

**LANGUAGE TRANSFER: AN ANALYSIS OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS'
CHINESE LANGUAGE ESSAY WRITING**

语言迁移：尼日利亚汉语学习者的作文写作分析研究

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Abstract

In the process of second or foreign language acquisition, the learner's mother tongue or dominant language directly or indirectly affects the acquisition of the target language, and plays a positive or negative role in promoting or interfering respectively. This paper adopts an analytic and a descriptive approaches in analyzing the positive and negative language transfers of Nigerian students' Chinese language essay writing in the Department of Chinese Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, from four aspects: grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and mechanical accuracy. This paper puts forward recommendations for learners and teachers on the use of effective teaching and learning strategies to reduce the negative language transfer.

Keywords: Chinese language, Nigerian students, dominant language, language transfer, strategy

Introduction

Language has been defined by different scholars in diverse time. Sapir (1921:7) defines language as a “purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produce sounds”. According to Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (3rd edition), language is the system of human communication which consists of the structured arrangement of sounds (or their written representation) into larger units, eg. morphemes, words, sentences, utterances. Okolo (2015) states that language is an expression of personality. What differentiates human beings from every other creatures is the use of language. Language is a unique nature of man...language is very important in the life of any person. Language cannot be separated from man because it is what the people use for meaningful existence. Judging from the above definitions and descriptions, it is agreeable that language is a human possession and activity. This is why Fromkin et al. (2007) assert that the possession of language, perhaps more than any other attribute, distinguishes humans from other animals. To understand our humanity, one must understand the nature of language that makes us human.

Now that we have established the fact that language is distinctively a human possession and activity. It is a language, whether a spoken, written or sign language, that first makes a person a human being. Without a language, there is no communication and

where there is no communication, misunderstanding, confusion, hatred and anarchy exist. We use language in everything we do. According to Fromkin et al. (2007:3):

Whatever else people do when they come together – whether they play, fight, make love or make automobiles – they talk. We live in a world of language. We talk to our friends, our associates, our wives and husbands, our lovers, our teachers, our parents, our rivals and even our enemies...Hardly is moment of our waking lives is free from words, and even in our dream we talk and are talked to. We also talk when there is no one to answer. Some of us talk aloud in our sleep. We talk to our pets and sometimes to ourselves.

There is nothing we can say or do without the use of language. We think, dream, pray, name, teach and learn with the use of language. Language is human and human is language.

Chomsky (1968:100) says “when we study human language, we are approaching what some might call the “human essence”, the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man”. The phrase here, “when we study human language” can be replaced with “when we learn human language” for a better understanding. Learning either a first, second or third language is a great feat only achievable by a normal human being. According to Bloomfield, L. (1933), the acquisition of language is doubtless the greatest intellectual feat any one of us is ever required to perform. A Slovakian proverb puts it thus, “with each newly learned language you acquire a new soul”. The two words, ‘acquisition and learning’ are sometimes used interchangeably. Some scholars and authors differentiate their usage. For example, Crystal (2003:8) states

Acquisition is also used in the context of learning a foreign language: ‘foreign’ or ‘second-language’ acquisition is thus distinguished from ‘first-language’ or ‘mother-tongue’ acquisition. In this context, acquisition is sometimes opposed to learning; the former is viewed as a subconscious, natural process, which is the primary force behind foreign-language fluency; the latter is seen as a conscious process which monitors the process of acquisition and guides the performance of the speaker.

The acquisition of a language is the learning of a first-language, second-language, third-language, etc with some differences in the learning processes. Invariably, the learning of a language is the acquisition of a first-language, second-language, third-language, etc with some differences in the development. Richards et al. (2002) in *Longman Dictionary of language teaching and Applied Linguistics (3rd edition)* state that language acquisition is the learning and development of a person’s language. The learning of a native first language is called first language acquisition, and of a second or foreign language, second language acquisition.

Therefore, second language acquisition is the learning or acquisition of a second language or foreign language. From a more restricted sense, Crystal (1997) asserts that a foreign language is a non-native language taught in school that has no status as a routine medium of communication in that country. A second language is a non-native language that is widely used for purposes of communication, usually as a medium of education, government, or business. In this usage, English, for example, has foreign language status in Japan, but second language status in Nigeria.

English as a Dominant Language in Nigeria

Nigeria is defined by its mixed population where people of different ethnic groups, tribes, and tongues coexist and live in the same entity, especially in the urban areas. Early studies of (Onwubu 1976:48), Adekunle (1976:28), Brann (1978:101) show the indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria is between 400 and above.

The term Nigerian language could be said to be diverse and complex. Nigeria is thus a mixture of homogeneous and heterogeneous linguistic characteristics. Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, the three major native languages in Nigeria, are predominantly spoken and used as a means of communication in the regions where they are localized. Whereas Hausa is mainly used in the North, Yoruba in the West, and Igbo in the East. In rural areas, people live in small groups and speak the same language and are essentially homogeneous culturally and linguistically. The reverse is the case in urban centers; communities are linguistically heterogeneous and complex, with members speaking different languages. This is responsible for the use of English as a means of communication. On the world stage, according to Pascale (2013:379), a language is dominant if (and only if) it is a second language used by bilinguals or polyglots around the world. It is not the number of speakers that determines whether it is dominant or not (otherwise, Mandarin would be the dominant language). The criterion is, rather, the number of plurilingual speakers who "choose" it. In the case of Nigeria, English has taken great preeminence and thus dominated linguistically. Oluwole (2001) states that "the extent to which one language or type of language is favored or preferred depends on the community's perception of the role or status of that language or language type in the context of the prevailing linguistic attitudes in the society". Oti Frances (2014:36) acknowledges that Nigerians do not only prefer English to their domestic languages, they believe that the indigenous languages are limited in scope and usefulness.

English is the language of administration, education, business and commerce, the press, and international relations. Though not officially declared in the Nigerian constitution as the country's official language, English is the dominant language in Nigeria. There has been much concern about the dominating nature of the English language over indigenous languages. Tajudeen (2016) points out that whilst Fishman (1996), Kachru (1997), Bamgbose (2004) and Daramola (2004) have all expressed concern about the dominant status of the English language with a threat towards other languages in the diaspora, he expresses fear on the dominating figure of the English language over the indigenous languages in Nigerian. Since English has dominated and thus become the *lingua franca* in Nigeria, it is becoming increasingly hard to find young Nigerians speak or write their indigenous languages.

Foreign language learner is too familiar with the interfering effects of their dominant language causing from accented speech to inappropriate nonverbal behavior (Freeman & Long, 2000:53). In the process of second language acquisition, learners' native language or dominant language usage habits will directly affect second language acquisition and play a role in promoting or interfering with it. When the dominant language and the target language are consistent or similar in form, structure, rule, and meaning, these characteristics of the dominant language will promote the learning and mastery of the target language. This kind of transfer that promotes the learning of new knowledge is called positive transfer. On the contrary, when the dominant language interferes with the learning of the target language it produces negative transfer.

The function of the learner's dominant language in promoting or obstructing foreign language learning has been proven by many scholars. Students' target language development depend on their dominant language proficiency. Cummins (1979; 1991) studies show the linguistic interdependence where L₁ and L₂ acquisition is mutually dependent and both contribute to and draw from the same common underlying proficiency. Lado (1957), Odlin (1989), Ellis (1994), Paradis, et al (1996) and Connor (1996) language transfer analysis explained the use of detailed linguistic analysis to identify similarities and differences between the two languages to make predictions regarding when and how cross-linguistic transfer may take place. Melby-Lervag & Lervag (2011) suggest that language transfer similarities between a dominant and target language may accelerate second language acquisition and differences may constrain L₂ acquisition. A recent study by Lan (2019), aimed at identifying the types of errors American intermediate-level Chinese as foreign language learners made as a result of interlingual interfaces, shows that a large number of errors made by these learners in lexical, syntactic, semantic and mechanical aspects can be explained due to interference from the dominant language.

Nigerian students learning Chinese language face language transfer of the English language, which has been stated as the dominant language in Nigeria, in the process of learning Chinese language as a second or foreign language.

Language Transfer

According to an online source (Edutechwiki), in second language learning, learners use different strategies to acquire knowledge. One of these strategies is language transfer. It consists of replicating structures from the learners' first language when they are speaking or writing something in the second language. Language transfer can have positive or negative effects on spoken and written compositions by second language learners. If the structure from the native language used matches the one in the second language, there is a positive effect, and if the structures do not match, then there is a negative effect.

Language transfer is also known as linguistic interference has always been a hot topic in second and foreign language acquisition. Jarvis, (2008) defines language transfer as the application of linguistic features from one language to another by a bilingual or multilingual speaker. Language transfer may occur across both languages in the acquisition of a simultaneous bilingual, from a mature speakers' first language (L₁) to a second (L₂) or third (L₃) language they are acquiring, or from an L₂ back to the L₁.

Simply put, when a language learner is learning a foreign language, the linguistic rules, expressions, and module influence of one language on the target language are called language transfer. It is considered as a complex cognitive psychological process in language learning, which is influenced and restricted by many factors. Paradis, et al (1996) note that language transfer is also a common topic in bilingual child language acquisition as it occurs frequently in bilingual children especially when one language is dominant.

In Odlin (1989) sees language transfer as the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps im-perfectly) acquired. It is then crucial to note that those similarities and differences could result in positive or negative transfer respectively. In agreement, Shatz (2017) states that when the relevant unit or structure of both languages is the same, linguistic interference can result in correct language production called positive transfer. The results of positive transfer go largely unnoticed and so are less often discussed. Nonetheless, such results can have a large effect. Generally speaking, the more similar the two languages are and the more the learner is aware of the relation between them, the more positive transfer will occur. However, language interference is most often discussed as a source of errors known as negative transfer, which occurs when speakers and writers transfer items and structures that are not the same in both languages.

According to Zhang and Luo (2017), language transfer can be classified into a linguistic transfer, semantic transfer, and conceptual transfer. This corresponds to Zhang and Liu (2013) position as the transfer of linguistic elements (e.g. pronunciation, syntactic structure), meanings, and concepts.

Contrastive Analysis Theory

According to Richards, J.C. et al. (2002), contrastive analysis is the comparison of the linguistic systems of two languages, for example the sound system or the grammatical system. Contrastive analysis was developed and practiced in the 1950s and 1960s, as an application of structural linguistics to language teaching, and is based on the following assumptions:

- a. The main difficulties in learning a new language are caused by interference from the first language.
- b. These difficulties can be predicted by contrastive analysis.
- c. Teaching materials can make use of contrastive analysis to reduce the effects of interference.

The contrastive analysis hypothesis were formulated in Robert Lado's *Linguistic Across Cultures* (1957). In this book, Lado claimed that "those elements which are similar to (the learner's) native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult". Lado (1957) notes that contrastive analysis is a scientific description of the language to be learnt, carefully compared with the parallel description of the first language of the learners. Contrastive analysis is the study and comparison of two languages...this is done by looking at the structural similarities and differences of the studied languages. There are two central aims to contrastive analysis; one is to establish the inter-relationships of languages in order to create a linguistic

family tree and two is to aid second language acquisition (Lado, 1957 cited in Alozie, 2015). The second aim of the contrastive analysis is in line with the purpose of this research.

Methods and Instruments

Subject: This study is conducted in the Chinese Studies Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria. Participants were 20 students of the department. All subjects were chosen randomly from the first, second and fourth-year students. The third year students were in China for exchange programme. The mother tongue of 16 students, 3 students and 1 student is Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa respectively. The students have been learning English language since nursery and primary schools as their first or second language, which has become their dominant language. All the participants have been learning Chinese language (Mandarin) as a foreign language at Nnamdi Azikiwe University between one to three years depending on their level. They have at least ten hours of Chinese language class every week.

Instrument: All participants were asked to write 2 compositions in Chinese language, which include; Narrative essay: Their unforgettable experience and Expository essay: About their University, Chinese studies, and prospects. Students were required to write at least 10 sentences in each essay. The essays were analyzed to bring out the various influence of language transfer on their Chinese language acquisition from the aspects of grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and mechanical accuracy. Aside from the establishment of a topic and instruction, there is no intervention or incentive by the researchers.

Data Analysis

According to Liu Hu (2000:194), learners can only rely on dominant language knowledge if they are not familiar with the target language rules. Therefore, learners from the same mother-tongue or language background tend to have errors of the same nature. All examples analyzed are copied from the participants' compositions. The correct Chinese expression is inserted in brackets and English equivalents are placed beside or under the Chinese examples.

1. Syntactic Transfer

A. Sentence structure: When it comes to sentence structure, there are few positive transfers on some basic syntax, which are same in both the dominant and target language such as;

1. S+V+O -我到学校。 - I arrived at school.
2. S+V+Pr -我到中国已经两个月。 - I have been in China for two months now.
3. S+V+O+O 他给我钱。 -He gave me money.
4. S+V+O+C 他让我们学习汉语。 -He asked us to study Chinese.

However, there is also negative transfer as regards time. Due to the influence of the English language, there is a negative transfer of time adverbials in some participants' essays. They tend to apply the English grammatical rule of placing time or date after place/location. In Chinese adverb of time is written before place/location.

5. 我去学校昨天。(我昨天去学校了。)
I went to school yesterday
6. 如果我有奖学金，我去中国明年。(如果我得到奖学金，我明年就去中国。)

I will go to China next year, if I get a scholarship.

7. 我在教室不慎丢了一个黑色的钱包在 2019 年 6 月 9 日。(我 2019 年 6 月 9 日在教室不慎丢失一个黑色钱包。)

I accidentally lost a black wallet in the classroom on June 9, 2019.

8. 我们上课是上午 8:00。(我们上午 8:00 上课)

We have class at 8:00 am

B. Predicate: In Chinese, some clauses can go without a verbal predicate, while in English, a complete sentence must have a verbal predicate. Affected by the influence of English language rule, some students always add a verb predicate to some sentences which make them incorrect in Chinese language.

9. 我们学校是挺漂亮。(我们学校挺漂亮)

Our school is very beautiful.

10. 教室是很大 (教室很大)

The classroom is big.

11. 这里的学生是多 (这里的学生多)

There are more students here.

2. Grammatical Transfer

A. Misuse of 们 plural marker in Chinese: Changes in the plural of nouns are fundamentally different from that of Chinese in the distinction between nouns in the participants' dominant language. Students are used to the grammatical rules of plurality in English, they often ignore the use of the plural forms of Chinese nouns for example;

12. 我要我们成为好朋友们。(我希望我们成为好朋友。)

I want us to be good friends.

13. 我学校有很多汉语学生们。(我学校有很多汉语学生。)

My school has a lot of Chinese language students

14. 五个老师们都是中国人们。(五位老师来自中国。)

Five teachers come from Chinese

15. 学生们说他们的教室们不舒服。(学生们说他们的教室不舒服。)

The students said that their classrooms are not comfortable

B. Complex and rigorous sentences: Chinese is a comprehensive intuitive language, lacking in morphological changes, emphasizing parataxis, and implicit connection. English is an analytic language that emphasizes hypotaxis and explicit connection. English uses a wide range of conjunctions and pronouns. Sentences can be expanded with the main sentence as the center, and then with the help of various conjunctions and clauses to form a complex and rigorous sentence. In Chinese, short and simple sentences are commonly used. According to Sun Fushan (2013), a Chinese sentence is a mono-level sentence. In Chinese paratactic sentences, the linguistic arrangement is looser and more implicit, and complex ideas are expressed in chronological and internal logic order. Under the influence of English, some negative transfer phenomena, such as long complicated sentences, complex structure, many conjunctions, and pronouns, often occur in Chinese essay writing of Nigerian students.

16. 如果学生们不明白我们老师的教的什么意思, 就是他们的学习条件问题, 所以我们大学求我们的政府来帮助我们提高我们的学校的条件。

(如果老师所教授的内容学生没办法理解, 就是学校学习条件的问题, 因此大学请求政府帮助改善学校条件)

If the students don't understand what our teachers teach them, it is the problem of their learning conditions, so our university asks our government to help us improve the conditions of our school.

17. 我们学校的条件很差, 学生们他们说他们的教室不舒服, 没有椅子, 空调..., 上课的时候教室里太紧了, 这是其中一个原因学生不好好明白老师教的内容。

(学生们在教室里感觉不舒服; 教室小, 人一多就挤, 也没椅子, 空调。老师教的内容学生听不懂。我们学校环境差是一个原因)。

The condition of our school is so bad, the students say their classroom is not comfortable, there are no chairs, electric fans. The classroom is too tight during the class. This is one of the reasons why the students don't understand what the teacher is teaching).

18. 我们的学校已经增加我们的学费, 他们说他们因为想提高我们的条件还有招聘有些中国的老师。

(因为学校想提高学校条件和招些中国老师, 所以增加了学费)。

Tuition was increased because the school want to improve learning conditions and recruit Chinese teachers.

C. Redundancies in the use of personal and possessive pronouns: There are also negative transfer in the use of personal and possessive pronouns which are not necessary in Chinese language.

19. 我们大学求我们的政府来帮助我们提高我们的学校条件

(我们大学要求政府帮助改善大学条件)。

Our University requests our government to help improve the condition of the University.

20. 他们说他们的教学环境让他们不舒服

(他们说教学环境让他们不舒服)

They said that the teaching environment makes them uncomfortable.

D. Subordinating Conjunction: In Chinese language, when subordinating conjunctions are used to indicate causality, the conjunction word (character) is usually in pairs. Conjunction word (character) in the first clause indicates the cause or basis, while the other indicates the result or inference. , “因为 所以”, “虽然 但是, 之所以.....是因为.....; 既然(既).....就. In English, the subordinating conjunction is usually a word at the beginning of the clause that indicates the cause or basis. This interference affects Nigerian students in Chinese writing. They usually omit the first conjunction character.

21. 我要让你们知道 因为我八月份要去中国。

(因为我八月份要去中国, 所以要让你们知道)。

I want you to know because I'm going to China in August.

22. 我现在要开始准备, 因为下个月要申请奖学金。

(因为下个月要申请奖学金所以我现在要开始准备)。

I have to start preparing now because I will apply for a scholarship next month.

3. Lexical (Vocabulary) Transfer

Vocabulary is the most basic material for writing. If students are not clear about the usage of Chinese vocabulary, they will naturally rely on English vocabulary in their writing which lead to negative transfer. The mistakes are mainly shown in the following aspects:

A. Word match: When students are influenced by English diction, they will "match" Chinese characters/words with English words, thus making mistakes in the word or sentence semantics. For example, the words "drink medicine" are translated into 喝药 instead of "吃药 - eat medicine" as in authentic Chinese. Some students, in their Chinese composition, do not consider the actual semantics of Chinese words used, they often use English Chinese word to word translation.

23. 我每天很早去学校。(上学)

I go to school early every day.

24. 我的钱包里有我的身份证。(身份证)

I have my ID card in my wallet.

25. 我们学校已经提高了我们的学费。(增加)

Our school has raised (increased) our tuition

4. Mechanical Transfer

Under mechanical accuracy, there is evidence of the negative transfer of English punctuation marks. These negative transfers are basically on the use of ellipses, commas, and periods.

A. Chinese Ellipses: In English, ellipses are the use of 3dots (...) to indicate the omission of a word, sentence, or whole section from a text without altering its original meaning. In Chinese, ellipses are represented by 6 dots (... ..). Due to the inference of already English language writing skills, the use of 3 dots English ellipses was found in some of the participants' essays writing.

26. 在教室什么都有: 椅子, 桌子, 空调, 黑板...

(在教室什么都有: 椅子、桌子、空 调、黑板.....)

In the classroom, we have everything: chairs, desks, air conditioners, blackboards...

B. Chinese back slopping comma (、): It is a slight-pause mark used to set off items in series. The difference between comma and back slopping comma is that while comma (,) in Chinese language is used to show a temporary pause in a sentence such as; 我等了他半天, 可是他没来 (I waited for him for a long time, but he didn't come). The back slopping comma (、) is used to set off items in a group or series, and it is shorter than a comma. For instance; 房间里有桌子、椅子、床和柜子。(There are tables, chairs, beds, and cabinets in the room). There is a frequent occurrence of the use of a comma instead of the back slopping comma due to the linguistic influence of the English language on the Nigerian students Chinese writing as recorded below:

27. 我丢的东西就是我的钱包, 我的钱包里有我身份证, 护照, 银行卡, 和钱.

(我丢的东西是我钱包。我的钱包里有我身份证、护照、银行卡和钱).

I lost my wallet. My wallet contains my ID card, passport, bank card, and money.

C. Inconsistency in the use of Chinese Period/ Full stop (。): Periods are both found in English and Chinese language, their function, and usage are the same except for the mode of writing. Even though there's positive transfer in the use of comma on Chinese language, there is also a negative transfer on the way it is written. Most of the participants use a solid dot (.) as in English at the end of Chinese sentences as opposed to a small circle (。) used in the Chinese Language.

28. 学生们不明白老师教的内容。(学生不明白老师教的内容。)

The students don't understand what the teacher is teaching.

29. 请你们放心。请你们注意身体。(请你们放心。注意身体。)

Please be rest assured. Please take care of your health.

Recommendations

Based on the errors that were identified in the Nigerian students' Chinese essay writing, due to their language transfer, the researchers put forward the following recommendations for both teachers and students.

1. Strengthen the comparative analysis. Teachers who understand language differences can use the method of comparative analysis to compare the similarities and differences between English and Chinese and let students do some Chinese-English translation exercises. Through comparison, the students can understand the characteristics of Chinese thinking and develop the habit of thinking in Chinese thereby reducing the phenomenon of a word to word translation.

2. Think in Chinese. Students should change their way of thinking and avoid the interference of their mother tongue or dominant language. The differences in cultural customs, ways of thinking, and values between Chinese and Nigerians have become obstacles for Nigerian students learning Chinese. Students should learn to think in Chinese and cultivate Chinese language sense. To achieve this, students can listen to more Chinese radio, chat with Chinese teachers and friends, read more Chinese newspapers and books to form a certain amount of Chinese input, which is conducive to the formation of Chinese language sense. Through this learning process, Chinese rules and expression habits will continue to accumulate in the subconscious mind of the students, and with the continuous deepening of learning, students will use this subconscious to speak authentic Chinese sentences, to reduce the negative transfer of the dominant tongue to a large extent.

3. Improve target language input. An important factor in the transfer of the dominant language is the lack of adequate target language input. Therefore, Chinese language teachers should encourage students to read more, practice more, recite more, and input more target language. Increase the sense of language, overcome the negative transfer of the dominant language. Teachers should let students understand the Chinese culture, and try to overcome the influence caused by the negative transfer of dominant language.

4. Improve students' Chinese language learning skills. To improve students' target language learning skills, while mastering a large number of vocabulary, sentence patterns, basic grammar, and reciting model texts, teachers should also conduct more Chinese writing exercises. In attaching importance to vocabulary, teachers should try their best to explain the vocabulary in different contexts, so that students can fully understand the different meanings and different usage of the same vocabulary in different contexts, eliminating misunderstanding of the same usage of the word in

Chinese. Teachers should not only be good at facilitating the positive transfer of dominant language to promote Chinese learning but also guide students to avoid the interference of negative transfer of English or indigenous language to Chinese learning. Teachers should constantly stimulate students' interest in the target language and guide students to pay attention to the input and accumulation of knowledge.

5. Moderate an authentic reading materials according to the students' current level. Teachers can choose moderate and authentic reading materials according to students' current level, and can also encourage students to choose the reading materials they are interested in independently. To broaden students' horizons and enhance their sense of the language. Students can choose reading materials according to their level and interest. Through reading, readers can first master new vocabulary and can perceive the context used by the vocabulary. Secondly, learn the expression of the writer and understand the organizational structure of the reading material. If this is applied, the students can make their expressions less affected by the negative transfer of their dominant language.

6. Developing students' intercultural awareness and pragmatic competence. Foreign language teaching emphasizes the ideal goal of cultivating students' practical language ability. Learning a foreign language cannot be carried out in a language without socio-cultural factors. The importance of target language culture cannot be overemphasized. Chinese Language teachers should pay attention to cultivating students' cultural consciousness. Make students pay attention to the cultural differences between China and Nigeria, constantly expand various cultural backgrounds and cross-cultural communication, and as well pay attention to the factors of the social and cultural environment in the process of language acquisition. Through a certain social and cultural factors, learners can achieve a positive transfer to the target language.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the phenomenon of language transfer of English in Chinese language essay written by Nigerian students. In this paper, we find that there are both positive and negative transfer of dominant language rules and forms in the participants' essay writing. These linguistic transfer greatly influenced their Chinese language syntax, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanical accuracy. Positive transfer is greatly acceptable, as it speeds up language acquisition. To curtail the negative language transfer, Nigerian students and teachers are advised to utilize the recommendations given above. Language transfer includes phonetic, phonological, lexical, mechanical, morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic as well as conceptual studies. This study is only limited to few aspects of the linguistic transfer, therefore further studies are needed to explore other aspects especially the phonological, semantics, and conceptual category of language transfer as it relates to Nigerian students learning Chinese language as a foreign language.

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