

An Empirical Study on Chinese EFL Learners' Processing of English Animal Idioms*

Xiaoli Gan

School of Foreign Languages, Sichuan University of Arts and Science, Dazhou, Sichuan, China

Abstract—The present article reports on the effect of various animal idiom types and that of both proficiency levels on animal idiom comprehension. Based on the different match of equivalence/similarity and difference between surface linguistic forms and their underlying cultural connotations, a contrastive model for English and Chinese animal idioms is built, each distinguishing four possible combinations. Results of participants' performance on an English animal idioms comprehension test revealed that (a) The effects of English animal idiom types on idiom interpretation are significant. (b) The effects of English proficiency level on the comprehension of English animal idioms are significant, too. (c) During the processing of English animal idioms, L2 proficiency level and animal idiom types interact with each other and the interaction reached the level of significance.

Index Terms—idioms, cultural connotations, transparency, cultural transfer

I. INTRODUCTION

Idioms are beautiful gems of a language. It has been estimated that about 7,000 idioms are used by native speakers per week (Cooper, 1999). Thus, to master idioms is one of the most important aspects of using more authentic English. To judge a learner's mastery of English may depend partially on how well this learner can initially comprehend and eventually produce the idioms encountered in everyday language (Cooper, 1999). At the same time "grasping idioms" can be a great asset to learners in acquiring a new language" (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p.36).

They are "notoriously difficult" for "its rigid structure and quite unpredictable meaning" (Liu, 2003, p.45). Despite the difficulties involved in acquiring L2 idioms, every L2 learner must be prepared for speaking and meeting this challenge because idioms occur so frequently in both spoken and written language. Many of them pack a lot of information, especially cultural information. Animal images are much more popular in idioms which are full of cultural connotations, that's to say, many idioms bear proper animal images and have strong cultural flavors. Making use of idioms is a method of expressing oneself more quickly and concisely than in any other way.

A. Animal Idiom Words and Cultural Connotations

Making use of idioms is a method of expressing oneself more quickly and concisely than in any other way. Many idioms are truth tested in practice and have been regarded very important and pack a lot of information, especially cultural information. Animal images are much more popular in idioms which are full of cultural connotations.

Culturally-loaded vocabulary plays an important role in a language. Different social backgrounds, history, and national culture have a great effect on cultural connotations. As to animal idioms, culture exerts an important influence on these expressions, such as geographical culture, historical culture, customary culture, religious culture, literary works, myth, legends, and fables. With comparison, the same animal words may bear the same and different cultural meanings. And different animal words may convey the similar or even same meaning. Chinese and English idioms carved with cultural characteristics account for a great part in English learning. Cultural similarities and differences may have a positive or negative effect on English idiom comprehension.

All in all, animal idiom words, abundant with associated meanings and cultural connotations, have become the focus of many scholars. It is of great significance to make researches on animal idioms which shine with cultural flavor and cultural connotations from L2 acquisition perspective.

B. Idiom Transparency

Idioms range along a continuum of compositionality or analyzability. In line of this view, Nunberg, Sag & Wasow (1994) identified 3 groups subsets of idioms: decomposable idioms (the constituents contribute to the idiom's figurative meaning i.e. break the ice; pop the question); abnormally decomposable (a subgroup of decomposable idioms, whose individual components have some metaphorical relation to their idiomatic referents (spill the beans, carry a torch, bury the hatchet); nondecomposable idioms are those in which the literal meaning offers no clue for the construction on the figurative meaning, e.g. *kick the bucket*, *chew the fat* .

However, some researchers (Yorio, 2003; Fernando & Flavell, 1981; Gibbs, 1986; Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991)

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later noted an important distinction between opaque (e.g., *keep one's shirt on*) and transparent (e.g., *go by the book*) idioms. With opaque idioms, the figurative meaning of this idiom has little to do with the literal meaning; with transparent idioms, the figurative meaning is closely related to the literal meaning. For example, the expression "*go by the book*" is highly transparent because its literal meaning — to follow directions in a cookbook exactly is closely linked to its nonliteral meaning — to follow rules and regulations exactly. In contrast, the expression "*keep one's shirt on*" is highly opaque because its literal meaning — to continue wearing one's shirt is not related to its nonliteral meaning — to remain calm and not overreact. Generally speaking, most of the idioms are not transparent or lack transparency. The stronger the idiomaticity is, the weaker the transparency is, and vice versa.

In section 2.2 a good many of idiomaticities have been described. If analyzing by these idiomaticities, we can find that not all idioms possess all of these characteristics. Actually, some idioms have some of these characteristics, while some have others; some idioms bear more idiomaticities, nevertheless some have less; some idiom structure is steady, but some structure is flexible. All in all, different idioms have different idiomaticities. From the perspective of idiom comprehension, transparency should be taken into consideration. It mainly lies in the fact that idioms, which have been accepted widely and gradually, are formed through a long history by specific group, community or trade. During this period, idioms breathe into specific cultural connotations and become conventional.

If idiom can be divided into various degrees, these degrees can be used as criteria to measure the difficulty of idioms. The transparency of an idiom, however, is relative but not absolute, that's to say, maybe for a L2 learner an idiom is hard nut to crack, but it is not definitely a hot potato for another learner. The reason is that the processing of an idiom is affected by such factors as intuition, L2 proficiency level, world knowledge including specific cultural connotations, and so on.

C. Proficiency Level and Idiom Comprehension

There is considerable evidence to support a link between learners' proficiency level and idiom comprehension. The literature is replete with studies suggesting that higher-proficiency learners use more strategies than lower-proficiency learners—usually indicating that the better learners use more strategies and can perform better in L2 idiom comprehension (Ehrman, 1990). Green & Oxford (1995), in a study of 374 college students at three different course levels at the University of Puerto Rico, found that learners varied considerably in both the overall frequencies with which they transfer from their L1 to L2 idiom comprehension and the particular types of strategies they used. Students who were better in their language performance generally reported better scores and frequent use of a greater number of strategy categories in employing their L1 knowledge. Dreyer & Oxford (1996), in a study of 305 first-year Afrikaans-speaking students at the Potchefstroom University in South Africa, found that correlations between students' idiom comprehension and EFL proficiency were positive and highly significant.

The link between L2 proficiency level and different idiom types which are classified according to the combination of linguistic forms and underlying cultural connotations, however, is not very clear. The aim of the present study is to investigate the processing of English animal idioms that are divided in four types by Chinese EFL learners, that's to say, to determine the effect of English animal idiom types and English proficiency level on the idiom comprehension by Chinese EFL learners.

D. Cultural Transfer

"Transfer" is originally an important notion in "Learning Psychology". It is regarded as the result of what is called proactive inhibition. This is concerned with the way in which the learning of task A prevents or inhibits the learning of task B. According to James (1980), if we change task A and task B in the above definition into L1 and L2, it is language transfer. Put it another way, language transfer is the learning psychology in Second Language Acquisition.

What is the dynamic relationship between second culture knowledge and second language acquisition? Humboldt (Yao Xiaoping, 1995) proposed that each language is composed of a distinctive philosophy of world and values, implying that language is culture-specific. Meanwhile Sapir & Whorf (1956) also regarded that to learn a foreign language, first of all, it is necessary to change the cultural perspective.

As early as 1957, Lado has already noted that in order to acquire a foreign language, we should compare cultures between different nations. However, it is a pity that for a relatively long time, it has not been taken up. Recently, with more comprehensive views towards transfer, more and more linguists began to concentrate their focus on cultural transfer. The representatives in this field are pragmatic study in Britain, JIC study in Former Soviet Union and Intercultural communication study in the United States.

The aim of the present paper is to investigate the effects of animal idiom types and Chinese EFL learners' proficiency levels on idiom processing. Hence the following research questions will be addressed in the present study:

Based on the research aims of this study, the specific research questions addressed in the study are:

1. What is the effect of English animal idiom types on the comprehension of English animal idioms by Chinese EFL learners of different proficiency levels?
2. What is the effect of proficiency levels on the comprehension of English animal idioms?
3. Does language transfer take place when Chinese EFL learners process and comprehend English animal idioms?

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

A total of 60 undergraduates and postgraduates majored in English were chosen from Foreign Languages Department of Sichuan University of Science and Arts and College of Foreign Language in Chongqing university. According to the aim of this study, they are divided into two groups according to their English vocabulary test which is closely related with their English proficiency levels: the intermediate-level and the high-level. The intermediate group comprises 30 third-year undergraduate majoring in English, who have an average 8 years of English learning experience and, at the present, all have passed the TEM 4 (Test of English for English Majors Band 4). The advanced group consists of 30 second-year postgraduates majoring in English who have an average of about 12-15 years of English study. The 30 postgraduates selected as high level learners have all passed TEM 8 (Test of English for English Majors Band 8).

B. Material Preparation

The study material was English animal idioms chosen from the Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English, a Dictionary of English Idioms with Chinese Translation, A Chinese-English Idiom Dictionary, American English Idioms, English and Chinese Idioms, English Allusions, A Dictionary of American Idioms. Only 20 English animal idioms were chosen as target words.

The choice of the 20 English animal idioms as target idioms was based on the following reasons. Firstly, the 20 animal idioms used in the study were with typical animal images and rich cultural connotations in both Chinese and English. Secondly, a former test showed that most students were unfamiliar to these idioms. Thirdly, some of the surface linguistic forms in the 20 animal idioms were unfamiliar or unknown to the subjects. Thus, the chosen 20 English animal idioms were likely to represent a favorable condition for the investigation of idiom processing.

Since one purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of idiom types on subjects' processing of English animal idioms, the target idioms should contain four types according to the match of linguistic forms and cultural connotations. That's to say, based on the equivalence/similarity and difference between surface linguistic forms and their underlying cultural connotations, a contrastive model for English and Chinese animal idioms should be built, which distinguishing four possible combinations, namely: Part/Types I (the type that is same as Chinese expressions in terms of linguistic forms and cultural connotation); Part/Type II (the English animal idioms that are same as Chinese expressions in cultural connotations but different in linguistic forms); Part/Type III (the type that is different in cultural connotation but is the same as Chinese expression in linguistic forms); Part/Type IV (the English animal idioms that are totally different in linguistic and cultural connotations from that of Chinese expressions).

C. Scoring

In the phase of idiom processing, the participants' interpretation of the 20 English animal idioms was operationalized by the scores they achieved in the test: 1 point or 0, depending on how close their comprehension was to the meaning of the target idioms. Zero was given for an answer of "I don't know" or an absolute wrong translation. Meanwhile, answers indicated a marginal sense or a vague sense of the given animal idiom meaning were scored zero, too. For example, set the wolf to keep the sheep (引狼入室) would be given zero if it was translated as 让狼去守羊. 1 point was given to the correct meanings or responses. For example drink like a fish—牛饮. Besides, one point also means a good sense of the animal idiom meaning including the implied cultural connotations, for example, help a dog over a stile—to be ready to help the others (乐于助人).

The total score of the English animal idioms comprehension test was 20, and the subscore for each animal idiom type was 5. The scoring criterion was based on some authoritative dictionaries, such as Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English, a Dictionary of English Idioms with Chinese Translation, A Chinese-English Idiom Dictionary, etc. The grading work was cooperated with consensus after repeated discussions with several college English teachers.

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

According to the research design, two-way ANOVA using a 2(Level: high vs. intermediate) \times 4 (Anima idiom type: Type I, Type II, Type III and Type IV) mixed design repeated measures were conducted.

Table 1 informed us a general description. In Part I, Part II, Part III and Part IV the Mean scores of intermediate-level EFL learners were 3.47, 2.30, .8, and .70 respectively, while that of the high-level learners were 4.00, 2.73, 1.00, and .83. From table 4.7 we got 4 2-tailed Sig, which were .004 ($p=.004 < .05$) in Part I, .023 ($p=.023 < .05$) in Part II, .155 ($p=.155 > .05$) in Part III and .229 ($p=.229 > .05$) in Part IV.

TABLE 1
GROUP STATISTICS

| Idiom types | Level | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-------------|-------|----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| PART I | 1 | 30 | 3.47 | .57 | .10 |
| | 2 | 30 | 4.00 | .79 | .14 |
| PART II | 1 | 30 | 2.30 | .65 | .12 |
| | 2 | 30 | 2.73 | .78 | .14 |
| PART III | 1 | 30 | .80 | .61 | .11 |
| | 2 | 30 | 1.00 | .45 | 8.30E-02 |
| PART IV | 1 | 30 | .70 | .47 | 8.51E-02 |
| | 2 | 30 | .83 | .38 | 6.92E-02 |

Note: Part I : English animal idioms with the same linguistic forms and cultural connotation as that of Chinese animal idioms
 Part II : English animal idioms with the same cultural connotation but different linguistic forms as that of Chinese animal idioms
 Part III: English animal idioms with different cultural connotations but same linguistic forms to that of Chinese idioms
 Part IV: English animal idioms with different cultural connotations and linguistic forms to that of Chinese idioms
 Level 1= high-level group; Level 2= intermediate-level group

The results of two-way ANOVA were reported in Table 2 and Table 3. Table 2 shows a general description of four types of English animal idioms' processing by two English proficiency groups. As shown in Table 3, the Mean score of intermediate-level was 3.47 in Part I, 2.30 in Part II, 0.80 in Part III and 0.70 in Part IV, while the Mean of high-level was 4.00 in Part I, 2.73 in Part II, 1.00 in Part III and 0.83 in Part IV. For the four types of animal idioms, the Mean of all these participations in Part I, Part II, Part III, Part IV were 3.73, 2.52, 0.90, and 0.77 respectively.

Table 3 gives us a more detailed view of the effects of both idiom types and English proficiency levels on animal idiom comprehension. In other words, except for the effect of language proficiency, idiom types which were distinguished according to the different match of their surface linguistic form and the implied cultural connotations affect animal idiom comprehension, too. Meanwhile, the English proficiency \times animal idiom type approached significance ($F=6.267$; $p=.020<.05$), that's to say, the effect of idiom type on idiom processing is related to English proficiency level in animal idiom processing.

TABLE 2
GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF FOUR TYPES OF ENGLISH ANIMAL IDIOMS' PROCESSING BY TWO ENGLISH PROFICIENCY-LEVEL GROUPS

| | Items | Part I | Part II | Part III | Part IV | Total |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------|---------|----------|---------|-------|
| Intermediate-level | Number of subjects | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| | Sum of score | 104 | 69 | 24 | 21 | 218 |
| | Mean | 3.47 | 2.30 | 0.80 | 0.70 | 1.82 |
| | Std. Deviation | 0.33 | 0.42 | 0.37 | 0.22 | 1.65 |
| High-level | Number of subjects | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 120 |
| | Sum of score | 120 | 82 | 30 | 25 | 257 |
| | Mean | 4.00 | 2.73 | 1.00 | 0.83 | 2.14 |
| | Std. Deviation | 0.62 | 0.62 | 0.21 | 0.14 | 2.11 |
| Total | Sum of score | 224 | 151 | 54 | 46 | |
| | Mean | 3.73 | 2.52 | 0.90 | 0.77 | |
| | Std. Deviation | 0.54 | 0.56 | 0.29 | 0.18 | |

Note: Part I = English animal idioms with the same linguistic form and cultural connotation as that of Chinese animal idioms
 Part II = English animal idioms with different linguistic form but same cultural connotations as that of Chinese idioms.
 Part III = English animal idioms with same linguistic form but different cultural connotations from that of Chinese idioms.
 Part IV = English animal idioms that are completely different from that of Chinese counterpart in both linguistic form and cultural connotations

TABLE 3
TWO-WAY ANOVA TEST: IMPACT OF ANIMAL IDIOM TYPES AND ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVELS ON IDIOM PROCESSING

| Source | df | SS | MS | F | Sig. |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Within-Subjects | | | | | |
| English animal idiom types | 3 | 354.78 | 118.26 | 323.202 | .000*** |
| English proficiency | 3 | 6.88 | 2.29 | 6.267 | .000*** |
| \times English animal idiom types | | | | | |
| Between-Subjects | | | | | |
| English proficiency | 1 | 6.34 | 6.34 | 17.320 | .000*** |
| Error | 232 | 84.90 | 0.37 | | |

Note: ** $p<.01$. *** $p<.0001$.

As the repeated measures two-way ANOVA yielded the notable effects generated by the two main factors, an independent-samples t-tests was performed to provide detailed information on between-group differences.

Table 4 reports that English proficiency affected the four types of English animal idiom interpretation differently. From Table 4.3 we have known that among the four idiom types, type I was the simplest one for the subjects, type II was easier, and type III and type IV were the most difficult parts for them. EFL learners with higher proficiency level in this study did not significantly perform better in all the four types of animal idioms than those with lower proficiency. They only scored higher significantly in Part I and Part II (English animal idioms which are different from or similar to Chinese animal idioms in linguistic forms while their cultural connotations are the same). In comprehension of

PartIII and PartIV, however, the idiom comprehension didn't reached significance, that's to say, the scores of the two groups, no matter its English proficiency level was high or intermediate, didn't different significantly.

TABLE 4
ILLUSTRATION OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL & ANIMAL IDIOM TYPE INTERACTION INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------|------------------------------|--------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. 2-tailed | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| PART I | Equal variances assumed | .475 | .493 | -3.002 | 58 | .004 | -.53 | .18 | -.89 | -.18 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -3.002 | 52.895 | .004 | -.53 | .18 | -.89 | -.18 |
| PART II | Equal variances assumed | .953 | .333 | -2.327 | 58 | .023 | -.43 | .19 | -.81 | -6.06E-02 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.327 | 56.090 | .024 | -.43 | .19 | -.81 | -6.03E-02 |
| PARTIII | Equal variances assumed | 7.851 | .007 | -1.439 | 58 | .155 | -.20 | .14 | -.48 | 7.82E-02 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -1.439 | 53.623 | .156 | -.20 | .14 | -.48 | 7.86E-02 |
| PARTIV | Equal variances assumed | 6.153 | .016 | -1.21 | 58 | .229 | -.13 | .11 | -.35 | 8.62E-02 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -1.21 | 55.687 | .229 | -.13 | .11 | -.35 | 8.64E-02 |

IV. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

A. Impact of Idiom Types on Animal Idiom Processing

The first goal of the present study is to explore the effects of English animal idiom types on idiom processing by Chinese EFL learners. English animal idioms in this research were distinguished into four types according to the different matches of their surface linguistic forms and underlying cultural connotations. Part I is the type with linguistic form and cultural connotation being the same as that of Chinese animal expressions. Part II are animal idioms with different linguistic forms but same cultural connotations as that of Chinese idioms. Contrarily, PartIII are the ones with same linguistic forms but different cultural connotations from that of Chinese idioms. PartIV, however, are completely different from their Chinese counterparts in both surface linguistic forms and underlying cultural connotations. The effect of animal idiom types on idiom interpretation was significant ($p=.000 < .05$) according to the test of two-way ANOVA.

To give explanation to this finding, first of all, it's necessary to review the nature of L2 idiom comprehension. In other words, what if a L2 learner encounters an idiom he/she does not know? When facing a L2 idiom unknown, foreign language learners tend to seek help from the meaning of constituent parts for the overall meaning. Idioms, however, are "notoriously difficult" for "its rigid structure and quite unpredictable meaning" (Liu, 2003, p.671). For example, to pull one's leg has nothing to do with "pull" and "leg" but means to fool somebody. From the surface or literal meaning of this idiom we can hardly tell its meaning as an L2 learner. That's to say, some idioms are semantically opaque, namely, the figurative meaning of an idiom, in most cases, not easy to be derived from the literal interpretation, because idioms, although it is a common phenomenon of all the languages known to mankind, it is deeply rooted in life of different races in different countries, thus most of the idioms are cultural and informal. For example, both English and Chinese idioms are large in quantity, long in history, rich in cultural information and deeply rooted in life. If we compare their underlying cultural information, some are completely or partially equivalent while some others have nothing in common at all. Therefore, to figure out the meaning of a L2 idiom, we need to depend on its underlying cultural connotations as well as its literal meaning. If the cultural connotations and linguistic forms are the same, then it is of great transparent to the L2 learners, and vice versa.

The processing of L2 idiom can also be explained by the phenomenon of language transfer which was first based on the behaviorist view that the main impediment to learning was interference from prior knowledge (Elks, 1994). Language researchers divided transfer into positive transfer and negative transfer. When first and second languages have

certain patterns that are identical, positive transfer occurs, which facilitates the language learning. However, if the patterns between first and second languages are different, negative transfer is likely resulting in interference. Second language acquisition research shows that L1 transfer is one of the important factors that influence second language acquisition (SLA), and this influence can occur in the course of learning all the subsystems of the second language such as phonology, lexicon, morphology, syntax and discourse, and experimental results did unanimously show such an effect of L1 on understanding L2 idioms, that is, transfer from L1 to the target language can speed up the learning process at least when the two languages share many features. Meanwhile, cultural connotations tend to transfer from L1 to L2, too.

B. Impact of L2 Proficiency Level on Animal Idiom Processing

In the processing of English animal idiom comprehension, cultural transfer occurred. For an EFL learner, he or she has formed a complete system of his or her native language and cultural connotations. When processing an unfamiliar L2 idiom, they firstly turn to their native language and then to their L1 cultural knowledge, and it was embodied in this study. In the interpretation of Part I (English animal idioms with the same linguistic forms and cultural connotation as that of Chinese expressions) and Part II (English animal idioms with the same linguistic forms but different cultural connotation from that of Chinese expressions), the language and cultural knowledge of EFL learners was activated through their native language system, so the participants performed best in Part I, and then in Part II. While in Part III (English animal idioms with different cultural connotations but same linguistic forms as that of Chinese expressions) and Part IV (English animal idioms with different cultural connotations and linguistic forms from that of Chinese expressions), the participants could only guess the overall meaning from the surface linguistic forms because of the different cultural connotations of English animal idiom or, in Part IV, even completely guess on no ground, so the Chinese EFL learners didn't performed well in the comprehension of two parts compared with Part I and Part II.

In the process of L2 animal idiom comprehension, therefore, the high-level L2 learners didn't definitely outperform the intermediate-level ones in some types of animal idioms which are lack of transparency mainly because of their different cultural connotations from that of their L1. This finding in the study can be explained in terms of the cultural transfer as well as language transfer. We can conclude that cultural connotation's transfer does exist. Learners either use their L1 knowledge to deem the English connotation of the words or literally translate the Chinese words into English. Meanwhile, we can conclude that the cultural connotation's transfer is at least influenced by three factors. They are the perceived markedness of L1 by L2 learners, L2 learners' language proficiency, and the L2 learners' intercultural awareness. Therefore, in the learning of L2 words, the important thing is to handle these three factors correctly. When emphasizing the distance between the Chinese and English, the similarities should not be ignored either; when developing the learners' language proficiency, learners' intercultural awareness should also be strengthened.

All in all, L2 idiom comprehension needs not only L2 knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar, but also L2 cultural knowledge, and all these can be transferred from L1 to L2.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the study reinforce the fact that both L2 idiom type and L2 proficiency level affect the acquisition of L2 idioms. Advanced English learners can't outperform the intermediate-level learners in all types of L2 idiom translation because L2 idioms, as a special phenomenon in L2 vocabulary, involve pure foreign language knowledge as well as the knowledge of L2 culture.

Language meaning is closely related to culture, as it is the primary means by which a culture transmits its values, beliefs, concepts, customs and social norms and habits. So we may say that a language, to some extent, is the symbolic representation of a particular culture. Culture, on the other hand, imposes considerable influence on language and the use of language as well. So languages in the world vary from culture to culture not only in the symbols they use, the diversities of structure at various levels, and the grammatical rules they have formed, but also in how they are appropriately used in communication. Since the knowledge, values and beliefs that constitute a people's culture are habitually encoded and transmitted in the language of people, it is of great importance for L2 learners not only to learn the linguistic knowledge of the target language, but also to pay much attention to the development of his cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural competence in their study of the target language.

Therefore, learning an L2 means more than merely mastering the pronunciation, words and grammar. It also means learning to see the world as native speakers of that language see it, learning the ways in which their language reflects the ideas, customs, and behavior of their society, learning to understand their "language of the mind". Learning a language, in fact, is inseparable from learning its culture.

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Xiaoli Gan was born in Sichuan, China in 1977. She is a lecturer in the School of Foreign Languages, Sichuan University of Arts and Science, Sichuan, China. Currently she is studying as a visiting scholar in Eastern Mennonite University, VA, U.S. Her research interests include Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching.