

A Cultural Exploration behind Teaching Passive Voice

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide English teachers with a Chinese/English cultural perspective in teaching passive voice grammar. According to the regular tests, The General English Ability Examination 2012 (GNAE 2012), conducted by the Language Center (LC) at a four-year technology university in Taiwan, 2012, the findings showed that the students' problems involved the use of passive voice.

This test, the (GNAE 2012), on one hand, was to evaluate the college students' English abilities before the end of each semester; and was utilized to measure the reliability of the questions created by teachers in Language Center, on the other hand. The results indicated that a major portion of these questions were successfully designed. Only a few questions were required to be re-examined. One of the re-examined questions implied that something behind the question needed further exploration. In this case, the number of higher intermediate English level students selecting wrong answers was more than the lower English level ones. In terms of the theory of Linguistics (Chomsky, 1975; Pinker, 1994), this research assumed that the potential reason accounting for this case might have connected with the cultural influence of the student's mother tongue. Ten questions were created to qualitatively explore the differences between Chinese and English as students' sensing how to correctly use English passive voice.

This study will explain students' cognitive differences in the use of passive voice between Chinese and English. The purpose of this study is also about to provide English teachers the distinctions of perception between some Chinese verbs and English verbs, which may have caused problems in learning passives.

Keywords: Cultural perspective, Passive voice, Linguistics, Cultural differences

英語被動句型之文化元素探討

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摘要

本研究試圖提供英語老師有關中文、英文相對照的文化視角，作為教授英語被動式之參考。依據此研究中、提供樣本的一所四年制科技大學之規定，語言中心在2012年舉辦英語會考，之後學生的作答情況顯示出學生在學習被動式上之障礙。此英語會考於每學期末舉辦，由語言中心的老師出題。此會考一方面是要檢驗學生在學習一學期後的成效，同時也能評估考題的效度。考試的結果顯示出考題的效度極佳，是設計良好的題目，僅少數題目須重新評估。然而，幾個題目的答題結果顯示出中高級班（英語程度相對較好的學生）答錯的比例竟高於中級班、甚至是初級班（英語程度相對較低的學生）。依照語言學之理論（Chomsky, 1975; Pinker, 1994），本研究假設此情況之產生是由於學生受到母語文化之影響。為進一步驗證此假設，本研究設計了十個與被動相關的中文問題，並提供對照的英文句子兩句讓參與研究的學生選擇，以探討中文與英文語法之不同如何影響學生對於被動句型的使用。此研究將會解釋學生在學習被動句型時所顯示出的中、英文之認知差異。此外，本研究也提供了一些因為不同語文之認知不同而可能影響被動式教學的中、英文動詞給英語老師，期望作為老師們在教學上的參考。

關鍵字：文化視角、被動式、語言學、文化差異