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CHAPTER ONE

Third Language Acquisition (TLA) & Multilingualism

1.0 Introduction

A growing body of research of Third Language Acquisition (TLA) suggests that linguists are increasingly aware that it is not sufficient to study TLA merely within the theoretical frameworks of bilingualism or Second Language Acquisition (SLA). In 1999, a debut international conference on the topic of “Third Language Acquisition and Trilingualism”¹ was finally held in Austria, which signified the establishment of an independent paradigm and field of TLA.

Third Language Acquisition (TLA) has begun to gain overdue attention and recognition due to the growing multilingual community in this modern age. Some suggest that the multilingual mind, which contains one single module to cope with more than one language system, may be a more natural state than the monolingual one (Cook, 1981). This work is an attempt to show that all knowledge of first and second languages play influential role in acquiring third language.

An investigation is carried out on how Hong Kong students with Chinese (L1)

¹ The International Conference on Third Language Acquisition and Trilingualism was held in Innsbruck, Austria, during 16-18th September, 1999



and English (L2)² backgrounds acquire German *Vorfeld* (Fronting) constructions in their third language (L3). To show the influence of the first and the second languages, a sample of compositions is collected and a number of subjects are asked to describe two pictures in the three respective languages for comparison. It is an empirical study and takes an interactive approach by integrating various factors such as language processing, cognitive functioning, comparative grammar and psychotypology to present a more holistic picture of TLA. It supports the view that language development is best revealed in terms of interaction of syntax, semantics and pragmatics (Gass, 1989).

Indeed, this investigation of L1 Chinese and L2 English influences in acquiring German is a novel attempt in the literature. Till now, not only has there been still very little research carried out on TLA topic, but the research area is also mostly limited to European contexts. This work will bring a native Chinese speaker's intuitive insights to bear on the acquisition of another European language.

In lieu of a purely syntactic comparison of the three languages, we would again take an interactive approach in treating syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects. We suggest that semantic and pragmatic factors of L1 as well as syntactic forms of L2

² L2 English refers to learners' L2 competence of English, which includes target English as well as IL English. (See also Yip, 1995)



respectively play salient roles in acquiring L3 German.

1.1 The nature of the study of Language Acquisition

It is a basic question when it comes to Language Acquisition to ask how people acquire and use language. However, the nagging “Plato’s Problem” or the mystery of the so-called “black box” (Language Learning Device), i.e. the discrepancies between the insufficient input and the competent output of the children, remains as a paradox. We can only postulate what is missing there and set up a theory to describe it. One approach suggests that language acquisition is innate, and its underlying argument is basically theoretically-driven (Chomsky, 1965, 1981; Pinker, 1994).

In SLA and TLA, the fundamental inquiry is different since it raises the opposite problem, known as “Orwell’s problem”: the underachievement of the learners given that they have been given so much input (cf. Chomsky, 1986). Moreover, an existing language system could affect and change the process of learning another language (Clahsen & Muysken, 1986).

However, it is to be argued that the ground of the argument concerning L2 or L3



learners' "underachievement" actually contains a misconception, in which deviations from target grammar are perceived as flaws. In fact, those productions should be treated as following their own integrated grammar in its own right. Selinker (1972) first established a separate treatment of learner grammar, "interlanguage" (IL), which results from the learners' attempted production of a target Language (TL) norm. The notion of IL also supports the argument of multilingual mind. Cook (1982, 1996) explains that the distinct grammar of a multilingual mind, which contains more than one linguistic system, is naturally distinguished from the target grammar of a monolingual mind.

The IL approach has changed our perspective in analyzing and understanding the subject of foreign language acquisition. It helps to justify the approach of this work, which is not confined to a behavioral study (result oriented), but also attempts to go deeper into the factors which determine how the learners acquire and use the target L3 (process oriented). Hence, it is not the aims of this work to show "WHY" the students are not able to write correctly and grammatically, but rather the reason "HOW" they produce the L3 original works.



1.2.1 Interlanguage (IL)

Selinker (1972) makes a breakthrough and introduces the notion of “Interlanguage” (IL), advocating a separate linguistic system for learners and recognizing the distinct learning process of SLA:

“context interacts with core grammar and language transfer effects to form IL competence in ways that have no parallel in the formation of NL competence.”

(Selinker, 1992)

The IL system describes the so-called internalized grammar, an underlying knowledge of a language, and thus accounting for how learners use that knowledge to obtain the target language competence (ref. Selinker, *ibid*; Schachter & Rutherford, 1979, Adjemian, 1976, Huebner, 1983, Rutherford, 1983, Zobl, 1984, Yip, 1995). The IL concept has far-reaching effects on the accounts of SLA. New research areas emerge such as the study of L2 fossilization, backsliding, permeability and learning strategies. Adjemian (1976) further elaborates on the nature of IL system, which is to be treated as natural language. It is claimed to be an internally coherent structure and is amenable to systematic linguistic analysis.

1.2.2 Current perspectives in the SLA domain



The development of SLA research clearly indicates that not only is there a change of methodological approach, but it has also altered the explanatory device, which is not merely based on linguistic structures. Cognitive and psychological explanation alternative seems to become more relevant and popular. It implies a specific application of the language acquisition faculty to non-native language, which comprises principles of information processing and more general learning processes (Clahsen, 1988, Bley Vroman, 1989). For instance, it focuses on how learners deal with form-function correlation.

An important element of many current approaches is the notion of a creative process, in which learners are interacting with their environment to produce an internalized representation of the regularities they discover in the language data to which they are exposed. It is much more complicated than transferring the knowledge from one language to another. Instead, learners “construct and test hypotheses” as suggested by Gundel and Tarone (1992).

1.3 An interactive approach of various theoretical framework

We need not to address a “To be or Not to be” type of question in labeling our theoretical framework by identifying ourselves with any particular theory. Indeed, we



try to suggest that theoretical stand could be best explained by an interaction of various theories. Wode (1981, 1986) advocates an integrativist position and involves a “linguo-cognitive” system. Clahsen (1982) also argues that the relationship of grammars to language processing should be included within the functionalist approach. He explains that his learners clearly prefer the SVO patterns, which are said to be parsed as the basic grammatical forms, even though they are exposed to a language with a relatively high degree of word order flexibility.

Furthermore, by adopting an interactive approach, we could perhaps enhance our understanding of TLA as we attempt to show that learning theories may be compatible with UG and typological approaches. As also suggested by Givón (1995), the role played by grammatical forms should not be ignored within functionalist framework. There is not only no exclusiveness amongst different theoretical paradigms, but they actually could complement each other.

1.3.1 Universal Grammar and Learning theory

Chomsky (1965, 1981) proposed the theory of Universal Grammar (UG) as an innate component of the human language faculty. However, the role of UG remains controversial in non-primary language acquisition. While Flynn (1987) and White (1988) emphasized the innate and domain-specific language faculty in language



learning, others argued that UG could only be accessed indirectly through L1 UG (Schachter, 1992)

Contrasting with the focus of the UG-based research, some scholars advocate the notion of general learning strategies (Felix, 1985; Clahsen, 1988; Bley-Vroman 1989; Schachter 1988, 1996; Meisel, 1997). Clahsen and Muysken (1986) speculate that cognitive capacities in adults could substitute for UG in learning certain structural properties. Their L2 learners of German are said to use canonical sentence schemas which are derived from the neutral sentence type, SVO order, even though the underlying word order is SOV.

The results of the two operating mechanisms, i.e. innate UG and general learning strategies may not be the same, thus accounting for the “unnatural rules” of adult grammars and the disparity of the learning processes between first and second language acquisition.

As shown in the results of our investigation (see Chapter Four), general learning strategies seem to be more apparent and prevalent in TLA as the learners appear to transfer the learning skill of their L2 into their L3. L3 learners show they have higher metalinguistic skills as they have learned from the previous SLA experience and this seems to affect the acquisition of the L3 (Thomas, 1988)⁴.



Nevertheless, UG is not irrelevant in SLA and especially our TLA research here, as we support Clahsen's proposition, ie. "UG-onlines⁵ are learnable without UG". He argues that L2 learners can still learn verb-position and subject-verb agreement in German, which are regarded as (parameterized) UG principles (cf. Klein, 1990). Indeed, while it remains controversial regarding the accessibility of UG in SLA, there is widespread consensus on the constraint role of UG in acquiring a new grammar (Eckman, 1996, Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996).

1.3.2 Typology and Developmental Principles

Language universals research in the Chomskyan paradigm is attempting to show internal language properties of human beings. Greenbergian typological universals are different from Chomskyan generative universal grammar, in that they present different explanation and presentation of language universals.

In contrast to generative UG, typological the approach is data-driven, proceeding through detailed examination of a wide range of languages. It concerns itself more directly with "possible variation" (Comrie, 1981) and is concerned with universal

⁴ Further discussion of L3 metalinguistic competence is in section 1.6.3.

⁵ UG-onlines refers to the L1 innate parameter settings such as the verb-position and subject-verb agreement in German (see Klein, 1990).



tendencies as well as absolute universals. It sets up implicational universal hierarchies according to factors such as markedness, word order, and syntactic-semantic distance (cf. Rutherford, 1984). As in foreign language acquisition, when there is an apparent incongruity between the L1 and the L2, learners would resort to fundamental universal properties such as hierarchical relationships between possible structures (Gass, 1989).

The significance of the implicational universal hierarchies is that they “represent general properties of the human language potential, or perhaps even more general properties of human cognition and/or social interaction” (Comrie, 1990). Innateness, which is the basic explanation for generative UG, would only be one type of cognitive universals. The cognitive explanations could also be functional in nature: for instance, self-embedding constructions, which are reported to be difficult to handle, may reflect certain general properties of human language (ibid). As for social (communicative) explanations, Greenberg’s subject preceding objects hierarchy in unmarked word order in languages of the world (cf. Greenberg, 1966) could be related to general communicative strategies of expressing cause before effect (Comrie, ibid).

This functional as well as communicative explanation device for approximating the language typological universals could be in a good alignment with developmental



theory. In a longitudinal project, ZISA⁶, learners are found to show consistent developmental sequences in acquiring German constituent order. The order of acquisition of word order is suggested to be in correlation with the degree of processing complexity (cf. Clahsen, Meisel, & Pienemann, 1981; Meisel, 1983; Clahsen & Muysken, 1986; Clahsen, 1990). The acquisition of inversion is found to appear in a later stage since it may be due to the interruption of verb complement sequences and causes more cognitive cost in language production (Clahsen, 1980).

1.3.3 Functionalism and Grammatical theory

Under functionalist theory, “language has the properties it does because of the uses to which it is put” (Slobin, 1979, p.64). In regard to foreign language acquisition, functional analysis tends to focus on how discourse constrains the acquisition of the forms which grammar can take. Pfaff (1982) begins with redirecting the attention from the surface products to the underlying pragmatic and linguistic functions and semantic intentions the learners are attempting to make. It is a study of acquisition of discourse and language use, aiming to explain genuine coding of function into form and not merely a correlation of the two (Tomlin, 1990).

⁶ ZISA stands for Zweitspracherwerb italienischer und spanischer Arbeiter (Second language Acquisition by Italian and Spanish workers; see Meisel, Clahsen & Pienemann, 1981)



Even under the functionalist paradigm, in which semantics and pragmatics are dominant, the role played by grammar should not be neglected or even denied (Clahsen, 1982; Wode, 1981, 1986; Tomlin, *ibid*). Tomlin (*ibid*) asserts that the learner may bring some grammatical knowledge to the task of acquiring a language. For instance, Jordens (1992) reveals in his study that his Dutch and English learners have carried over their L1 linguistic properties of subjects and objects into their L2 German, which affects the L2 German case marking in a non-native way.

1.4 Transfer: Form and Meaning

In the literature, the study of transfer has grown from the translation-type model and value-attached notion schema⁷, which are based primarily on the results accounted entirely by prior linguistic knowledge, into a more comprehensive and process-oriented investigation of how it affects language acquisition (cf. Gass & Larry, 1992). The effects of language transfer have been enlarged accordingly so that previous knowledge, which now also includes knowledge about the target language as

⁷ The values contained (for example, positive, negative, or neutral) are only made valid and relevant by the researchers themselves who explicitly compare the resulting IL forms with learners' prior linguistic knowledge. This approach has been largely criticized by scholars such as Schachter (1992), Corder (1992)



well, is considered as “both a facilitating and a limiting condition on the hypothesis testing process” on the general cognitive domains (Schachter, 1992).

Transfer does not refer to “the apparent application of L1 rules to TL forms” (Selinker, Swain & Dumas, 1975). In examining the role of L1 and L2 in L3 performance, there seem to have an underlying metalinguistic processing procedure.

Indeed, experienced learners seem to become more skilful parsers as they increase higher metalinguistic knowledge, and it could affect the acquisition of the function of the target grammar.

In the following, we would try to describe what can be transferred and what is being transferred (cf. Gass & Selinker, 1992).

1.4.1 Psychotypology and Transfer

Kellerman’s (1979) study shows how learners’ own perception of the distance of one’s language(s) to the target language and the markedness of the syntax might affect the degree of interference. In TLA studies, this kind of learners’ psycholinguistic condition can be shown more apparently as they could choose from more than one linguistic resource. However, it is not merely a mechanical transfer of old rules and forms into the new language grammar. In fact, learners do not appear to deliberately transfer the structure of one language to another. The psychotypological transfer is



not an automatic process, but a strategy to achieve target language competence (Schachter, 1992, Newmark & Reibel, 1968, in Singleton, 1987), and is a “subtle process of cognitive cross-referencing” (Singleton, 1987). They acquire the target structures, which are most consistent with their language processing strategies in determining the relationship between form and function.

In addition to transferring sounds or grammatical structures from the first language to the second, speakers also transfer the meanings associated with the use of structures from one language to another. True avoidance is not the complexity of the form, but the meaning attached to that form in L1 (Seliger, 1988). So, for example, Japanese and Persian or Arabic learners of English differ in learning relative clauses (Schachter, 1974)

1.5 Multicompetence v.s. Monocompetence

The crux of the question is: whether people who know two languages have a merged language system or two separate systems (Cook, 1992)⁸? Should we treat the acquisition of an additional language as acquiring another first language?

⁸ While Cook refers to L2 as multicompetence v.s. L1 as monocompetence, multilingualism is referring specifically to L3 competence or more, generally consisting of more than two foreign languages.



First of all, even in advanced bilingualism, the speakers could scarcely attain balanced native competence in both languages. It is also very rare that second language learners can reach the same target competence as native speakers. Indeed, there are close ties between the two languages such as language transfer, codeswitching and borrowing. Coexisting monolingual competence of two languages contained in two separate language systems thus seems to be less plausible.

Cook (1991) introduced the term *multicompetence*: “the compound state of a mind with two grammars”. He argues that L2 users differ from monolinguals in L1 as well as target L2 knowledge. It is a unique combination system of the two languages which are interactively correlated and overlapped. It is not just the sum of the knowledge of L1 and L2, but a distinct state of mind which requires much more further studies and investigation on multilingualism. It may require extra monitoring and control (Krashen, 1981). Multicompetent speakers may have greater linguistic capabilities such as metalinguistic awareness and cognitive flexibility.

The significance of recognizing the distinction and diversities of multicompetence is that it provides new research perspectives on multilingualism. It sets free the new research field from the constraints of the L1 and the target language



system. It proceeds from the traditional Contrastive Analysis (CA), Error Analysis (EA) to Interlanguage (IL) approach, which sheds new light on the independence of the language systems of the learners. Moreover, Cook (1992) also mentioned its pedagogical impact, suggesting that educationists had better understand that learning foreign languages could never be like learning a native language.

In this paper, I shall follow this approach of Multicompetence. However, while Cook (1992) only distinguished the bilingual mind from the monolingual mind, I suggest that it is also necessary to take into consideration the number and the combination of the languages into consideration which would shape different distinct states of minds accordingly. I would therefore restrict and specify my research into TLA in German. I hope this could contribute to future research which would comprise different numbers and combinations of languages.

1.6 Third Language Acquisition (TLA)

An independent research field of Third Language Acquisition (TLA) is proposed in this work as it is argued to be distinct from Second Language Acquisition (SLA) not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively (Gibson, Hufeisen & Libben 1999). It is not merely an extension of SLA research.



Also, TLA research could obtain better results from some empirical tests of more than one foreign language resources. For instance, Ringbom (1990) shows that the English (L3) of his Swedish learners have hardly any traces of their knowledge of Finnish (L2) while the Native Finns show a lot of Swedish (L2) transfer in their English (L3) since Swedish is perceived to be closer to English. The consistent results of more salient Swedish transfer (either as L1 or L2) of the two groups of learners who know both Finnish and Swedish reinforce the effects of psychotypological factors in language transfer. On the other hand, Sjöholm (1979) also found that monolingual Finns and bilingual Swedish-speaking Finns use different strategies in the learning of English as a foreign language as L2 and L3 respectively. It shows better control for examining foreign language influence since the speakers are of the same native tongue.

1.6.1 TLA literature

It has been suggested that a broader definition of SLA includes acquiring any additional language other than one's mother tongue (Selinker, 1979). Such a definition implies acquiring a second language (L2) to be equivalent to multiple languages ($L_n = L_3, L_4 \dots$) is inaccurate as well as deficient to elucidate the process of retrieving or recreating pluralistic rules or grammars and strategies in multi-lingual



cases.

Compared to L2 learners, L3 learners are less rule-governed and can pick up languages with greater facility with faster progress and more overgeneralization (Zobl, 1992). Zobl claims it is due to the learning procedure which are affected by antecedent linguistic knowledge. It seems that L3 learners are more open to learning different forms and grammars; and when they do so, they may be prone to over-extension based on the grammars they have acquired both rightly and wrongly. Previous learning experience also makes a difference, and therefore the learners are more flexible in employing and abandoning production strategies (McLaughlin & Nayak, 1989). There is also an increasing potential for interference from other available languages as a learner increases the number of languages learned (Ahukanna, Lund & Gentile, 1981).

L3 Learners are more aware in terms of metalinguistic knowledge than L2 learners and are more sensitive to the linguistic input (Thomas, 1988). The monitoring may undermine the autonomy of grammar in language acquisition, which calls for an emphasis on cognitive studies such as learning and communicative processes (Faerch & Kasper, 1986).

1.6.2 Interlanguage Transfer



In Leung's L3 research (1998), a new type of transfer has been discovered, namely the transfer of Interlanguage (IL), interference of the learners' "Chinese-English IL" (see also Yip, 1995) in her learners of French. An indirect interference of L1 Chinese through L2 to L3 is traced. It is found that there is not just merely grammatical interaction, but discourse transfer as well. Leung's L3 learners show the same L2 grammatical forms which contained the L1 discourse in their L3 French production. We have also found many instances of this kind of IL Transfer in our L3 German learners as well. The discussion regarding this Interlanguage Transfer will be found in Chapter four.

By admitting the existence of additional linguistic resources in the TLA research, namely the second language grammatical system (Target L2 and IL L2) as well as learning experience, the scope of language acquisition studies is accordingly expanded.¹⁰ It leads us to a more cognitive approach to TLA research. Many of the few TLA studies available (Bartelt, 1989, Ringbom, 1982, Azevedo, 1978, Fitzgerald, 1978) also suggest that the role of L2 seems to be prominent in L3 strategy building.

1.6.3 TLA competence

¹⁰ According to the theory of "Connectionism" (Sharkey, 1996), previous learning experiences are stored to process new inputs.



TLA does not only add complexity to the acquisition process, but changes the nature of it as well. The learners' previous experiences in learning other languages and their metalinguistic knowledge make TLA more dependent on general language learning strategies, while SLA research has still been discussed in terms of the continua of the L1 Universal Grammar (UG) such as the Continuity Hypothesis (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996). The starting point of experienced foreign language learners and first time learners, at least, is not the same and the respective learners will also go through different learning processes. The scope of studies in TLA would therefore be a distinct paradigm from that of SLA. The highly functional and communicative nature of learning and production strategies in TLA provide a better insight into the mental planning mechanisms within the language acquisition faculty.

The studies of multilingual systems, which usually refer to the learning of more than one foreign language, show them to be highly dynamic in nature (Herdina & Jessner, 1999). They raise new questions and explore research perspectives which are absent or have been neglected in the SLA research, such as:

1. multilingual linguistic behavior (for instance activation or constraints of other languages when accessing to the new language competence, language choice and language dominance).



2. facilitation or disadvantages of multilingual competence on overall language proficiency (such as language loss or enhancement of language learning skills).

1.6.4 TLA research and the present study

In arguing for a distinctive paradigm of TLA research, I shall attempt to show that the process of our Chinese learners in acquiring German L3 could only be explained by new insights and models of the TLA and not directly from the derivatives of the research on or theories of first or second language acquisition.

Our first proposal is that despite the closer typological affinity between German and English, the influence of the L1 Chinese is also salient. It is argued that the learners may acquire German through their L1 channel under the principle of the Common Underlying Conceptual Base (cf. Kecskes & Papp, 1995). This approach focuses on the conceptual rather than the structural nature of transfer. It may also suggest that discourse transfer of Chinese word order could be more influential than the syntactic transfer of English canonical word order.

The second proposal is a reinforcement of Clahsen & Muysken's (1986) idea: TLA research seems to depend more on principles of information processing and



general learning strategies to ‘integrate’ as well as acquire the target grammar.¹¹ It is argued that the learners follow principles of information processing and general problem solving strategies in establishing the semantics-syntax correspondences of the target language. They may not have the capacity to postulate the abstract underlying mechanism of the target language. They may tend to assign a function to one target form and overgeneralize it despite of the polysemous nature of the target forms. By pursuing a cognitive approach for the metalinguistic findings, both incremental production and cognitive functioning as language processing strategies would appear as significant factors in accounting for third language acquisition and production. They both indicate highly functional means of communication and form-meaning correspondences.

There are not only different grammatical interactions, but also transfer of previous experiences, from Target L2 as well as IL L2 into L3, through the interaction of one native language and two Interlanguages, L2 and L3 (Leung, 1998). The IL L2 shows an indirect influence of the mother tongue (L1) through the channel of L2. In the L3 case, there may be transfer of the L1 functions concealed by the L2 syntactic forms which should be distinguished from the target L2 transfer. IL transfer is

¹¹ The integration refers to the alignment with the existing linguistic knowledge when the learners acquire the target grammar.



especially relevant since it supports an independent IL research which should be freed from the target grammar constraints. It also implies a deeper definition of transfer, ie. not merely the transfer of the surface structure, but the of underlying functions as well.

In sum, this approach to TLA research attempts to show there are not only quantitative but also qualitative differences between the acquisition processes of multilingual learners (ML) and unilingual learners (UL)¹². It considers the interplay of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in L3 language production and processing, learning strategies and language development. The transfer of discourse function of available language(s) would also be suspected to be more prevalent than the transfer of their surface constructions (Schachter & Rutherford, 1979; Rutherford, 1983, Yip & Matthews, 1995).

¹² Zobl (1992) distinguishes the true multilingual learners who acquire more than one foreign language from the true unilingual learners who acquire only one foreign language. He argues that the prior linguistic knowledge of the experienced learners makes the true multilingual learners learning differently than the first time learners.



CHAPTER TWO

Crosslinguistic Study of Fronting Constructions

2.0 Introduction

The area of L3 grammar investigated in this study involves the initial position or *Vorfeld* in German. This area was chosen because:

- (i) the fronting of constituents into the *Vorfeld* and the associated verb-second rule are known to be an area of difficulty for learners of German;
- (ii) Chinese is also known to have typological characteristics involving the sentence-initial position, being a topic-prominent language contrasting with English as a subject-prominent language.

The acquisition of the *Vorfeld* by Chinese learners therefore offers a promising field for insights into the interaction of L1 (Chinese), L2 (English) and L3 (German) knowledge.

Chinese is classified as a ‘topic-prominent’ or pragmatic word order language (Li and Thompson, 1976; Thompson 1978), while English has grammatically determined word order and is a subject-prominent language. English topicalization constructions, as compared to Chinese, are much less common and productive. Yet, adverbials of time and location in English are also quite normally found in initial position as they are in Chinese.

German is also flexible in word order and would fall under the pragmatic word order type. In German, learners can choose either “topic-like” or “subject-like” syntactical structures in their German fronting constructions. For instance:

Das Buch gab John dem Bruder. (The book (topic) gave John his brother)



John gab dem Bruder das Buch. (John (Subject) gave the brother the book)

Both sentences are grammatical but with different foci. This results in a greater variety of word order, as exemplified below (Hawkins, 1986, p. 37-40):

Peter gab zu Weihnachten dem Bruder das Buch.

(Peter gave for Christmas to the brother the book)

It has been reported that with appropriate contrastive stress there could be $4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 24$ maximal possible relative orderings productive of the four constituents of the sentence: *Peter*, *zu Weihnachten*, *dem Bruder* and *das Buch* and sixteen variations even without the assistance of the stress; while English has to rule out all postverbal subject orderings plus two other ungrammatical sentences¹, leaving only 10 possible word orderings.

In the case of acquisition of fronting in L3 German, the question would fall on how the learners are to decide which word order they should use: whether there would be more L1 influence and henceforth more topicalization constructions, or would the L3 interlanguage be more like L2? Or would it show the effects of interlanguage transfer as mentioned in the previous chapter? In order to look into the impacts of both preceding languages on the acquisition of L3 German fronting, we need to go through the relevant features of word order and fronting in each language.

2.1 Cross-Linguistic Studies of Word Order

The notion of syntactic categories such as topic, subject should be more specifically defined with respect to each individual language, if we assume that

¹ The remaining two ungrammatical orderings are:

1. *Peter gave for Christmas (to) his brother the book.
2. *To his brother Peter gave for Christmas the book. (Hawkins, 1986, p. 39)



syntactic relations are language-particular (Croft, 1990, 1998)². Different languages may use different devices to express same function of syntactic relations or semantics. In Comrie and Matthews' (1990) study of crosslinguistic tough movement constructions in German and Serbo-Croatian vs. English, they show that a similar discourse function is filled by formally very different syntactic objects.

Vice versa is that same constructions could contain different functions such as fronting in German and English fulfil different functions: Hopkins (1988) distinguishes the fronting in German and English as he points out: “[if fronting] must still be considered logically as contrast, then contrast must be regard as a scalar phenomenon and G (German) has a mechanism for marking explicitly a special, low degree of contrast which is absent to E (English)” (p82).

Language-specific factors such as how closely the surface forms correspond to their respective semantic structures within each individual language, and pragmatic functions play critical roles in determining the cross-linguistic distribution of fronting constructions. In order to carry out a cross-linguistic study of the acquisition of fronting constructions, we need to consider the distinct conceptual mapping of form and function in each language. As reported by Jordens (1992), case marking in German fulfils a cognitive function of role prominence, such as nominative case for German subject roles, while non-case marking languages such as English and Dutch rely more on word order properties.

In view of how fronting constructions actually work in the three respective languages, we could examine how the L1 Chinese, L2 English and the target German input influence the acquisition of German fronting. In the following sections,

2 Croft (1998) proposes a novel model of “radical construction grammar” in which syntactic categories are derived from constructions. It contains a hypothesis of a universal conceptual base



Chinese topic constructions, English fronting and especially Chinese-English interlanguage fronting will be briefly introduced. A comparative study of English – German and Chinese – German fronting constructions would help explain the interrelation of fronting constructions of the three languages. Finally, some other studies on IL fronting, particularly regarding topic constructions, will also be reviewed.

2.2 The *Vorfeld* in German

The term *Vorfeld* appears in German descriptive grammar, in which sentences are said to be composed of three main parts: “*Vorfeld*, *Mittelfeld* and *Nachfeld*”, namely the initial, middle and final fields, as laid out in the following example:

Einige (Some)	Haben (have)	Auch Beschuldigungen (also accusation)	vorgebracht (brought out)	in diesem Zusammenhang. (in this context)
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Vorfeld *Rahmen* (frame)³ *Mittelfeld* *Rahmen* *Nachfeld*

(Engel, 1994, p.184)

The *Vorfeld* is the initial position preceding the finite verb in main clause. The study of *Vorfeld* concerns the so-called “*Positionsverhältnisse*” or position conditions (ibid, p.122): which element can be put in each position and what function(s) does it contain?

As German is a V2 language⁴, the first position can be filled by a variety of topicalized constituents, including the subject NP. Where the initial constituent is

(also known as cognitive map or semantic space) onto which the properties of individual language categories can be mapped.

³ *Rahmen* here refers to the “frame” formed by finite verb / auxiliary and the non-finite verb form.



not a subject NP, German clauses exhibit inversion in the form of XVSubj (Hawkins, 1986). Meisel, Clahsen and Pienemann (1980) outline the rules of inversion as follows:

1. after an interrogative pronoun (WH): **wann** gehst du nach Hause?

(*When* go you to house?)

2. after the preposing of an adverbial: **jetzt** gehe ich nach Hause.

(*Now* go I to house.)

3. after topicalization of a simple NP [Topic 1]: **diesen Tabak** kaufe ich.

(*This Tabak* buy I.)

or of an embedded clause [Topic 2]: **wenn ich nach Hause gehe**,
kaufe ich diesen Tabak. (*When* I to house go, buy I this Tabak.)

(ibid, p. 124)

The *Vorfeld* may serve a variety of functions (Hammer, 1971, p.363):

1. It may be a completely normal and neutral way of beginning a sentence.
2. It may give emphasis to the part of the sentence placed at the beginning.
3. It may give emphasis to another part of the sentence, such as the sentence beginning with *trotz* (although).
4. It may be determined by contextual factors:

- i. By what precedes, including the remark of another speaker.

(discourse topic): eg. *Ich sehe ihn oft; seinen Bruder* sehe ich selten.

(I see him often, **his brother** see I seldom)

- ii. By what is to follow: e.g. *Das Geld* gab er seinem Bruder, der dann
die Rechnung bezahlte.

⁴ In German main clauses the finite verb stands most frequently in second position as the surface structure (Hawkins, 1986).



(*The money* gave he his brother, who then
the bill paid.)

In the literature on the topic of the German *Vorfeld*, the main discussion is usually devoted to the topic and theme or focus relations of this very first constituent. This issue will be directly relevant to our investigation of German interlanguage. Abraham et al. (1986, p.5), discussing the “topic, focus, and configurationality” of German and Hungarian, distinguish the processes of focussing from topicalization by dividing the functions of topics according to the notion of **1. topicalization** and **2. topic prominence**.

1. Topicalization is the rule by which constituents are fronted and the effect is to lend specific emphasis to the fronted constituents, in a sense more like the effects of focus.
2. Topic in the sense of topic-comment relations serves to “delimit the universe of discourse” (ibid), introducing what the sentence is about or setting up the frame of the sentence⁵. Topics of this kind have been termed ‘Chinese-style topics’.⁶

Given the distinction of Chinese-style topics and German fronting topics, we might hypothesize that Chinese learners would be influenced by their L1 and acquire the “framing” function of topics as (2) above while neglecting the focusing function (1) above. We shall see that there is some evidence for this in our L3 learners’ production.

⁵ It may also receive some emphasis since it is at the initial position and please see the following §2.2.1. for further discussion of Chinese topicalization.

⁶ The terms “Chinese-style” vs. “English style” topics are first suggested by Chafe, 1976 (see also Huang, 1984). It is claimed that certain topics in Chinese are not subcategorized by the verb of the comment, and it is an “aboutness” relation that holds between the Chinese topic and the comment.



We shall also discuss the problem of acquiring the focus function of *Vorfeld*, which involves fronting movement. Since we suggest all initial constituents, except subjects, which appear in the *Vorfeld* position would undergo fronting movement, and movement together with inversion, the operation of fronting is crucial in *Vorfeld* constructions.

2.3 Fronting

Fronting could be defined as preposing (Trask, 1993): “Any of various constructions in which a constituent is placed at the beginning of a sentence or clause, as in WH-movement or adverb preposing”. It connotes an underlying transformation, which modifies an input structure by reordering the elements it contains⁷. The deviation from the default canonical word order, i.e. the linearizing interpretation of extra-lingual reality, could possibly be triggered by fulfilling distinct functions such as focusing, foregrounding and contrast. It is basically communicatively driven since it implicates the speaker’s explicit attempts and emotions in conveying a message. For example:

Money I cannot take, it’s illegal.

By preposing the object **Money**, the speaker can pinpoint the object or the theme.

Even though fronting constructions appear in many languages, they might be different in terms of which elements could be fronted and what functions they play.

For instance⁸:

1. Dem Kind hat der Mann einen Ball geschenkt.

([to] The child has the man a ball given.)

⁷ The transformational notion is following Generative approach (Chomsky), but there are also alternative approaches.



*2. (To) the child gave the man a ball

(Zimmermann, 1972, p. 15)

This shows that German is relatively flexible in permitting fronting constructions, e.g. allowing the fronting of a recipient object in this case. In English, the earlier example object *Money* can be preposed, but the second object “the child” cannot due to its recipient role, which can be fronted by using the passive voice instead:

* The child the man gave money

The child was given money by the man

As such, not only are there disparities amongst languages on the conditions for fronting, but they also vary within the same language.

The function of fronting could be different amongst languages as well. As Hawkins (1986) points out, however the fronting in German has no direct syntactic parallel in English. It appears to express a function known variously as foregrounding, focussing or downstaging, which is less prominent as compared in English as compared with German. The “emotive” notion described by German grammarians seems to fit better the situation in English, since it presents necessarily implied contrast.

2.3.1 Chinese Topic-Comment Constructions

What distinguishes topic from subject? In Y.R.Chao’s words: “The grammatical meaning of subject and predicate in a Chinese sentence is topic and comment, rather than actor and action.” (Chao 1968: 69)

⁸ The asterisk is used here to indicate that the sentence is ungrammatical in native usage



Topic is best understood by taking account of extra-sentential considerations, while the subject remains within the sentence structure (Li and Thompson, 1976). The functional role of topic appears to do is to “limit the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain... The topic sets a spatial, temporal, or individual framework within which the main predication holds.” (Chafe, 1976)

Topic constructions can be considered basic in that, at least for some instances, the topic-comment structure cannot be viewed as being derived from another sentence type: “because of the importance of “topic” in the grammar of Mandarin, it can be termed a *topic-prominent* language” (Li and Thompson, 1981, p. 15). It could be generated in situ as base-generated topic or derived by movement (Huang, 1984):

1. The base-generated topic structures do not represent a subcategorized complement of the predicate (Yip and Matthews, 1995):

Beijing hen duo ren qi jixingche.

(Beijing very many people ride bicycle)

(ibid, p.22)

2. Topicalization derived by movement contain a gap in a subcategorized position corresponding to the topic (ibid):

Beijing _i wo meiyou qu-quo _{t_i}

(Beijing I have-not gone)

(ibid, p.22)

The difference between types 1 and 2 can be described in terms of adjunct and argument topics, depending on whether the topic bears a grammatical relation to the predicate (ibid). The adjunct topic as in (1) above is not syntactically related to the verb.



Topicalization in Chinese, unlike German, can take both gap (2) and non-gap topics (1) (cf. Gasde, 1998). Chinese topicalization relies heavily on semantic and discourse functions for its syntactic relations, while German retains close ties with the verb predicate. Topicalization in Chinese seems to have greater freedom of movement such as extending to crossing clause boundaries or attaching clause-externally as adjuncts whereas German is relatively restricted to clause-internal movement and arguments to clause-internal movement. (cf. Hawkins, 1986)

2.3.2 English Subject-Predicate Constructions

English syntax is built mainly upon subject-predicate constructions and it is classified as belonging to the “grammatical word order” type (Thompson, 1978). As this term indicates English subject-predicate is the basic grammatical relation which is linked to the fixed SVO word order. Pragmatic principles, therefore, play a lesser role in word order rearrangement in accordance with the information structure of the whole discourse.

Topicalization and left dislocation could also be found in English, but largely in colloquial spoken registers and they usually require different stress and tone to express the strong contrast or emotion of the sentences. For example:

Mango, I like very much.

Taiwan, I've never been to.

Learners are also aware of the marked functions of these sentence types which are therefore not very common in both written and spoken productions. There are also relics of earlier V2 order in English, such as:

1. Negative adverbs:

Seldom have I seen such a thing.



2. Prepositional phrases:

Down the street came a procession of elephants.

These are also unusual in spoken English today.

The initial constituent seems to be restricted largely to subject and subject-predicate structure. And it has high subject-forming possibilities in English than in German since it has wider range of semantic functions for subject roles such as non-agentive subjects (Hawkins, 1986):

The tent sleeps four

The book sold 10,000 copies

(ibid, p.59)

“The tent” has locative function while “the book” has patient role. Both examples retain subject-predicate word order relation and structure. However, to express contrastive or emotive functions, it seems it is more common in English to use tone and stress in spoken language or use alternative sentence constructions such as passive, cleft, relative clause and existential sentences in written language.

2.4 Acquiring German Fronting Constructions: Topic and Focus

The general description and functions of German fronting have been briefly introduced in the previous section (see §2.2). What we shall do here is to discuss further two particular types of constructions and functions of German fronting, which are the area of the target language we shall be looking at in terms of our L3 learners would acquire them.

We have seen that there are possibly two different types of “preverbal fields” (Scherpenisse, 1986) involved in German fronting: (1) topic and (2) focus structures. As clearly distinguished by Gadler (1982), over three quarters of the topic



constituents in his German corpus represented rhematic or new information which serves the focus function, while the rest remaining the topics which are old information, definite, etc. (cf. Chafe, 1976; Li and Thompson, 1976)

2.5 IL Fronting

After reviewing briefly the different basic sentence constructions of the three respective languages, we may be able to see the stumbling-blocks during the process of learning one sentence type after one another. How would the learners solve the discrepancies of various sentence constructions to represent one and the same function for each individual language? How much carry-over would be traced in the new form from the previous one(s)? Concerning learnability, we hypothesize that the learners use the conceptual base from their native tongue to acquire the target forms.

And in TLA studies, how much influence do the respective L1 and L2 have in learning the target L3? In the case of our IL German fronting study, the definiteness and discourse function of Chinese topics as well as the basicness of English subject-predicate form would be the most relevant factors.

Apart from the influence of L1 and L2, the result of our L3 learners also seems to comply with the developmental sequences of the other languages, which could be seen as somewhat universal phenomenon. For instance, Givon (1979) considers the stage of pragmatic topic fronting as a preceding step towards grammaticalization. Clahsen (1982) (cf. Meisel et al., 1981) explains the acquisition of German word order by means of developmental stages in terms of a sequence of grammars and processing development. The inversion appears in stage four as shown in the following stages:

⁹ Yáuh essentially means “have” or “there is/ there are. It has the ‘existential’ function. (Matthews



1. SVO
2. ADV-PREP
3. PARTICLE
4. (SUBJECT-VERB) INVERSION
5. ADV-VP
6. V-END

Even Spanish and Italian learners, whose native languages also have inversion rules, learn inversion as the other learners, following the same developmental stages. Some learners seem to either fail to perform inversion or they seem to delete subjects in inversion so as to avoid the interruption of verb – complement sequences in sentences such as:

*und dann ich hab gemacht meine Kinder

(and then I have made my children)

*und dann hab Ø meine Kollega gesprochen

(and then have my colleagues talked) (ibid., p.128)

This is seen as a way to keep down the cognitive cost of language production (Clahsen, 1980). The proof of the universal cognition affecting the sequence of learning certain grammar needs more crosslinguistic as well as longitudinal investigations for verifications. Although it is beyond our scope to show the developmental sequence, we shall use other studies such as ZISA project as discussed earlier for reference. At the meantime in the following, we shall try to show the possibilities of L1 and L2 influences on the IL learning process.



2.5.1 English CIL Existential Constructions

We hypothesized in section 2.3 above that Chinese definiteness constraints on the initial/topic position would affect the learning of German indefinite NP fronting as the way the Chinese learn indefinite subjects in L2 English. To show how our L3 learners transfer their IL existential constructions to their L3, we first shall show how these existential constructions are formed in the L2 context.

Since Chinese has a strong preference for definite subjects (Chafe, 1976; Li and Thompson, 1976), one preferred position for indefinite NPs in Chinese is the position after an existential verb, *yáuh* in Cantonese. In contrast, English allows indefinite NPs to occur relatively freely in the subject position. As such, in learning English, learners use a lot of existential sentence constructions with “there be”. This is argued to be essentially due to semantic motivation so as avoid an indefinite subject (Yip, 1995). Indeed, in Chinese, the existential verb *yáuh* also occurs in Chinese contexts where the NP has indefinite reference. This overgeneration of existential sentences in CIL production as shown below apparently stems from transfer of the Definiteness Effect in the Chinese L1:

(L1 Chinese) you¹⁰ yige ren zai yuenzi li zuozhe
EXIST one-CL person at yard LOC sit-CONT
(There is a man sitting in the yard)
(Yip, 1995, p. 188)

(CIL data) *There are many varieties of cancer exist.
 *There were a lot of unfortunate stories in China occurred

¹⁰ Mandarin existential verb ‘you’ is equivalent to Cantonese ‘yáuh’.



between these two women.

(ibid., p.189)

Moreover, in discussing the ensuing learnability problem, Yip (ibid) suggests that “the Uniqueness Principle encourages the distinction between definiteness vs. indefiniteness in subject position; as long as learners retain the distinction and fail to collapse them as a single category, the learnability problem remains” (p.199). The learners tend to preserve one structure for one meaning in their IL, regardless of the polysemy actually found in the L1 and L2.

The same phenomena is found in this work, in that our learners also use existential sentence constructions with *Es gibt* (there be), to avoid indefinite NP as the initial constituent. It could be a case of IL transfer from English, and raises the same learnability problem in learning both topic and focus functions of German Fronting.

2.5.2 Topicalization: Is it transferable?

Clahsen (1982) found that Italians learning German, who could have been expected to use variable word orders, in fact also used SVO orders despite the fact that all possible orders of subjects, verb, and object could occur in informal discourse under certain pragmatic constraints (cf. Bates et al., 1982). They did not transfer surface structure orders of their L1 to the second language, but used “word order which can best be described by underlying linguistic representations” (p.16).

This argument poses the dilemma of transferability: What can be transferred? And as to be more relevance here, can topicalization be transferred? (cf. Trévisse, 1986)



It seems that learners choose rather neutral topicalization devices which often lead to error-free productions with extensive use of a few constructions, but do not seem to transfer what are felt to be L1 specific devices. We therefore suggest that the learners' conception of a topicalization construction would be decisive in affecting its transferability.

Topicalization is a central and functional feature of Chinese. However, in our L3 German, there seems to be relatively limited use of topicalization for focus functions. This is similar to Trévise's (1986) results, in which English students use a very restricted number of French topicalization devices, apart from *c'est*, and use them with a low degree of frequency. Our Chinese learners may transfer more L1 topicalization to L3, but we suspect the learners may choose to use different forms such as existential sentence and relative clause in their L2 as they may feel they are applying the target syntactic rules.

2.6 Summary of Hypothesis

One hypothesis of the present study, as suggested in chapter one, is that the L3 learners are influenced by their L1. In the case of the *Vorfeld*, this would predict that the learners will acquire the "framing" function of topics, while neglecting the focusing function. We hypothesize that our L3 learners acquire the German topic function only partially, influenced by their prior knowledge of Chinese-style topics: topic in the sense familiar within topic-prominent languages, which sets the frame of the sentence and may not necessarily involve movement as it could be treated as a sentence adjunct.

Secondly, we hypothesize that the L3 learners will show transfer of previous experiences from Target L2 as well as IL L2 into L3, ie. IL transfer, through the



interaction of one native language and two interlanguages, L2 and L3. To test this hypothesis we shall focus on existential sentences. Based on Chinese learners of English, we expect L3 learners to use a strategy based on Chinese existential constructions with the word *yáuh* (there is/are)¹¹ as alternatives (Yip, 1995). Subjects/topics in Chinese are normally definite and therefore “*yáuh*” is used to introduce indefinite noun: *Yáuh di yàhn mh séung jáu.*

(Have some people not want leave)

(Matthews and Yip, 1994, p. 286)

We hypothesize that learners will use the same strategy by using existential constructions to avoid indefinite initial constituents in their L3 German, as they do in L2 English.

¹¹ *Yáuh* essentially means “have” or “there is/ there are. It has the ‘existential’ function. (Matthews and Yip, 1994)



CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology and Major Findings

3.0 Introduction

The methodology of the present study is basically divided into three parts:

- I Background questionnaire
- II Composition collection
- III Elicitation of picture description and story telling

Forty-five third year students taking German language courses at the University of Hong Kong participated in this research and completed a background questionnaire¹. It serves to elicit the necessary background information of the subjects, which has direct and decisive effects on the outcome of the results.

In the second part, each subject was asked to submit five home assignment compositions, i.e. a total of more than two hundred pieces of work altogether were collected, forming a preliminary pool of L3 German production data. Based on these data, sentence structures relevant to our hypotheses were chosen and categorized for further analysis.

Lastly, ten students of the group proceeded with two elicitation tasks, narrative and descriptive. They were asked to write about two sets of pictures in all three languages: Chinese, English and German languages accordingly. This task was designed to elicit fronting of various sentence constituents to the *Vorfeld* position (see section 3.3) It is a novel attempt to directly track the interrelation of the three languages as well as the influence of one or both on the others. For example, the

¹ The questionnaire is attached in appendix A.



number of fronting usage would be counted in each language in order to compare the fronting frequency in English, German and Chinese production (results are shown in Table 3.7).

3.1 Questionnaire

3.1.1 Subjects

We attempt to obtain a homogeneous group of subjects² by means of screening the subjects through the questionnaire. We also take a record of the linguistic knowledge and psychotypical perceptions of the subjects. A total of fifty questionnaires were collected, but five were invalid due to the subjects' different nationality backgrounds which indicated that they were not native Cantonese speakers.

Of the forty-five subjects, all are female except four males and their age range is in the early twenties. All are Hong Kong born Chinese. The report of the subjects' background information is summarized in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1 Distribution of sex, age and nationality of subjects

SUBJECTS (total:45)	
Sex	Female: 41 (91.1 %) Male : 4 (8.9 %)
Age	20-21 : 3 21-22 : 37 22-23 : 5
Nationality	Hong Kong born Chinese: All (45)

² "Homogeneous group" in this research has a different connotation from Chomskyan sense, in which we recognize the contextual factors and therefore it is our effort to screen the subjects according to



As shown in Table 3.1, our subjects form a rather homogenous group in terms of language background, age and gender.

3.1.2 Linguistic Knowledge and Psychotypical Perceptions

The second part of the questionnaire is about the subjects' linguistic knowledge and psychotypical perceptions. The participants were current full-time third year students of the University of Hong Kong and had been studying a German degree course for two and a half years, having attended approximately 500 classroom lesson hours of German language.³

The subjects have a generally high level of English proficiency and most of them are enrolled in language-related subjects such as linguistics and translation. Some of them also have additional language basic skills apart from Chinese and English. A summary of the result is shown in the following tables 3.2 and 3.3:

Table 3.2 Proficiency of English

Public examinations	Results (Total: 45)			
	A	B	C	D
Use of English (UE)	2	10	13	10
Certificate English Language (HKCEE)	15	16	12	2

their personal background information.



Table 3.3 Language-related academic subjects and additional language skills

Language-related subjects and additional language skills	Each student may take more than one course (Total: 45)
English Language and Literature	25
Linguistics	22
Translation	13
Mandarin	10 (Good level) 13 (Fair level)
French	3 (Basic level)
Japanese	3 (Fair and Basic level)
Spanish	2 (Basic level)

It is important to check on the linguistic skills of the subjects before analyzing their language acquisition behavior. Indeed, another study was conducted at Hong Kong Baptist University (Eschenlohr, 1999) in which the researcher reported that there was much more direct Chinese influence in her subjects on the grounds that their English proficiency was weak. On the contrary, we are claiming that the English influence of our subjects is stronger and there are more traces of indirect Chinese transfer via the English forms in our L3 cases.

3.1.3 Psychotypological Awareness

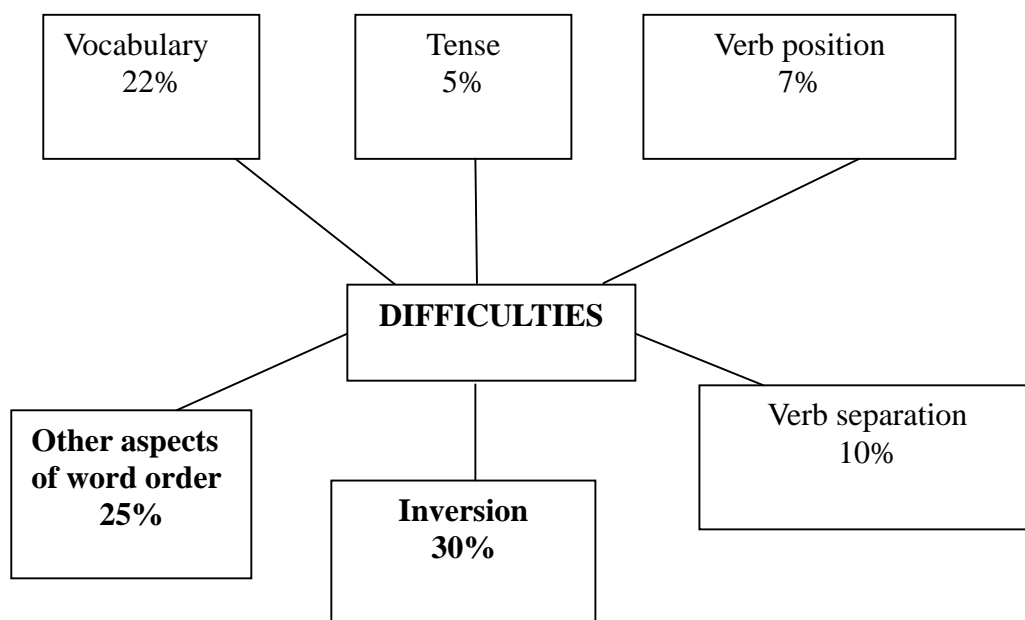
The previous section shows that our subjects have high overall linguistic skills. This may enhance our subjects' metalinguistic skills and affect their psychotypological awareness. In the questionnaires, the subjects were asked to choose what aspects of German grammar were difficult. They generally admit that

³The description of the third-year course syllabus is attached in appendix B.



German word order is the most difficult. The main obstacles reported in acquiring German syntax are shown in the following chart:

Chart 3.1 Major difficulties in studying German grammar:



Some of them explained that German word order was confusing and as far as inversion is concerned, retaining Verb-second word order was the biggest problem.

The results also show a consistent response in that the subjects perceived German to be closer to English than to Chinese. They also feel there is more influence of English in their German oral and written production. The results are summarized in the following tables:

Table 3.4 How close German is perceived to be closer to the other languages:

How close to German	Rating			
	Very close	Close	Far	Very far
Cantonese	2%	7%	26%	65%
English	63%	29%	4%	4%



Table 3.5 Influence of other languages on German speech

Other language influence when speaking German	Rating			
	Always	often	sometimes	never
Cantonese	4%	7%	30%	59%
English	10%	56%	27%	7%

Some learners claimed they were thinking in English in their head when they spoke in German. Others explained that the sounds and pronunciations of the two languages were similar and therefore get mixed up easily.

Table 3.6 Influence of other languages on German writing

Other language influence when writing German	RATE			
	Always	often	sometimes	never
Cantonese	2%	20%	42%	36%
English	16%	48%	27%	9%

The result of the learners' acknowledgement of more English influence in their oral and written German is consistent with their psychotypological perceptions, i.e. English is perceived to be closer to German. It is a preliminary evidence for the psychotypological approach and we shall investigate this aspect further with actual production data in the following section.

3.2 Composition Collection

A total of 200 home assignment compositions were collected, forming the main pool of our L3 production data. The composition topics vary across different genres such as letters, narrative and argumentative writing. The topic titles include:



1. Die Alten / Alte Leute in Hong Kong
(The elderly / Elderly people in Hong Kong)
2. Ein Brief (A letter)
3. Meine Europareise (My European trip)
4. Was ist hier passiert? (What has happened here?)
5. Leben auf dem Land oder in der Stadt?
(Choose living in the countryside or in the city?)

3.2.1 Major Findings

There are a few very common sentence fronting constructions found amongst the learners from their compositions. They could be divided into three main types⁴:

- I. **(TOPIC-[S]VO)** *Für mich, jede Familie hat eigene Probleme.
(For me, every family has its own problem.)
(Ich glaube, dass jede Familie eigene Probleme hat.)
(I think, that every family own Problem have.)

- II. **(V2 position)** *Obwohl gibt es viele Probleme mit alten Leuten zusammen lebt, finde ich gut dafür.
(Although are there many problems with old people together live, find I good for nevertheless.)
(Obwohl es viele Problems mit alten Leute zusammen zu leben gibt, finde ich gut dafür.)
(Although it many problems with old people together to live has, find I good nevertheless.)

⁴ Following each example of production data, a literal gloss is given, followed by the target German



- III. (XSVO) *Jetzt die meistens haben schon nach Hong Kong zurückgekommen.
 (Now the most have already to Hong Kong returned)
 (*Jetzt sind die meisten Leute nach Hong Kong zurückgekommen.*)
 (*Now are the most people to Hong Kong returned.*)

We first shall list out some typical examples of the three main groups accordingly and the analysis of these three main types constructions will be carried out in the following Discussion Chapter.

3.2.1.1 TOPIC-[S]VO

In type 1 (TOPIC-[S]VO), learners failed to perform German inversion fronting. Either they simply ignore inversion rule in German fronting constructions as in (A) or they use “for” to introduce the indefinite NP as an adjunct topic as in (B) in the following examples:

A [Für mich] SVO:

1. *Aber für diese Ferienarbeit, ich mußte meine Friezeit, meine Familie opfern.
 (But for this summer job, I must my free time, my family sacrifice.)
 (*Ich mußte meine Freizeit und meine Familie wegen der Ferienarbeit opfern.*)
 (*I must my free time and my family because of my summer job sacrifice.*)
2. *Für mich jede Familie hat ihre eigene Probleme.
 (For me every family has its own problems.)
 (*Ich glaube, daß jede Famile ihre eigene Probleme hat.*)

equivalent (in parentheses).



(I think, that each family its own problems have.)

3. *Für mich, ich ziehe Leben in der Stadt vor.

(For me, I chose life in the city prefer)

(Ich ziehe Leben in der Stadt vor.)

(I prefer live in the city to)

B [Für mich] V2 SO:

1. *Für mich ist Hong Kong gut zu verdienen aber schlecht zu leben.

(For me is Hong Kong good for earning money but bad to live)

(Ich glaube, daß Hong Kong eine Stadt für gut Geld aber schlechte Leben ist.)

(I think , that Hong Kong a city for good money but bad living is)

2. *Für die Arbeiten im Büro waren Administration.

(For the work in the office were administration.)

(Die Büroarbeit ist überhaupt Administration.)

(The office job is generally administration.)

3. *Für mich ist diese Erfahrung völlig neu.

(For me is this experience totally new.)

(Diese Erfahrung ist völlig neu für mich.)

(This experience is totally new for me)

C [Es gibt]

1. *Es gibt viele Unterschiede zwischen Deutschen und HK-Chinesen

(There are many differences between Germans and HK Chinese!)

(Die Deutschen und HK-Chinesen sind sehr anders.)

(The German and HK-Chinese are very different.)

2. *Viele alte Leute gibt es in Hong Kong leben.
 (Many old people are there in Hong Kong live.)
(Viele alte Leute wohnen in Hong Kong.)
(Many old people live there in Hong Kong .)

3. *Es gibt eine tolle Erfahrung für die Leute, ein anderes neues Leben erleben.
 (There is one wonderful experience for the people, one different new life live.)
(Ein anderes neues Leben zu erleben ist eine tolle Erfahrung.)
(One another new life to live is one good experience.)

D. Marginal / Problematic Fronting

1. Ziemlich schön ist dieses Leben.
 (Pretty good is this life.)

2. Wohnen innerhalb der Großstadt ist wie in der Hölle zu mir.
 (Live inside of big city is like in the hell to me)

3. Große Familie zusammen leben ist schwierig.
 (Big family together live is difficult.)

These examples are hypothesized to involve indirect transfer of the L1 topicalization, which appears to be “a carry over into the target language of native language function-form characteristics” (Schachter and Rutherford, 1979).

3.2.1.2 V2 Position

This type of V2 position problem is hypothesized to be an intralingual error in which the learners have overgeneralized the verb second (V2) rule, without acquiring the correct function of the *Vorfeld* construction. Examples could be shown in the following three groups:

(A) V2 overgeneralizations

1. *Aber werde ich meine Familie nicht verlassen.

(But shall I my family not leave)

(Aber ich werde meine Familie nicht verlassen werde.)

(But I shall my family not leave will.)

2. *Vielleicht haben diese alte Leute kinder und wollen ihre kinder sich um sie kümmern.

(Maybe have these old people children and want their children to take care of them)

(Vielleicht haben diese alte Leute Kinder und sie wollen ihre kinder um sich kümmern.)

(Maybe have these old people children and they want their children for them care.)

3. *Denn brauchen die Alte Leute ein bißchen Arbeit.

(Because need the old people a little bit of work.)

(Denn die alten Leute brauchen ein bißchen Arbeit.)

(Because the old people need a little bit of work.)



(B) V2 where German requires V-final order

1. *Obwohl gibt es viele Probleme mit alten Leuten zusammen lebt, finde ich gut dafür.

(Although are there many problems with old people together live, find I good for nevertheless.)

(Obwohl es viele Problems mit alten Leute zusammen zu leben gibt, finde ich gut dafür.)

(Although it many problems with old people together to live has, find I good nevertheless.)

2. *Wenn gibt es kleine Kinder, die Alte bei ihren Hausaufgabe helfen können.

(If are there small children, the elderly can their homework help can.)

(Wenn es kleine Kinder gibt, können die Alte bei ihren Hausaufgabe helfen.)

(If there small children are, can the elderly for their homework help.)

(C) Right position, wrong function

1. *Seit 1969, würden die Gespräche zwischen den beiden deutschen Statten geführt.

(Since 1969, did the dialogue between the two German states open.)

(It would be a correct sentence if there is no comma after the year 1969.)

2. *Im Wochenende, bleibt er immer zu Hause.

(In the weekend, stay he always at home.)



(It would be a correct sentence if there is no comma after the weekend.)

[At the weekend, he always stay at home.]

3. *Gegen Ende des Jahres 1993, hat er mansche Wahl, die einflussreich fuer sein Karriere getroffen.

(Near the end of 1993, has he many choices, the influence for his career meet)

(It would be a correct sentence if there is no comma after the year 1993.)

[Near the end of 1993, he makes many choices, which influence his career.]

3.2.1.3 XSVO

The third type of example (XSVO) shows that apart from the influence of English in adverb fronting construction, adverbs of stance or perspective adverbs like *jetzt* (now) semantically do not form part of the propositional sentence and they therefore are not counted as a constituent of the sentence and do not affect the basic V2 construction, being seen as “extra-sentential” constituents. The following are examples are:

1. *Außerdem das ist nicht etwa einfach, einen Job zu suchen.

(Besides that is not something easy, a job to find.)

(*Außerdem ist das gar nicht einfach einen Job zu suchen.*)

(*Besides is that at all not easy a jobe to find.*)

2. *Natürlich er dachtet noch an seinen Kopper.

(Of course he thought about his luggage)

(*Natürlich dachte er noch an seinen Kopper.*)

(*Of course thought he still about his luggage.*)

3. *Natürlich, das Bett ist zu klein für ihn.
(Of course, the bed is too small for him.)
(*Natürlich ist das Bett zu klein für ihn.*)
(*Of course is the bed too small for him.*)

3.3 Elicitation of Picture Description and Story Telling

A direct cross-linguistic comparison was carried out in this part, in which students were asked to describe a picture and tell a story in English, Chinese, and German accordingly. There are three different sections for the three respective languages and in each section students are asked to write about two pictures. Seven local students completed the tasks. The picture description part targets the elicitation of locative prepositional phrases in the *Vorfeld* position, while the story telling also elicits adverbs of time in the topics for the sequence of the story.

3.3.1 Pilot Studies

In order to design a research methodology for valid elicitation of data, we first tried two pilot studies with different methodological procedures. Timing and procedures were suggested to be crucial for an effective design and could directly affect the output.

The subjects of the two pilot studies were six HKU students, who were studying in second-year German language degree classes and third-year German language voluntary (non-credit) courses.

The significance of the pilot studies here is to work on a valid research methodology. Therefore, the result data will not be used as reference in the analysis and discussion part of this thesis.



3.3.1.1 Pilot Studies: Results

I Pilot Study One

The first pilot study was carried out by three second-year students, who were in German language second-year degree classes. They were asked to do the two tasks of elicitation in three languages in a row, starting with Chinese followed by English and German. There was no time limit, nor separation of the three different language sections.

The result data were like translation output. The word order and sentence structures of the English and German versions were very restricted to the Chinese expressions with paraphrasing. The subjects also complained about the workload affecting their performance. Some reported the difficulties in switching channels too hastily, especially when they already had the first language version in mind. The results, therefore, failed to represent spontaneous production.

II Pilot Study Two

A second pilot study was carried out with another three students, who were students of a third-year German voluntary non-degree course. They were first asked to perform the two elicitation tasks in German, followed by English and Chinese versions on separate days. Even though the content of the three language versions were not identical in writing about the same pictures since the subjects might have had different perspectives or ideas at different times, there was still a certain basic content of the pictures that the subjects would mention. Indeed, the different results seemed to capture and reflect more of a natural and spontaneous speech as “Sapir – Whorf hypothesis” also suggests language could influence learners’ mental perception and they may perceive things differently even when looking at the same picture (Crystal, 1987).



3.3.2 Elicitation Procedures and Control

We follow the second pilot study procedures:

- I Each section consists of two tasks in one language, involving descriptive and narrative writing respectively, and each subject is presented with two sets of pictures⁵. They have fifteen minutes for each task.
- II Subjects begin with Chinese section first and proceed with English and German sections respectively at three-day intervals.
- III They are allowed to use a dictionary in the German section.

There are a total of ten students from the same group of subjects who take part in questionnaires and composition collection sections.

We carried out the same elicitation tasks in German language only with ten German native speakers at University of Bonn, Germany, following the same procedure for control purposes.

⁵ Copies of the pictures are attached in appendix C.



3.3.2.1 Elicitation Results

The results show that our Chinese learners use frequent topic fronting constructions in their L3 German. The figures seem to show that they perform fronting at a similar rate to the native control speakers, as indicated in table 3.8:

Table 3.7 The frequency rate of German fronting production by Chinese learners and German natives.

	Chinese learners	German natives (control group)
Fronting rate : Story telling	35.7%	37%
Fronting rate : picture description	44.5%	44.8%

The learners seem to recognize the prominence of fronting in the target language and not in L2 English. This awareness is supported by their less frequent fronting performance rate in their L2 English. The frequency rate of fronting in three languages could be summarized as below:

Table 3.8 The frequency rate of fronting by Chinese learners in the respective three languages.

	Chinese	English	German
Fronting: Story telling	41.6%	22%	35.7
Fronting: picture description	42%	26%	44.5%

The learners perform half as much fronting in their L2 English as in their L1 Chinese and L3 German. However, we must note that the fronting constructions including existential sentences or relative clauses are not counted in the fronting constructions.

The different fronting distribution of the descriptive and narrative tasks (44.5%



and 35.7% respectively) also indicates that the Chinese learners produce more fronting constructions in descriptive contexts than in narrative contexts. It may suggest that they prefer locative or temporal topics, which are often required in descriptive contexts. This hypothesis will be discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

4.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to reveal how Chinese learners acquire L3 German fronting constructions by means of analyzing the L3 output and thereafter putting forward plausible explanations to account for the learners' L3 linguistic behaviors. The analysis is carried out in an interactive manner as outlined in chapter 1, taking language processing, cognitive functioning and comparative grammar as well as psychotypological factors into account.

The research findings presented in the previous chapter shall be analyzed here and the discussion will be divided into four sections. The first three sections are based on the composition data and the last one adds data from the elicitation tasks, together with the native German speakers as controls.

The findings from the composition data can basically be classified into three main types as outlined in the previous chapter:

*Für mich, jede Familie hat eigene Probleme

(For me, every family has own problems.)

This type is proposed to be the result of a discourse transfer of L1 Chinese and interlanguage transfer of English, including both IL forms and IL strategies. It implies the salient influence of an L1 conceptual base and L2 syntactic structures.

I. Intralingual errors (V2 position)

**Obwohl gibt es viele Probleme mit alten Leuten zusammen lebt, finde ich gut dafür..”*



(Although are there many problems with old people together live, find I good nevertheless.)

This type could be regarded as the result of “divergent representations” of the target language grammar by the learners’ own interpretation of the target grammar functions according to their precedent knowledge (cf. Sorace, 1993). It may involve incremental procedural production (Jordens, 1989) and general learning strategies.

II. Extra-sentential constituents constructions (XSVO)

*Jedenfalls, die Ferienarbeit war eine wertvolle Erfahrung, es war gut für meine Karriere in Zukunft.

(Anyway, the holiday job was one valuable experience, it was good for my future career.)

This type is treated as a possible sign of incremental procedural production in L3 language processing. It shows highly functional and communicative nature of L3 learning and production.

The last section is an analysis of the elicitation findings together with the comparison of the native German speakers. The results show the fronting frequency of L3 German and native German to be apparently alike (both descriptive 44.5% and narrative tasks 35.7% respectively) (see Table 3.7), but we shall show that there may be qualitative differences in the functions for which fronting is used.



4.1 IL Topicalizations (TOPIC-[S]VO)

4.1.1 “Native Language Function-Form Characteristics”

Although the questionnaire results indicate our students perceived German to be closer to English and they also admitted that they were influenced more by English, fronting constructions are still prevalent in the L3 German compositions and elicitation works:

- [1] Für mich, ich ziehe lieber in der Stadt vor.
(For me, I move prefer to the city to.)
- [2] Für die Arbeiten im Büro waren Administration.
(For the work in office are administration.)
- [3] Es gibt viele Vorteile, auf dem Land leben.
(There are many advantages, on the countryside live.)
- [4] Große Familie zusammen leben ist schwierig.
(Big family together live is difficult.)

Rutherford (1989) contends that it is the pragmatic word order that is transferable rather than basic word order. Indeed, in Yip’s (1995) study of “Chinese-English-Interlanguage” (CIL), there is a substantial influence of L1 Chinese topic-comment pragmatic relations in IL English. Like Leung’s (1998) IL transfer in L3 cases, the transfer of L1 topicalization also exists in our EIG, namely English-Interlanguage-German (EIG). It is cases thought to reflect “a carry over into the target language of native language function-form characteristics” (Schachter and Rutherford, 1979; Rutherford, 1983; Yip and Matthews, 1995).



As mentioned earlier, English is a subject prominent language and NP topics with no grammatical relation to the predicate are not allowed in English grammar, such as:

*Yosemite, the waterfalls are beautiful.

However, it could be repaired by applying a prepositional phrase “As for” to introduce the NP topic as in the following example:

“As for Yosemite, the waterfalls are beautiful” (CIL data) (Yip, 1995)

Even though this sentence is grammatical, it is not native-like or is even reported as “a periphrastic topic construction”, which is regarded as unnatural or even marginally ungrammatical. Indeed, it could be treated as a parallel literal translation of the Chinese L1 counterpart topic construction as exemplified in the following sentences:

Dui Bide lai jiang, Mali shi yi-ge ting piaoling de guniang.

(For Peter (Topic), Mary is a beautiful girl.)

(Gasde, 1998)

Zhiyu zhexie wenti, wo mei you renhe yijian.

(Regarding those questions (Topic), I don't have any strong opinions.”

(Gasde, 1998)

Similar examples of transfer from L1 topic fronting through L2 syntactic paraphrase in L3 German have also been traced:

[1] Für mich jede Familie hat ihre eigene Probleme.

(For me every family has its own problems.)

[2] Für die Arbeiten im Ausland, kann man erziehen selbständig zu sein

(For the work in foreign country, can people become more independent to be.)



The use of *Für* (for) constructions are based on German grammar to fulfill the case-marking functions as in the English periphrastic topic constructions. Example [1] is seen as a Chinese topic-comment construction, plus the tactic of fulfilling German case-marking functions (*Für mich* {TOPIC – SVO}). The topic is treated as an adjunct and therefore inversion may be considered as not necessary. In example [2], even though the V2 condition is observed, there is more than one constituent in the *Vorfeld* position (*die Arbeiten* (the work) + *im Ausland* (outside of the country)) and the punctuation comma might also indicate that it is not an instance of German fronting operation¹. Rather, it seems to be more plausible to treat it as a Chinese topic-comment construction disguised by the L3 *für* (for) on the surface.

4.1.1.1 Function and Form Transfer

Even though Chinese is considered as a pragmatic word order, topic prominent language and a lot of studies have been carried out in the literature concerning topics and topic comment constructions in Chinese², most examples and evidence are taken out of spoken contexts. Compared to English or German, Chinese speech is not always close to its written forms. For example: in colloquial Mandarin:

Zhangsan wo yijing jian guo le

[Zhangsan (topic) I have already seen (comment)] (Li and Thompson, 1989)

but in written Chinese, it is more appropriate to use canonical subject-predicate word order:

Wo yijing jian guo Zhangsan le

[I (subject) have already seen Zhangsan (predicate)]

¹ The significance of the comma punctuation, separating the fronting constituents from the rest of the



Cantonese speakers are especially aware of the distinctions between the connotations of “colloquial” speech and “formal” written forms since Cantonese is only a colloquial language and students in Hong Kong are taught to write “formal” Chinese at school. It may be an important factor to consider when determining the influence of L1 Chinese in L3 German acquisition, especially in written work.

However, as mentioned in the previous section, the discourse functions of a language are more transferable than its syntactic forms (Rutherford, *ibid*). This may make us rethink the questions of what is being transferred and what specific effects it would possibly have in the L3 acquisition or production process. We propose that it is the discourse functions of Chinese topicalization that is transferred and the learners are aware of the restricted role of the discourse functions in language use, which may not be mapped automatically into the syntactic forms. It suggests the learners use their L1 conceptual base in acquiring other languages.

On the other hand, we propose that there is substantial transfer of IL forms to the L3 (cf. Leung, 1998) as the learners may transfer the same L2 learning strategies into TLA, such as applying English existential sentence constructions (cf. chapter 2.3.1). The same existential constructions are also common in our L3 German case:

[1] ***Es gibt** niemand, mit den alten Leuten **sprechen**.

(There is nobody, with whom old people talk.)

[2] *Viele alte Leute **gibt es** in Hong Kong leben.

(Many old people are there in Hong Kong live.)

clause, will be discussed further in the following sections.
2 Discussion of Chinese as a topic prominent language is found in Chapter 2.2.1.



The above examples exemplify IL transfer as the existential verb *es gibt* (there be) appears with another verb followed *sprechen, leben* (talk, live), which suggest the existential verb is there merely to keep the indefinite NP away from the subject position, exactly as has been argued in case of Chinese learners' English L2 production (Yip 1995, p.189). In short, the L3 learners are transferring the IL form containing the L1 semantics, ie. the existential construction (IL form) with L1 semantics (existential verb to keep away the indefinite NP from the subject position) to their L3 production.

4.1.2 Developmental Sequence

Topic fronting could also be claimed to be the first stage of universal or developmental grammar as many learners of different native languages use topic fronting at the very beginning. It is regarded as a pragmatic mode in their transitional rule before they could manage to change to a syntactic mode with complicated syntactic structures such as case system or subordinate clause (Givón, 1979). Two longitudinal SLA studies, the Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt (Dittmar and Klein, 1979) and the ZISA-project (Meisel et al., 1981), also reveal that the adverb preposing appears in stage two before the SVO word order.

Our L3 German data seem to be consistent with this line of argument even though we have not carried out longitudinal studies. Our learners seem to use more topic fronting in the elicitation tasks due to time constraints and they might choose to use pragmatic topic fronting constructions, whereas they might prefer to use complicated sentence constructions such as relative clauses in their composition assignments.



4.1.3 Gap vs. Non-Gap Topics

Even though we have mentioned earlier that German is more liberal in word order and topic can be placed in the fronting as in Chinese, the device to express its function can be different from language to language (Comrie and Matthews, 1991). However, some of our students used their L1 nongap topic constructions in their L3 German:

In Chinese, nongap topics such as the following are possible: (Gasde, 1998):

[**Kuaiji**] women yijing you ren le.

Lit. 'Bookkeeper (Topic), we've already got someone'

But in German, it is ungrammatical as shown in the following EIG example:

[1] *Aber arbeiten für [**die Ferienarbeit**], ich habe meine Freizeit, meine Familie opfern.

(But work for the summer-job, I have my free time, my family spared.)

One explanation for the L3 German non-gap topic productions may be due to a tactic of students in avoiding complicated subordinate clause or relative sentence constructions. For instance, as for the examples listed below, they could possibly be corrected into either relative clause or subordinate clause:

1. *Aber für diese Ferienarbeit, ich mußte meine Friezeit, meine Familie opfern.

(But for this summer job, I must my free time, my family sacrifice.)

[Wenn ich in den Ferien arbeite, muß ich meine Freizeit und meine Familie opfern.]



(When I work during holiday, must I my free time and my family spared.)

2. *Wohnen innerhalb der Großstadt ist wie in der Hölle zu mir.

(Live inside of a big city is like in the hell to me)

[Ich finde, daß in der Großstadt zu wohnen wie in der Hölle ist.]

(I find, that in the big city to live like in the hell is)

3. *Große Familie zusammen leben ist schwierig.

(Big family together live is difficult.)

[Wenn man in einer großen Familie ist, findet man das Leben schwierig.]

(When a person in one big family is, find he the life difficult)

or

[In einer großen Familie zu leben ist schwierig.]

(In a big family to live is difficult)

4.1.4 Problematic Fronting

L3 German IL fronting constructions may not just be the influence of Chinese, but the learners may also have acquired the topic fronting of German inaccurately. It could possibly be an intralingual error as learners may not have acquired the true nature of the fronting constructions. They may freely place any constituents into the initial position such as in the following examples:

- [1] **Viele alte Leute** gibt es in Hong Kong.

(Many old people are there in Hong Kong.)



[2] **Ziemlich schön** ist dieses Leben.

(Pretty good is this life.)

This results in marginal or problematic fronting constructions. The second example could be seen as showing a general tendency toward overrepresentation of fronted non-obligatory adverbs: *Ziemlich* (pretty). It may be that due to the prominent role of fronting constructions in German target grammar, learners overgeneralize fronting to all constituents.

4.2 V2 Position

One feature of German fronting constructions involves inversion according to the German V2-finite rule. We propose that learners are well aware of the V2-finite rule and it may pose an obstacle to learning target fronting constructions, as in examples (A), (B) and (C) below:

(A) V2 overgeneralizations

*Aber werde ich meine Familie nicht verlassen.

(But shall I my family not leave)

(B) V2 where German requires V-final order

*Obwohl gibt es viele Probleme mit alten Leuten zusammen lebt, finde ich gut dafür.

(Although are there many problems with old people together lives, find I good nevertheless)

(C) **Right position, wrong function**

*Seit 1969, wurden die Gespräche zwischen den beiden deutschen Staaten geführt.

(Since 1969, were the talks between the two German states carried out.)

4.2.1 V2 Overgeneralizations

The learners frequently apply V2 order even for cases where German does not require it as in:

[1] *"Aber werde ich meine Familie nicht verlassen."

(But shall I my family not leave)

[2] *"Denn brauchen die alten Leute ein bißchen Arbeit."

(Because need the old people some work)

The above examples show false fronting construction due to overgeneralized V2 rule. The learners may have overgeneralized verb second (V2) constructions. It may also imply that they have not acquired the *Vorfeld* fronting constructions, but merely the surface structure of German word order, i.e. wrongly treating any word occupying the first constituent as the *Vorfeld* followed immediately by a finite verb. It shows that L3 learners, like native learners, also make hypotheses about the target rules themselves and overgeneralizing them which indicates their "transitional competence" (Corder, 1981).

4.2.2 V2 Where German Requires V-Final Order

Learners may also apply the V2 rule in fronting constructions such as the following examples:

[1] *Obwohl gibt es viele Probleme mit alten Leuten zusammen lebt, finde ich gut dafür.

(although are there many problems with old people together lives, find I good nevertheless)

The learners may not have acquired the verb-final condition in subordinate clause constructions. Indeed, verb-final constructions are found to be acquired in the latest stage (stage VI) of the developmental sequence (cf. Clahsen, 1982; Meisel et al., 1981).

The failure of performing verb-final mechanism as in the examples above may be due to learners' own conception of what the target grammar should be like, which is determined by the V2 feature. Contrary to the XSVO L3 productions, which we have argued to be easier to process as there is no involvement of inversion, here we find the inverted XVS0 word order. We suggest that when certain sentence constructions require a higher degree of processing such as relative or subordinate clause, the learners may have higher monitoring control of the sentence constructions (cf. Krashen, 1981) during language production. That might be the reason for our L3 learners to apply inversion as a means to maintain V2 feature of the target language.



The L3 sentence seems to involve just a misplacement of V2, but this kind of “V2 error” may actually be our deception in analyzing the examples. Perhaps the superficial “subordinate clause” is not used to complement the “main clause”, but is linked to it by semantic relations such as conditional as the example (3) or just causal links as shown in example (4):

[3] *Wenn gibt es kleine Kinder, die Alte bei ihren Hausaufgaben helfen können.

(If are there small children, the elderly can their homework help can.)

[4] *Wenn man irgendwo in der Fremde, soll er seine Heimat immer lieben

(When a person wherever in a foreign country, should he his country always love.)

In example (4), the verb is even missing in the subordinate clause, which may suggest that the subordinate clause may be treated as a topic, serving the foregrounding function as in other topic-comment constructions.

4.2.3 Right Position, Wrong Function

Some fronting constructions may appear in correct surface forms following the V2 rule, while being assigned the wrong function. For example:

1 *Seit 1969, wurden die Gespräche zwischen den beiden deutschen Staaten geführt.

(Since 1969, were the talk between the both German States started.)



2 *Am Wochenende, bleibt er immer zu Hause.

(On the weekends, stays he always at home.)

The examples seem apparently syntactically well-formed fronting constructions except for the appearance of the comma. This could be a purely orthographic problem. However, the systematic use of the comma punctuation may suggest that the problem goes deeper than that, as we propose the comma actually separates the two estranged parts of the sentence.

The comma after the topic may actually hint at a break from the rest of the sentence and make it clause external.³ The tendency to produce clause-external topics separated by a comma may be due to L2 English influence as the comma followed after adverb preposing is common in English forms. It could also be induced by Chinese topic-comment constructions, in which there may also be a pause or comma between the two parts.

4.3 Constructions with Extra-Sentential Constituents (XSVO)

This type of XSVO word order is commonly found in L3 German:

[1] *Jetzt die meisten haben schon nach Hong Kong zurückgekommen.

(Now the most have already back Hong Kong come back.)

³ It should be noted that German is more constrained in clause-external movement than English is and the clause-internal movement is vice-versa (Hawkins, 1986). And movement into the *Vorfeld* should be a case of clause-internal movement.



[2] *Jedenfalls, die Ferienarbeit war eine wertvolle Erfahrung, es war gut für meine Karriere in Zukunft.

(Anyhow, the summer job was a valuable experience, it was good for my career in the future)

[3] *Also, es ist unmöglich für mich, ins Ausland auszuwandern.

(Well, it is impossible for me, in overseas country immigrate.)

[4] *Im Wochenende, sie immer mit ihre Freundinnen für die Sauna.

(In weekends, they always with their friends for the sauna.)

[5] *Zum Beispiel, wir können zum Alterheim bei die Alten zu besuchen gehen.

(For example, we can to elderly homes for the elderly to visit.)

[For example, we can go to the elderly homes to visit the elderly.]

This XSVO word order could possibly be caused by transfer of English L2 adverb preposing since this word order is very common in English adverb preposing usages such as:

Today, I don't have to go to school. (cf. example 4)

For example, people do not have to wear school uniform in Canada.

(cf. example 5)



However, this could also be due to the influence of their Chinese (L1) and / or universal preference for SVO canonical order in SLA. It is difficult to distinguish between the three influences. Indeed, some native German speakers also produce the same XSVO word order such as the example (3) above, especially in colloquial conversation. Marginally grammatical example such as (3) may therefore not be treated as errors, but could be a type of deviation from the target grammar. The learners may see such examples as input and overgeneralize them to include other similar perspective adverbs. Indeed, L3 learners' conception of what the target grammar should be like may affect the operation of transfer. As implied by Andersen's notion of "transfer to somewhere" (1984b), learners may only transfer the existing linguistic knowledge to the target language (TL) on the condition that the TL system is perceived to be compatible.

Although it is difficult to trace back the source of the influence since it could be found in all three target languages and is actually known to be universally prevalent, the phenomenon could be explained by cognitive factors which may play a role in forming the XSVO word order⁴. Stance or perspective adverbs like *Also* (Well), *Jedenfalls* (Anyhow) semantically do not form part of the propositional content of the sentence and they therefore may not counted as a constituent of the sentence and do not affect the basic V2 word order construction, since they are seen as "extra-sentential constituents". This could account for the higher frequency of the adverb preposing than topicalization.

⁴ This order appears in a very early stage (stage 2 of the total six) of the implicational developmental sequences scale before the stage of inversion (stage 4) (Meisel et al., 1981). This is probably because that inversion increases the cognitive cost of language production and is hence acquired later. (Clashen, 1980).



Unlike in Chinese and English, topic XPs are closely integrated in the clause in German (cf. Hawkins, 1986). The topics in German usually maintain a close relation with the verb and are not separated from it by any pause or intonation break. This may help explain the greater tolerance of XSVO word order type in Chinese and English than in German. English is more flexible in clause-external placement than German is (ibid), and Chinese is even more prone to it since it is a topic-prominent language. Consequently, learners may have difficulty in learning the more rigid and constrained target grammar.

As our learners produced L3 German XSVO word order sentences, we suspect that they might actually treat a constituent occupying the X-position as an extra-sentential part, like an adjunct of the sentence, instead of the target Topic XPs integrated in the clause.

In our data, the Chinese learners seem to use both the target XVSO word order and XSVO order alternatives as shown in the following elicited example:

*In Bild 1, es gibt vier Leute auf der Straße.

*In Bild 2, da sind zwei Personen, eine Frau und einen Mann.

*In Bild 3 sehen **wir** die alte Partner, daß wir in Bild I gesehen.

*In Bild 4, die Junge Frau in Bild 1 spielt die Violine in dem Konzert.

(In picture 1, there are four people on the street.

In picture 2, there are two people, one woman and one man.

In picture 3, see **we** the old couples, that we in picture one seen have.

In picture 4, the young woman in picture one played the violine in the concert.)

The sentences show clearly how a speaker perceived the relation of a sentence part to be related to the rest of the sentence and thus affecting the word order structure as well as the syntactic relation of the sentence. Only in the third sentence is the first narrative perspective explicitly shown and therefore there is a direct link between the experiencer and the topic, i.e. *In Bild 3* (In picture 3) which is considered as part of the sentence and therefore included in the word order arrangement (hence the V2 word order without a comma) while the other topics are not. The choice between XSVO or XVS0 word order in the interlanguage may thus depend on how the learners map the semantic functions onto the forms themselves.

This example shows that learners are more restricted in integrating XPs in the clause unless there is a very close relationship between the topic and the rest of the sentence (i.e. the “ego effect” of the last example, cf. Jordens 1989). In other instances, the learners seem to prefer XSVO word order, namely the sentence-external placement of topic XPs.

4.4 Elicitation Findings

Despite the predictions of psychotypology (as English is perceived to be closer to German), there seems to be substantial L1 Chinese topic-comment influence in the L3 elicitation results which shows a high rate of topicalization and fronting constructions as shown in table 4.1 below. In this section, we shall show various kinds of topics found in descriptive and narrative contexts. They will be compared with the native German speaker and Mainland Chinese controls.

We shall also give an account of learners’ formulation of topic sentences in production by means of the incremental procedural model, which is said to be



directly determined by rules of language production and only indirectly by the corresponding linguistic rule system (cf. Jordens, 1989).

4.4.1 Topic Distribution

A relatively direct way to show the influence of each precedent language on the target language is to compare the three languages in writing the same content. The table below shows the frequency rate of fronting and topicalization constructions used by the learners when undertaking the same written tasks:

Table 4.1

	L1 Chinese	L2 English	L3 German	German natives (control group)
Topicalization / Fronting: Story telling	41.6%	22%	35.7%	37%
Topicalization / Fronting: picture description	42%	26%	44.5%	44.8%

The result clearly shows that topicalization / fronting is used much less in L2 English than in L1 Chinese and L3 German. Indeed the frequency rate of L3 German learners is strikingly similar to the native German control group. The figures could indicate that our Chinese learners have achieved the target grammar successfully; however, we should reserve judgement on this question until we look into their production in the later section. An alternative explanation is the influence of Chinese topicalization constructions on the L3 German. Yet, this may raise a question on why there is L1 influence in L3 German and much less in L2 English. We suggest that it is due to learners' awareness of the differences between the target



L2 and L3 grammar, in that they realize fronting constructions are common in German and therefore they are more “willing” to transfer topicalization constructions into L3 German. This would be a case of “transfer to somewhere” (cf. Andersen, 1984a,b).

Another finding shown in Table 4.1 is that there are more fronting constructions in descriptive contexts than in narrative contexts, and once again this result appears very similar to the German control group. Nevertheless, we shall suggest it does not indicate native-like performance as we find that almost all fronted constituents in L3 German are locative or temporal topicalization constructions, as shown in the following examples:

I. Picture Description: (Locative)

1. ***Da** sehe ich ein Haus.

(There see I a house.)

2. ***Im Stock eins** hat eine Frau, die Klavier spielt.

(On the first floor has a girl, who plays the piano.)

3. ***Am oben rechts** gibt es ein Fenster. Unter diesem Fenster gibt es ein anderes Fenster.

(On the upper right is there a window. Under this window is there one other window.)

II. Narrative: (Temporal)

4. ***Später** waren die alte Paar ganz überrascht.

(Later were the old couple very surprised.)

5. ***Zum schluss** hat das ältere Liebespaar entdeckt, daß das junge richtige Musikanten sind.



(In the end has the older couple found out, that the young actually musicians are.)

The higher frequency rate of fronting constructions in descriptive contexts may simply be due to more application of locative or temporal topics⁵. It may also be due to the extra-sentential semantic functions contained in locative / temporal topics, and therefore learners may feel more confident in placing them in the *Vorfeld* as an adjunct topic.

4.4.1.1 Topic Functions

Even though the result shows our L3 learners have similar fronting production rates to the native controls, we suggest the L3 data are not target-like in qualitative terms. The following L3 German examples may help illustrate the point:

***Es gibt** ein dicker Rauch auf dem motorrad folgt.

(There is a thick smoke on the motorbike follows)

Im 2. Stock des Haus **gibt es** ein Mädchen, das Klavier spielt.

(In the 2nd floor of the house is there a girl that piano plays)

Am ersten Stock **gibt es** ein Mann, der das Buch liest, aber er kann nicht konzentrieren.

(On the first floor is there a man who the book reads, but he cannot concentrate)

Almost 85% of the instances of fronting and topicalization produced by the L3 learners involve *es gibt* (there is) existential sentence structures, compared to only

⁵ German native speakers may also use locative / temporal topics, but we shall argue in the next section that the functions they play and the constructions are different.



5% in the German control data. The native control data show a very different topic fronting function from our L3 data, as exemplified below:

Auf dem Gartentor steht die Hausnummer 35.

(On the garden door stands the house-number 35)

Vor dem Haus sieht man auf der Straß einen Lastwagen.

(In front of the house sees one on the road a lorry)

The examples show a close relation between the topic and the verb, which is lacking in the L3 German, and use of verbs other than the existential *gibt*. Indeed, in many instances where the L3 fronting construction includes *es gibt*, the existential verb *gibt* does not hold the existential verb function, but serves to introduce indefinite NPs instead, following the function of the Chinese existential verb (*yáuh* in Cantonese): “The word *yáuh* essentially means ‘have’ or there is / there are’ but often does not correspond to anything in English” (Matthews and Yip, 1994, p.279). It is not treated as a verb, “but is usually required to introduce an indefinite noun phrase as the subject of a sentence” (ibid). The non-verbal function of the existential construction *es gibt* is indicated by the co-existence of another verb in IL production as below (cf. Yip, 1995):

1. **Es gibt** ein dicker Rauch auf dem motorrad **folgt**.
(**There is** a thick smoke after the motorcycle **follow**.)
2. Im 2. Stock des Haus **gibt es** ein Mädchen, das Klavier **spielt**.
(On 2nd floor of house **is there** a girl, the piano **plays**.)



In example [1], *es gibt* introduce *ein dicker Rauch* and the actual verb should be *folgt*, meaning that the polluted air ‘follows’ the motorcycle. And in example [2], it is also used to introduce the indefinite subject: *ein Mädchen*.

4.4.2 Production Rules

The frequent use of *es gibt* structure is not accidental, but it may actually implicate an L3 production rule of an incremental-procedural nature:

“in producing a sentence as a series of content fragments that fit together both cognitively and thematically, speakers are less concerned with the syntactic well-formedness of a sentence than with its being an adequate expression of their intentions.”

(Jordens, 1989)

We propose that our L3 learners may also be working with such conceptual fragments and that pragmatic and communicative factors are driving the elicitation results as much as syntactic considerations. We suggest that the fronted constituent of the L3 sentence may be produced with relative independence from the remainder of the sentence. And this may be one rationale behind the weak relations between topic and verb in L3 fronting constructions as shown in the previous section. We shall further explore the proposed production rule in the following:

Im 2. Stock des Haus gibt es ein Mädchen, das Klavier spielt.

(On 2nd floor of house is there a girl, the piano plays.)

→ [*Im 2. Stock des Haus*] {[*gibt es*] [*ein Mädchen, das Klavier spielt.*]}



The use of existential verb *gibt es* as explained earlier serves as introducing the indefinite subject *ein Mädchen*, which marks a break of the topic from the rest of the sentence. The topic seems to lie outside of the argument of the sentence and serves as background locative function. This reinforces our claim of treating topics as an extra-sentential part of the sentence.

There are also substantial *es gibt* existential sentence production data from the Chinese Mainland learners. Those learners have only low English proficiency as compared to our learners at HKU, and yet the similarly redundant existential sentence production suggests that there may not be so much English influence. It could be a means of efficient communicative strategy or a reflection of L1 Chinese influence.

4.5 Conclusion

Three major fronting types are found in our sample of L3 German. The first type (Topic-[S]VO) shows that the discourse function of available languages is more prevalent than the transfer of their surface constructions. It also shows the indirect transfer of the L1 topicalization. The second verb position problem shows some intralingual errors, in which the learners may have not acquired the true functions of the target *Vorfeld* constructions. It also shows some comparative fallacies in misinterpreting the meanings of the learners' output. In the last XSVO type, the incremental production is invoked to explain the usage of the word order, in which 'X' is located as an extra-sentential constituent in L3 German.

The case of the *Vorfeld* shows how universal constraints such as communicative strategies, the incremental production and overgeneralization all play a role in TLA. Unlike native German speakers, the Hong Kong subjects use general



learning strategies in solving linguistic conflicts such as mapping one function to one form as shown in the V2-overgeneration type. They also use canonical sentence schemas, which derive from the neutral sentence type to start out with an SVO phrase structure system.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Further Consideration

5.1 Acquiring German *Vorfeld*

The results of the two hypotheses raised in this work are both positive.

Regarding the first hypothesis on functions of the *Vorfeld*, L3 learners are influenced by their L1 and acquire the "framing" function of topics while neglecting the focusing function. The L3 learners also show evidence of IL transfer, as shown by the L3 German existential constructions which appear to be based on the corresponding L2 interlanguage constructions.

We suggest L3 learners have attained a high level of control in both perceiving the relations between the target forms and functions as well as applying learning and production strategies. The learning experience of L2 is instrumental in affecting the acquisition process of L3 learners as they have become skilful in metalinguistic knowledge as well as general learning strategies. They show a high awareness of the correlations between forms and functions in language. They seem to have reserved their own idea of what the target grammar is like or more generally on how grammar works universally in all language systems, which is based mostly on their mother tongue intuitive conceptual system.

In acquiring German fronting constructions, our L3 learners are well aware of the inversion rules involved in fronting constructions as they do sometimes perform target-like fronting. Yet, the production of it seems to be restricted, depending on learners' own perception of the role played by the topics in the fronting position. If they perceive the topic to have close relations with the argument of the sentence such as the verb or experiencer role of the subjects as we have discussed in section 4.3.1,



they are able to apply necessary inversion operation in fronting construction. However, in other cases, where the learners perform XVS0 inversion, they still may not have fully acquired the target fronting constructions as they may treat the fronting as an clause external placement. These L3 productions may superficially work as instances of fronting and yet do not perform target-like functions. Indeed, we suggest that the functions of the fronting constituents in L3 German are, to a large extent, restricted to “framing” functions as in Chinese style topics in topic-comment sentences. As Andersen (1984a, b) and Yip (1995) contend in regard to learnability, learners seem to preserve the principle of one function to one form (also known as Uniqueness principle), and this may be the reason why our Chinese L3 learners have not acquired a native-like command of fronting as it has already been blocked by Chinese style topic functions.

As revealed in the findings, learners seem to have only acquired one of the two functions of fronting, namely topic function, by taking extra-sentential considerations as for adjunct topics; while they fail to achieve or have not achieved fully the focus function. For the focus function, learners seem to prefer alternative sentence constructions such as ‘es gibt’ existential clauses.

This work has suggested that the acquisition of L3 German *Vorfeld* construction requires truly an interactive perspective on TLA field, which encompasses syntax, semantics and pragmatics in all levels of language development. Various factors such as UG, typology, syntax, psychotypology, cognition all play a role in accounting for L3 knowledge and performance. We have advocated an independent paradigm of TLA research in view of the highly functional and communicative nature of the learning and production process involved. Its dynamism patently goes beyond the scope of SLA.



All in all, when carrying out TLA research, we may have to bear in mind that the L3 subjects we are investigating could be linguists themselves, though amateurs, who are dealing with the very complicated task of acquiring a third language. They may take many things into consideration and so should we. That is what makes TLA are so unique and exciting.

5.2 “Where we are standing now” – A *Context Based Approach to SLA and TLA*

We try to reinforce the idea that there is a need to understand why and how certain processes or development in the language acquisition take place in a situation and henceforth resulting in a certain way (Selinker, 1992). It is not sufficient to describe a phenomenon without giving a reasonable explanation. And it could be more absurd to presume an argument or theory before evidence is found or then base on that assumption to look for or recognize the data only when they could fit into the preset frame. A valid research methodology and analysis should therefore be context based.

It is clear that we do not intend or have the ambition to build a theory which could hold for all languages and different situations. In fact, it is very dangerous to pursue the notion of “Universal Grammar”. Even in the fashion of language typology, in which “absolute universal” is to be understood as “less abstract universal generalizations”¹ and theories are drawn with the provision of definite conditions, researchers are still inclined to generalize and define properties and regulations for all languages. The shortcomings of such an approach is that it may fail to recognize some seemingly trivial factors which result in cross-language or

¹ Hawkins (1998) commented that his language typological approach to be less abstract universal generalization, but he still admitted that it was a common goal to build a theory of “Universal Grammar”, only that for the typologists, they would recognize different outcome due to different



contextual variations. We have to bear in mind that no matter how much alike two twins look, they still cannot be treated as identical.

We recognize the proficiency of L1 and L2 would affect the relative importance of its influence onto the acquisition of L3. In our case here, our subjects generally have a relative high standard of L2 English and the classroom teaching is also conducted in English, which could be one of the factors resulting in the apparent marked influence of L2 to L3. Comparatively speaking, the role played by L2 English may be less significant for the students of the Baptist University (Eschenlohr 1999). This illustrates that even though the language combination (Chinese-English-German) of the three groups are the same, the role played by L2 could be different due to different L2 English proficiency.

5.3 Implications of TLA Study

TLA is suggested to be different from SLA not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively. It has been found that the role of the L2 seems to be prominent in L3 strategy building. It indicates that the cognitive learning mechanism is more apparent and active in the process of TLA. In SLA, learners may rely more on the L1 linguistic resources and their L2 production also seems to be more L1 / UG-constrained². However, as TLA includes the preceding L2 learning experience, learners show more control in their strategy building, which is said to be more “psycholinguistic cognition” (Cenoz et al.,1999) in nature. In our study, the learners seem to have developed two systems: 1. “a native language”, one that remains as the “language of thought” and 2. “a base language” (Cenoz, 1999), ie. a language

conditions.

² Some scholars suggest UG is implicated in SLA through L1 as implicated by the Continuity Hypothesis (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1996)



which they have stronger metalinguistic skills, and which influences the other language(s) being acquired.³ In this L3 case, our students have Chinese as their native language and their IL English as the base language.

By probing an independent TLA study, I am hoping to open a new dynamic research space as well as contribute to the ongoing debate in the SLA field, by admitting more autonomy and consciousness of the learners. Our learners have shown that they do attain control even on the level of grammatical interaction such as in determining certain functions or mental representations of the target grammar. It is therefore necessary to be vigilant about possible deceptions of the forms on the surface level. Rather, more attention should be put on the underlying functions and meaning.

5.4 A Proposal for Future Research

We have looked into the case of acquiring German fronting constructions in TLA and suggested the learners' conception and language processing play salient roles in it. As a Chinese speaker, I have added many of my own native intuition into the analysis of the data, which is hypothetical, but it does offer an intuitive perspective on language acquisition. We have collected data and used controls as references, and yet the results could use more support of larger sample of subjects and different groups of native speakers for comparison.

Further research on the roles of L1 and L2 in L3 production and acquisition is not only significant in understanding third language acquisition, but it is also useful in applying to pedagogical questions such as the issue of language learning in multilingual education.

TLA research itself has already offered new areas of study such as interlanguage transfer and competing language systems, which could enhance the understanding a multilingual mind. After all, TLA is a dynamic field and what's more: it has just begun.

³ The same conclusion has been suggested by Cohen, 1995 and Rivers, 1981 (in Clyne, 1997)



Appendix A Questionnaire

I am a M.Phil. student in the Linguistic Department of University of Hong Kong, doing research in language acquisition on German. The aim of my study is to track some difficulties faced by learners of German as a foreign language. It is therefore very significant to find representative subjects and collect useful data for my research.

Hence, I would ask you for your **voluntary** participation for my research study. I will assure you the work will be kept completely confidential and your name will not be divulged since all the participants will be assigned an individual code number as marked at the top of this questionnaire for identification.

Your consent and cooperation will surely contribute much to the success of my research.

PART I

1. Name: _____

2. Sex: M / F

3. Age: _____

4. National: _____

PART II

5. Language skills

Since when and where have you been learning German? _____

Other languages: (in order of proficiency)	Native	Very fluent	fluent	good	fair	basic
a. _____ (Native)	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. _____	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. _____	1	2	3	4	5	6

Pls state your grades for the Use of English (UE) _____

and English Language (HKCEE) _____

6. Subjects (Major & Minor) _____



7. The most difficult parts you find in studying German grammar is: (pls rank the highest three; the most difficult the lowest no.)

() () () () ()
 vocabulary / tense / modal verbs / inversion / article /
 () () ()
 verb separation / verb position / other aspects of word order

other (pls specify) : _____

Why? _____

8. Please rate how close you perceive German to be to the other languages you know.

	Very close	Close	Far	Very far
a. language one (ref: Q5)	1	2	3	4
b. language two (ref: Q5)	1	2	3	4
c. language three (ref: Q5)	1	2	3	4

In which way? _____

9. Do you feel that when you speak German you are affected by other languages that you know? (eg. by translating from those languages.)

	Always	often	sometimes	never
a. language one (ref: Q5)	1	2	3	4
b. language two (ref: Q5)	1	2	3	4
c. language three (ref: Q5)	1	2	3	4

In which way? _____

10. Do you feel that when you write German you are affected by other languages that you know? (eg. by translating from those languages.)

	Always	often	sometimes	never
a. language one (ref: Q5)	1	2	3	4
b. language two (ref: Q5)	1	2	3	4
c. language three (ref: Q5)	1	2	3	4

In which way? _____

Thank you very much



Appendix B

Description of German Language third year class

This course is taught throughout the year and is a continuation of German II.1. It offers a balanced range of language skills and furthers exploration of the various linguistic aspects of the language. Special attention will be given to language registers and patterns, specific terminology and structures used in a variety of fields (literature, press, business, etc.) with the aim of further stimulating critical reading. As in German II.1, small tutorial groups will be arranged to ensure oral fluency and writing techniques as well as the development of oral skills in the context of argued discourses and presentations.

