Exploring Second Language Acquisition and Etiquette Differences Between Countries

Liqiu Tai[1,a,*]

[1]*School of Translation Studies, Xi'an Fanyi University, Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China*
a. 1910930109@mail.sit.edu.cn
*corresponding author

Abstract: Second language acquisition (SLA)is a heated issue among the world currently. Some researchers have found that etiquette differences between different cultures may lead to misunderstandings and conflicts among learners, but the close relationship between culture and SLA and specific case studies are still lacking specific evidence. Therefore, the topic of this paper is to explore the etiquette differences between the three countries in the SLA. The research findings of this paper are as followed: First, the etiquette data of China, Britain and France are collected, and then the data are compared and analyzed. It is found that culture is closely related to SLA, and understanding the etiquette of different cultures can promote second language learning. There are differences between China, Britain and France in table manners, first meeting etiquette and taboo etiquette. When learning a second language, it is necessary to learn the etiquette of the country to avoid unnecessary friction.

Keywords: second language acquisition, etiquette, culture

1.   Introduction

Language learning is not solely about acquiring grammar and vocabulary; it also involves developing cultural competence. Culture and language are deeply intertwined, and understanding cultural norms and etiquettes is crucial for effective communication. This paper focuses on how cross-cultural etiquette differences can impact second language acquisition.

2.   The Relationship Between Culture and Second Language Acquisition

Culture has a significant influence on learning a second language. Language is deeply intertwined with the cultural context in which it is used. Learning a second language involves not only acquiring vocabulary and grammar but also understanding the cultural norms, values, and customs associated with that language. Cultural context influences how language is used and interpreted, including aspects such as greetings, formality, politeness, and nonverbal communication.

First, in Whorf's book Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf published in 1956, presents his famous hypothesis known as the "linguistic relativity" or "language determinism. "According to Whorf, language influences our thought patterns and perceptions of the world. In his writings, Whorf argues that language is not just a means of communication but also shapes and determines our thinking. He suggests that different languages embody distinct worldviews and conceptual frameworks, which in turn influences how we perceive and understand the world

around us. According to Whorf, language molds our cognitive processes and structures our reality. The vocabulary, grammar, and expressions used in a language reflect the cultural beliefs, values, and ways of thinking [1]. Therefore, speakers of different languages may have different ways of categorizing information and organizing their thoughts.

Second, Sapir proposed his famous idea that language and culture influence each other. He believes that language is not only a tool for expressing ideas and exchanging information, but also a reflection and shaper of culture. According to Sapir, language is not only a means of expressing concepts, but also contains the values, belief systems, social customs, and other factors of a particular cultural context. Language is not only influenced by culture, but also has a profound influence on culture [2]. By studying the interrelationship between language and culture, people can better understand the human mind, cultural diversity, and the differences and connections between different communities.

Third, in his book of *Beyond Culture*, Hall emphasized the importance of understanding and respecting the etiquette of different cultures in order to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts in cross-cultural communication. Hall pointed out that every culture has its values, beliefs, codes of conduct and social norms that subtly influence the way that people behave and think. Understanding the implicit guidelines behind these cultures, including etiquette norms, is essential for cross-cultural communication [3].

Fourth, the book *Communicating with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication* addresses the importance of cross-cultural communication and the challenges of effective communication between different cultures. The author provides a theoretical framework, research findings, and practical strategies to help readers understand and cope with etiquette differences in cross-cultural communication [4].

Finally, Language and Culture is a book published in 1998 by Claire Kramsch that explores in detail the relationship between language and culture and provides multiple examples of cross-cultural communication. In this book, Kramsch begins by describing language and culture as two closely related concepts. She emphasizes that language is not just a communication tool, but an important part of cultural identity and way of thinking. Through language, people transmit and share knowledge of cultural values, belief systems, social norms, and history and traditions. Kramsch also provides a variety of examples and strategies for cross-cultural communication. She stressed the importance of linguistic and cultural sensitivity in cross-cultural communication. She encourages people to learn and appreciate the languages and expressions of different cultures in order to build more effective cross-cultural communication. She also introduces some practical tips and methods to help people understand and adapt to language habits and communication styles in different cultural contexts [5].

In summary, the above five books all focus on the relationship between language and culture and the problems of cross-cultural communication. These books focus on the interplay between language and culture, exploring how language shapes our perceptions and cultural concepts, and how to understand and respect cultural differences in cross-cultural communication. They provide in-depth thinking and practical approaches to the relationship between language and culture, helping us to better understand and deal with the challenges of intercultural communication.

At the same time, understanding different cultural backgrounds is crucial to adapting to different manners. First, in different cultural backgrounds, people may have different social habits and etiquette norms. Understanding and respecting these differences can help us interact better with others and avoid causing misunderstanding or conflict. For example, in some cultures, a handshake is a common greeting, while in others, bowing or hugging may be more common. If we are not aware of these differences, we may give an inappropriate impression to others. Second, understanding the manners and customs of different cultural backgrounds helps us respect and recognize the cultural identity of others. By adapting and following their social norms, we should express respect for their culture and build positive relationships. This respect and inclusion also help to reduce cultural conflicts and

misunderstandings. Third, understanding the etiquette and customs of different cultures can improve the effect of cross-cultural communication. When we understand and follow the etiquette norms of the target culture, we are better able to communicate our intentions and make the other person feel comfortable. It also helps us to correctly understand the expressions and intentions of others and avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. Therefore, cultural awareness plays a crucial role in language learning, and understanding etiquette in a culture can enable second language learners to learn a language.

3.   A Case Study of Etiquette Differences Between Countries

This section presents various examples of cross-cultural etiquette differences to highlight the challenges faced by second language learners. The following is a case study of table etiquette, first meeting etiquette and taboo etiquette in China, Britain and France.

3.1.   Table Manners

In China, the host usually arranges seating, with important guests sitting in the main seat and other guests assigned seats according to their status in formal occasions. The use of chopsticks as the main tableware in Chinese culture requires attention to proper use and politeness. Usually start with a few cold dishes or appetizers, followed by hot dishes, main courses, and soups. Traditionally, rice is usually regarded as a staple food. In Chinese culture, respect for elders is very important, and young people usually wait for elders to start eating first. Chinese table manners are deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and the value of respecting elders. In China, eating is regarded as a cultural and social activity, emphasizing harmony, respect and unity. It is said that Chinese table manners can be traced back to ancient Confucianism and the teachings of Confucius. Confucius emphasized the importance of respecting elders and customs, which is reflected in Chinese table manners [6].

In the U.K., the host usually designates the seat, and the woman usually takes the seat before the man in formal situations. British culture uses knives and forks as the main tableware, and different knives and forks are used for different dishes. The British use a teacup and a teaspoon when drinking tea, and a knife and fork when eating. In British culture, politeness and modesty are important values when eating, don't be loud or conspicuous. Table manners in England originated from the court customs of the aristocratic society in the Middle Ages. At that time, table manners were very important to show social status and identity. British table manners are also influenced by the Victorian era, with Queen Victoria placing great emphasis on etiquette and norms. British table manners emphasize politeness, modesty and order, as well as enjoyment and taste of the meal process [7].

In France, the host usually assigns the seat, and the woman usually takes the seat before the man in formal occasions. French culture uses knives and forks as the main tableware, but also spoons and knives. Toast at the French table is common and usually involves clinking glasses and saying a word of blessing. The French focus on enjoying the meal process and usually taste the food slowly rather than rushing through it. French table manners can be traced back to the aristocratic culture of the French court. During the reign of Louis XIV, French court customs and table manners reached their peak and became the object of emulation for the rest of Europe. The French attach great importance to the details and taste of the meal, paying attention to the culinary art of the food, the presentation of the plate and the collocation of the dishes. French table manners embody the characteristics of dignity, elegance and romance [8].

To sum up, Chinese table manners emphasize harmony, respect and unity, which can be traced back to the values and traditional concepts in Chinese culture. British table manners emphasize politeness, modesty and order. They are closely related to British cultural values and social customs. The greater focus on elegance and romance in French table manners. It is related to the French love

of food and quality of life.

3.2. Etiquette for First Meeting

In China, greeting is usually expressed by smiling, shaking hands or bowing. Address the other person by his or her first or last name, such as "Mr.", "Ms.", etc. It is important to show humility and respect when meeting someone for the first time. Use polite phrases such as "Please help", "hello" or "Nice to meet you" to show kindness and kindness. On special occasions or meetings, people may bring small gifts as greeting gifts. Traditionally, flowers, tea or specialty products are common gift choices.

In the UK, it is common to shake hands when meeting someone for the first time. The handshake should be short and firm, while maintaining moderate eye contact. In communication, British people usually introduce themselves and ask for the other person's name. Prefixes such as "Mr." or "Ms." are also common manners. British people usually use polite expressions such as "hello", "nice to meet you" or "Thank you very much" to show kindness and respect [9].

In France, kissing on the cheek is a common greeting when meeting someone for the first time. The number and manner of this greeting varies from region to region and is usually a light touch on the cheek from both sides. French people usually introduce themselves and ask for the other person's name. They may use the surname with a prefix such as "Monsieur" or "Madame" to show respect. French people usually use polite expressions such as "hello", "nice to meet you" or "thank you very much" to show kindness and respect. They also use appropriate titles and honorifics [7].

To sum up, Chinese and British greet each other with a handshake, while French greeting each other with a kiss on the cheek. This difference can be attributed to cultural and historical differences. Chinese and British cultures tend to be conservative and pay attention to personal space, while French culture emphasizes interpersonal relationships, intimacy and emotional expression.

3.3. Etiquette Taboo

In the Chinese culture, the number four (pronounced "four" like "death") is considered unlucky and should be avoided when it comes to celebrations, gifts and house numbers. White is often associated with funerals and mourning and is considered an unlucky color. Therefore, in weddings or other festive occasions, the use of pure white decoration should be avoided. Red is a lucky color, often used in celebrations and festive activities. In Chinese culture, it may be considered impolite to decline an invitation outright. Often, people respond to invitations in a tactful way, such as by offering alternative arrangements or evasive answers. Clocks and green hats are not allowed as gifts in China. Giving a clock ("giving a clock" sounds like "dying") is considered unlucky because it is associated with funerals. Green hats have negative symbolism in Chinese culture and are associated with infidelity or infidelity. Therefore, giving a green hat can be considered offensive or unlucky.

In the British culture, asking too much about personal questions (e.g., age, income, family status) may be seen as an invasion of privacy and inappropriate behavior. People are usually more concerned with maintaining a certain distance and respecting others' personal space. The emphasis on personal privacy in British culture may have something to do with Britain's history as an island nation and a long-term kingdom. British people generally tend to maintain a certain distance and respect the private sphere of others. Such cultural values may have been historically associated with the development of social hierarchy and feudalism. In British culture, excessive bragging about one's achievements or wealth may be seen as showing off and immodesty. The British tend to keep a modest and low-key attitude. The majority of Christian Britons often regard suicide as a sin and therefore try not to talk about it in their interactions. Thirteen is an unlucky number in England, and the reason why it is so taboo is partly based on stories in the Bible and partly on Greek mythology [10].

In the French culture, being too impatient or impatient is seen as lacking patience and calmness.

Respecting the pace of others and giving enough time is an important social etiquette. The emphasis on patience and calmness in French culture may be related to France's long historical, artistic, and philosophical traditions. The French tend to be introspective and reflective, focusing on depth and quality rather than speed. This cultural value may have been historically associated with the French intellectual class and the Enlightenment. In French culture, it is considered impolite and disrespectful to interrupt another person's conversation. People are more inclined to listen to the views and opinions of others and communicate in an orderly manner. French people avoid dark green because it is the color of Nazi uniforms in World War II, they believe that peacocks are evil birds, chrysanthemums are associated with funerals, and walnuts, azaleas and paper flowers are unlucky. The French consider it insulting to call an old woman an "old lady."

Taboo culture, as a special cultural form, has a long history and varied colors in the spread and variation of history, reflecting the changes of people's awareness and social life from different angles [11]. These prohibitions or restrictions stem from values and norms of behavior in specific cultural and social contexts. They aim to maintain social order, promote good human relations and protect the rights and interests of individuals. When interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds, it is important to understand and respect the corresponding etiquette rules and taboos in order to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts and to build a relationship of mutual understanding and respect.

Different etiquette differences can have various impacts on second language acquisition. Here are some potential effects: First, barriers to cross-cultural communication: not understanding the etiquette differences in the target language country may lead to barriers to cross-cultural communication. If second language learners are not familiar with British etiquette norms when communicating in English, they may encounter misunderstandings, embarrassment or offence. Second, social adjustment difficulties mean not knowing the social etiquette of the target language country can make second language learners feel confused and uncomfortable when participating in social situations. In the UK, for example, there is more emphasis on maintaining a certain distance and being polite, and if the second language learner is not aware of this, it may come across as unfriendly or rude. Third, communication strategy adjustment refers to understanding and adopting the etiquette norms of the target language country can help second language learners better integrate into the local culture and social circles. By learning and applying British etiquette norms, they can establish contact with local people more effectively and improve the effect of cross-cultural communication. Finally, cultural sensitivity cultivation: Understanding the etiquette differences of different cultures can cultivate the cultural sensitivity of second language learners. By learning the etiquette norms of the target language country, they can better understand and respect people from different cultural backgrounds and show respect and friendliness in cross-cultural communication.

Therefore, it is very important for second language learners to understand and learn the etiquette differences in the country of the target language. This can help them integrate more smoothly into the social life of the target language country, improve the effectiveness of communication with the locals, and promote cross-cultural understanding and friendship building.

4. Conclusion

The topic of this article is to explore the etiquette differences between China, Britain and France in second language acquisition（SLA）. Through literature review, the main points of view are as follows: understanding cross-cultural etiquette differences is crucial for SLA. Cultural awareness facilitates effective communication and fosters intercultural competence. Educators and learners alike should recognize the importance of integrating cultural aspects into language instruction to enhance language learning outcomes. By embracing cultural diversity, learners can become more proficient communicators in their target language. Situational simulation, role playing, case analysis, cross-cultural communication and discussion, cultural field visits, these cross-cultural training methods can

help second language learners to actively contact, experience and apply the cross-cultural knowledge they have learned in the actual situation. Intercultural etiquette education enables learners to better understand the values, beliefs, social norms and codes of conduct in different cultural contexts. By understanding and respecting the cultures of others, we can build better mutual understanding and communication. By learning cross-cultural etiquette, learners can develop a respect for diversity and inclusion. They are better able to appreciate and respect the differences between different cultures, as well as the commonalities within them, and thus better adapt to a diverse social environment. Cross-cultural etiquette education helps to reduce misunderstandings and conflicts caused by cultural differences. By understanding and respecting the cultural background of others, people can avoid unnecessary friction and misunderstanding and build a more harmonious interpersonal relationship. Therefore, teaching intercultural etiquette is of great significance for cultivating learners' cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication ability. This article has some educational implications, because it can promote second language learners to learn the language better. Educators and learners alike should recognize the importance of integrating cultural aspects into language instruction to enhance language learning outcomes. By embracing cultural diversity, learners can become more proficient communicators in their target language.

References

[1] Whorf, B. L. (1956). Language, thought, and reality: Selected writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf. MIT Press.
[2] Sapir, E. (1929). The status of linguistics as a science. Language, 5(4), 207-214.
[3] Hall, E. T. (1976). Beyond culture. Anchor.
[4] Gudykunst, W. B., & Kim, Y. Y. (2003). Communicating with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication. McGraw-Hill.
[5] Kramsch, C. (1998). Language and culture. Oxford University Press.
[6] Liang J.C. (2012) The cross-cultural Communication of Chinese and Western Etiquette from the perspective of Chinese and Western Table Order [J]. Comparative Research on Cultural Innovation,202,6(18):171-174.
[7] Wang H., Dai K (2019). Comparison of etiquette among China, France and Francophone West Africa [J]. Intelligence,2019(03):182.
[8] Zhao L (2017). On Eating Etiquette in France [J]. Farm Staff,2017(13):274-275.
[9] What You should know about British communication Etiquette [J]. Times English (10th 1),2020(04):12-13.
[10] Li L.Q. (2015). Analysis on the characteristics and causes of British etiquette culture [J]. Popular Literature and Art,2015(19):260-261.
[11] Xiao J. (2008). On the function of Chinese Taboo Culture [J]. Language World,2008(02):49-51.