

Investigation and Analysis of Tibetan-Chinese-English Trilingual English Learning Concept

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ABSTRACT

This research mainly takes non-English major Tibetan-Chinese-English trilingual speakers as the research objects. By questionnaire survey method, the research investigate the English learning concepts of non-English major Tibetan-Chinese-English trilingual speakers. It explores the current situation of the language learning concepts of trilingual speakers, the differences in the language learning concepts of this group in different grades, the relationships between various conceptual dimensions. The author takes the survey data as the objective basis of this research to discuss and analyze the English learning concepts of trilingual speakers, and finally puts forward the views and suggestions.

KEYWORDS

Tibetan-Chinese-English trilingual; English; Learning concepts

1 Introduction

China is a multi-ethnic country. Many ethnic minority students are bilinguals who learn and master two languages simultaneously from childhood. Therefore, when this group learn English, it is actually the acquisition of a third language. Horwitz (1999) investigated the learning concepts of students from different cultural backgrounds showed that different cultural backgrounds can lead to different foreign language learning concepts. Tibetan college students live in a Tibetan-Chinese bilingual environment, and their ways of thinking and attitudes have been influenced by their cultural backgrounds. In view of this, it is necessary to conduct an investigation to foreign language learning concepts of Tibetan non-English major students, who are a minority group. Horwitz (1985) was the first to use the term "beliefs" to refer to various viewpoints and opinions that learners had formed in advance regarding language learnin, and he (1987)^[1] designed the *Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI) in his research. Ehrman and Oxford (1995) found that the concept that learners believe they can learn a language well is significantly correlated with their proficiency in speaking and reading^[2]. Through a review of the literature, the author found that compared with foreign research, the research on English learning concepts in China started relatively late. Wen Qiufang and Wang Haixiao (1996) found that students generally believed that extensive training in basic knowledge was more important than mastering language knowledge^[3]. Zhuang Biyun (2008) found that students generally held a negative attitude towards the concept of relying on the mother tongue^[4]. Wan Xiaohui (2021)^[5] conclude that there is a positive correlation among all factors of learning concepts and learning strategies. This study investigates non-English major Tibetan-Chinese-English trilingual speakers, which enables us to understand the current situation of the English learning concepts of non-English major Tibetan-Chinese-English trilingual speakers, the differences in this group of different grades, and the relationships between various conceptual dimensions.

2 Research Design

2.1 Research Questions

- (1) What is the current situation of English learning concepts of non-English major Tibetan-Chinese-English trilingual speakers?
- (2) Are there any differences in English learning concepts among non-English major Tibetan-Chinese-English trilingual speakers in different grades?
- (3) Is there any relationship between learning concepts in different dimensions?

2.2 Research Method

There were 183 non-English major trilingual speakers participating in the study, among which 138 were freshmen and 45 were sophomores. This questionnaire adopted the BALLI compiled by Horwitz and combined with the concept of the mother tongue put forward by Wen Qiufang. The author re-tested the reliability and validity of the scale. The Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.896, the KMO was 0.77, and $P < 0.01$, which proved that the scale has good reliability and validity.

3 Research Results

3.1 Current situation of English learning concepts

3.1.1 Overall Characteristics

Table 1 Overall Characteristics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Difficulty	2.17	4	3.0959	0.39674
Ability	1.89	5	3.2366	0.41419
Nature	1	5	3.4902	0.46817
Strategy	1	5	3.4056	0.45491
Motivation and Expectations	1.25	5	3.4442	0.51079
Mother Tongue	1	5	3.2566	0.64745
Overall Characteristics	1.66	4.81	3.3215	0.34906

The results indicate that the learning concepts of trilingual speakers generally present a medium level. The levels of learning difficulty, learning ability, and mother tongue concept are general, while the levels of learning nature, communication strategies, and motivation and expectation concepts are relatively high. This indicates most Tibetan students have already recognized the close relationship between culture and language learning, but they also think English is a difficult language. The few students underestimate their own language learning ability and overestimate the difficulty of English learning. Students have strong motivations and expectations for English learning, who attach great importance to communication strategies in English learning, believing that learning strategies are of crucial importance for learning English well. There is a large gap in the students' conceptual levels within mother tongue dimension, as most Tibetan non-English major students find it difficult to break away from their dependence on their mother tongue.

3.1.2 Grade difference

Table 2 Grade difference

Grade:		Difficulty	Ability	Nature	Strategy	Motivation	Mother Tongue	Overall
Freshman	Mean	3.09	3.25	3.49	3.41	3.46	3.29	3.33
	Standard deviation	0.40	0.43	0.51	0.50	0.51	0.63	0.37
Sophomore	Mean	3.11	3.19	3.50	3.41	3.41	3.15	3.29
	Standard deviation	0.40	0.36	0.37	0.31	0.52	0.69	0.28

In each dimension of learning concepts, learning abilities, motivation expectations, and native language concepts, the level of freshmen are all higher than sophomores, which indicates that the English learning motivation of these Tibetan students is strong. However, the learning motivation of Tibetan freshmen is even stronger and they are more confident in their own learning abilities, believing that they have the capacity for language learning. At the same time, they also rely more on their mother tongue. In terms of the dimensions of learning difficulty and learning nature, the level of non-English students in freshmen is lower than that of non-English students in sophomore year. Regarding the learning nature, this trilingual speakers in both freshman and sophomore years pay relatively more attention to the learning of basic knowledge. As learning difficulty, the level of sophomore students is higher than that of freshman students. This shows that, sophomore students think that the difficulty of English learning is lower.

3.2 The correlation between the various dimensions of language learning concepts

Table 3 The correlation between the various dimensions of language learning concepts

Dimension	Difficulty	Ability	Nature	Strategy	Motivation	Mother Tongue
Difficulty	1.00					
Ability	0.34**	1.00				
Nature	0.38**	0.61**	1.00			
Strategy	0.31**	0.53**	0.69**	1.00		
Motivation	0.32**	0.57**	0.51**	0.70**	1.00	
Mother Tongue	0.12	0.42**	0.35**	0.34**	0.33**	1.00

Note: ** < 0.01, the correlation is significant.

Learning difficulty had a significantly positive correlation with learning ability, learning nature, communicative strategies, and motivation expectation respectively, and there was no correlation between learning difficulty and the concept of the mother tongue. This means that: The higher the level of students' perception of learning difficulty, the

lower the fear of difficulties. They think that it is important to use relevant strategies when learning a foreign language. At the same time, they have stronger learning motivation and expectations. The more students believe that they have the ability to learn languages, the more they think that English learning is inseparable from the learning of basic knowledge. The more students attach importance to the learning of basic knowledge, the more they will use relevant strategies, and the more they will have strong learning motivation and expectations. However, they will also rely more on their mother tongue. The higher the level of students' use of communicative strategies, the more they will have strong learning motivation and expectations. Similarly, they will also rely more on their mother tongue. 5. Students' motivation and expectations for foreign language learning will affect their reliance on the mother tongue, and the higher the learning motivation and expectations, the more they will rely on their mother tongue.

4 Conclusion

Through the investigation of the situation of English learning concepts, grade differences, and the relationships among various dimension, the results show that the students' English learning concepts are at a moderately above-average level, and there are deviations in the learning concepts of trilingual speakers among different grades. Among the various dimensions, the level of the nature is the highest, while the level of the learning difficulty is the lowest. In terms of the correlation relationships, except that there is no correlation between learning difficulty and the concept of the mother tongue, there are significant positive correlation relationships among the other dimensions. However, the correlations between the concept of the mother tongue and each dimension are relatively low.

The research findings have certain implications for college English teaching. Firstly, most Tibetan non-English major students have already realized that in order to speak a foreign language well, it is necessary to understand the culture of that foreign language. That is to say, there is a close relationship between language learning and cultural learning. This is consistent with the research of Deng Haitang (2008)^[6]. As a result, English teachers should consciously cultivate students' cultural sensitivity and cultural learning ability in English education. Zhuang Biyun (2008) pointed out in her research that while mastering grammar and vocabulary is of course important, what is more important is to possess the comprehensive application ability of English. Therefore, teachers should tell students that language learning should focus on various abilities. The purpose of using language is to obtain information, transmit information, and ultimately be able to interpret information. As for students have a certain fear of difficulties, teachers should encourage students more, encourage them to believe in their own learning abilities, have a correct understanding of the difficulty of foreign language learning, and build up their confidence. In addition, students have relatively strong and clear motivations for English learning, and attach great importance to communicative strategies for English learning. Therefore, teachers should guide students to make a correct evaluation of their own English learning concepts, instruct students to transform the correct concepts into actions, and to learn to cooperate and communicate with others for learning. Finally, the learning methods of most non-English major trilingual speakers are difficult to be separated from the dependence on their mother tongue. Their English learning concepts have unique contents, and such concepts are likely to dominate their minds for non-English major trilingual speakers. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to reduce their dependence on the mother tongue, and improving the quality of language communication.

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