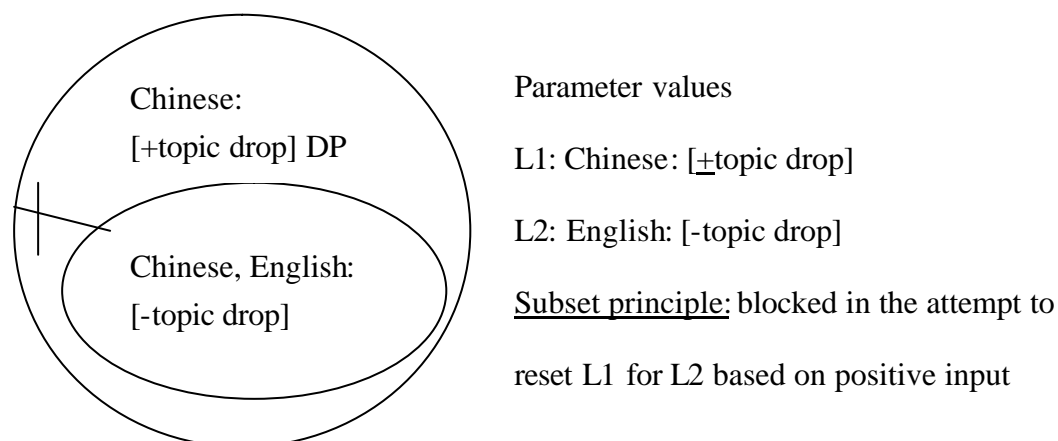


Figure 24: topic drop parameter

All the four topic structures in our study—LD, DP, DS, TOP—can therefore be

described based on the two parameters. The morphosyntactic parameter can characterize three syntactically marked topic structures—LD, DS, TOP for the value [+syntax], since in these three structures, the topics are marked by the syntactic position, being sentence-initial. On the other hand, the [\pm topic drop] parameter can characterize the unmarked topic in the zero form—DP for the value [+topic drop].

Therefore, all the four structures form the superset of the English as a subset. The resetting of the two parameters is necessary for the acquisition of English. Namely, the value [+syntax] of the morphosyntactic parameter should be reset as the value [+morphology], and the [+topic drop] parameter should be reset as [-topic drop] for English. In order to unlearn the four structures, not only positive evidence is needed, negative evidence should also be available.

In sum, the two parameters can better characterize the Chinese topics—the morphosyntactic parameter and the topic drop parameter. The Chinese values of the two parameters form the supersets of English as a subset. Thus, the four topics need negative evidence to be unlearned by the Chinese learners of English.

5.3.3 The Asymmetry of Responses to Subject and Objects

In the two controlled tasks—grammaticality judgment task and translation task—I separated both LD and DP into two types, the structure with the coreferential subject or with the coreferential object. As mentioned in chapter 4, I found three cases

of subject-object asymmetry with significant differences in the GJ task—the Chinese group’s overall response to non-DP (S>O), level 2’s response to DP (O> S), and the English group’s response to non-LD (S>O). However, in the TR task, there were no significant differences in the responses to subject and to the object of the same structure. This is another evidence of task effect. That is, the comprehension task elicited more asymmetric responses than did the production tasks. These results are reproduced in table 23.

Table 23: the TP and non-TP mean scores of the subject and object in LD and DP

GJ task	LD		Non-LD		DP		Non-DP	
	S	O	S	O	S	O	S	O
English	.14	.21	.86*	.57*	.07	.29	.93	.71
Chinese	.83	.81	.10	.64	.55	.68	.32*	.10*
Level 1	.82	.82	.12	.83	.58	.63	.40	.27
Level 2	.91	.83	.40	.87	.52*	.83*	.22	.35
Level 3	.73	.82	.00	.00	.45	.64	.00	.09

The reason for the whole Chinese group’s asymmetric responses in non-DP(S) and non-DP(O) (S>>O) has been explained—the nature of input in DP(S) being enhanced by tense and agreement. However, the other two cases of asymmetric responses have not been discussed—level 2’s response to DP (O> S), and the English group’s response to non-LD (S>O). The two results will be interpreted as follows.

Level 2’s relatively higher TP scores in DP(O) than in DP(S) revealed that DP(O) posed the most serious problem for this level. This worst performance in level 2 was also typical of the U-shaped pattern. As Kellerman (1985) predicts, the developmental

grammar of level 2 students may be replaced by the target grammar when they found a mismatch between the input and their current hypothesis.

As for the English group's asymmetric responses to non-LD(S) and non-LD(O), it seems that LD(O) induced more incorrect judgments than LD(S). This result is quite surprising since in the author's corpus study (Huang, 2002), the two types of LD share similar frequency (LD(S): 0.33 time/1000 words; LD(O): 0.25 time/1000 words). Perhaps the English group was more careful in judging the grammaticality of LD(S) than that of LD(O). However, this interpretation needs further investigation to be confirmed.

In sum, the Chinese group's general better responses of non-DP(S) than those of non-DP(O) can be explained by the relative enhancement of positive evidence. Level 2's worse behavior in the DP(O) than DP(S) showed a developmental U-shaped pattern. On the other hand the English group's worse performance in LD(O) than LD(S) may suggest their relative carefulness in judging LD(S).

All the linguistic implications are outlined in table 24.

Table 24: summary of linguistic implications

Structural complexity	Parameter resetting	Subject/object asymmetry
Sentential versus supra-sentential distinction of unlearning	1. [morphosyntactic] Chinese:[+morphology]& [+syntax](LD/TOP/DS) ? English: [+morphology]	1. Chinese: non-DP(S)>non-DP(O) the enhancement of positive input through tense/agreement
LD: supra-sentential DP/TOP/DS: sentential	2. [topic drop] Chinese: [-topic drop] &	2. Level 2

	[+topic drop] (DP) ? English: [-topic drop]	DP(O): U-shaped pattern 3. English: LD(O)>>LD(S) the relative carefulness in judging LD(S)
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First, as seen in table 24, the sentential versus supra-sentential distinction should be the structural explanation for the relative difficulty of LD. Second, there would be two parameter values to be reset for the English ones—[+syntax] to be reset as [+morphology] in the morphosyntactic parameter, and [+topic drop] to be reset as [-topic dop] in the [topic drop] parameter. Finally, the subject-object asymmetry of non-DP in Chinese can be attributed to the presence of input enhancement in DP(S), that of DP (O) in level 2 showed a U-shaped pattern, and that of LD in English can be explained by the relative carefulness in judging LD(S).

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

The present study investigates the effects of L1 topic structures on Chinese EFL learners' interlanguage grammar and interprets the results based on the theoretical framework developed from three SLA perspectives-- L1 influence, universal grammar, and the subset principle. However, there are still many questions necessary for further investigation.

First, due to the time and money constraints, I did not use standardized tests to determine the English proficiency of my subjects. Further studies are needed in order to properly decide the language level of subjects by using standardized tests such as

TOFEL or CEPT.

Second, the Chinese subjects were confined to the second-graders from three junior high schools in the northern Area of Taiwan. Therefore, the results of this study did not represent all the Chinese learners. Further studies are needed to gather more Chinese samples from different age groups and different regions.

Third, the Chinese subjects performed better on production tasks than comprehension tasks. That is, more TP and less non-TP features were elicited in the grammaticality judgment task. Moreover, I found that even the control group suggested the colloquial knowledge (TP properties) in the grammaticality judgment task, thus creating the need for differentiating the written grammar and spoken grammar. However, different tasks may yield different results. Thus other task types can be employed to replicate this study to further confirm these findings, and to investigate the extent to which the English speakers exert their colloquial intuition in different tasks.

Forth, I only focused on the acquisition of English in the context of formal instruction. The follow-up study can be undertaken to compare the acquisition of English in different settings—that of formal instruction and that of naturalistic settings. In this way, the nature and effectiveness of the two settings can be revealed, and these may offer us more insights for English teaching.

Fifth, due to the difficulty of designing comparable tasks, I did not use the same amounts of topic structures in the controlled tasks (grammaticality judgment task and the translation task) and the free writing task to determine subject-object asymmetry in DP and LD. Only the controlled tasks differentiated the two types of syntactic position. Therefore, it was difficult for us to fairly compare the results of the two kinds of tasks. Hence, further studies are needed to design comparable tasks in order to better understand the different responses revealed in different tasks.

Sixth, I had not expected the two types of double subject construction--DS(A), DS(B)-- to yield different results. Thus, I adopted test sentences of both types only in the grammaticality judgment task. However, this made me unable to compare the results of responses to DS(A) in different tasks. Again, further study is needed to confirm the relative difficulty of the two types of topic structures.

Finally, I found that English speakers revealed a significant subject-object asymmetry in their judgments to the LD construction, with more correct judgment in LD(S) than in LD(O). This result is contrary to my expectation since both types of LD were found equally frequent in the spoken corpus. I attempted to explain this phenomenon by attributing it to the relative carefulness in their judgments of the two structures. Namely, the English group were more careful in judging the LD(S) than the LD(O). However, this assumption is only tentative, and needs further studies to

prove it.

5.5 Summary of Chapter 5

In this chapter, the findings of the present study have been discussed in terms of my theoretical framework of the operation of interlanguage system as well as the task effect. I also discussed linguistic implications about the structural complexity of the four topic structures, about which parameters to be reset on the basis of negative evidence, and about the asymmetric responses to the subject and object position in LD and DP. I found that L1 transfer can explain the overall TP tendency and the relative difficulty of DP in terms of markedness, and the universal grammar can explain the relative difficulty of LD by means of its nature positive evidence (indirect). Moreover, I have proposed two parameters to differentiate Chinese and English topic structures— morphosyntactic parameter and topic drop parameter. In order for acquisition of English to take place, the original Chinese setting must be reset as English. Since all the topic structures form a superset of written English, they need to be unlearned via negative evidence to work together with positive evidence. In terms of subject-object asymmetry in LD and DP, the Chinese group's asymmetric responses in DP may be due to the extra enhancement of the positive input, and the English group's in LD may be due to their relative carefulness in judging the structures. Finally, some suggestions for further studies were also made.