

*Language Transfer in Language Learning* edited by Susan M. Gass and Larry Selinker. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993. 236 pp.

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*LTLL* is a collection of twelve papers, eight of which are either direct reprints or slight revisions of articles that appeared in Gass and Selinker (1983). A few are theoretical in nature: most of the rest investigate cases where native language forms appear as features of interlanguages (IL). After a good updated overview introduction by the editors, the book opens with the late S. Pit Corder's "Role for the Mother Tongue," which reasons against the idea that L1s inhibit learning in any sense, though they may facilitate rates of learning where typologies are similar, at least at later stages. The author tries to draw logical conclusions of the paradigm shift away from behaviorism approaches, a shift by now a generation old in SLA. He distinguishes phonology, where L1 features do play a salient role, from syntax, where they seem not to do so. While borrowing of mother tongue features is an attested suppletion strategy, it is not, in his view, a learning strategy: interference as such is an obsolete notion.

The other papers, old and new, do nothing to seriously undermine Corder's picture of transfer. Among the reprints is J. Schachter's "New Account of Language Transfer," which presents a hypothesis-testing model in which all internalized constructs, both L1 and L2, constrain the inferencing process; this constraint is not to be understood as the 'blocking effect' of interference, however. Ard and Homburg's paper sets up a means of predicting lexical transfer based on similarity of lexemes. Broselow's article investigates epenthesis in the English of native speakers of two Arabic dialects, by showing dialect-specific transfer of vowel insertion processes. The updates include "Language Transfer and the Acquisition of Pronouns" by Gundel and Tarone, who have added to their data set and included some new discussion; Bartelt's "Rhetorical Transfer in Apachean English"; and Scarcella's

"Interethnic Conversation and Second Language Acquisition: Discourse Accent Revisited." For a review of the original volume see Arabski (1985).

Now, for new papers: Peter Jordens investigates transfer in the interlanguage of American and Dutch speakers of German in his contribution "The Cognitive Function of Case Marking." In English and Dutch, role-prominence (agentivity) and referential prominence (topicality) tend to fall to the same NP, a subject. In German, a V2 language which case-marks most NPs, the two functions may be separated such that dative/accusative topics may occur S-initially, where topics tend to be in languages with less strict word order. J. focuses on speaker judgments on a quasi-fragmentary S-type construction found in news headlines and elsewhere in which an initial NP occurs case-marked either nominative or accusative and requires intuitions about role/referential prominence to come into play. Across languages, the selection of subjects is held to follow an 'egocentric bias' by which high agentivity together with "the more subjective factor of a speaker's actual personal involvement" (p. 141) influence subject selection. J. has dealt with such headline constructions before (1983, 1989) and has argued that NS selection of case is heavily influenced by the factor of [+implied person]. Predictably, he notes, accusative NPs tend to be animate and lack a determiner (implying new information). For transfer, the hypothesis is that the crosslinguistic tendency toward egocentric bias in subject selection will carry over for Dutch and English speakers asked to assign case in headline structures: J's results strongly suggest that it does carry over as predicted.

The paper by Selinker and Lakshamanan posits a Multiple Effects Principle (MEP) to account adequately for fossilization. MEs include, centrally, transfer of L1 forms. Indeed, such transfer is highlighted as foremost among these effects. There are three others. One is the presence or absence of markedness in relevant equivalent forms in the interlanguage; thus pro-drop, here assumed to be marked, transfers from Italian into English ILs and fossilizes there. The second is "affect". The third is a posited cognitive need for symmetry which conspires to produce *\*would* in *if*-clauses to match that in accompanying conditional main clauses; this need is also said to produce the false generalizing of relatively free adverb positions in English VPs absolutely free ones, thus creating \*[V Adv NP], violating a condition of strict [V NP] adjacency. One

cannot predict fossilization on the basis of transfer alone, say the authors, but its likelihood increases to the extent that other such factors enter into the picture. Thus the need for symmetry produces overgeneralization of the subcategorization frames for *hope* and *wish* to ECM verbs like *want*: \**I want that you help me*; the likelihood of this sentence occurring is compounded since ECM constructions are crosslinguistically marked. As given, the MEP fails yet to be very predictive partly because the precise nature of the effects is not spelled out (what counts as 'symmetrical' linguistic behavior?) and partly since we need some means for weighting the effects, both absolutely and relative to each other. As the authors note, individual idiosyncrasies also play a role.

Lydia White's "Universal Grammar: Is It Just a New Name for Old Problems?" is a cautious and evenhanded attempt to show that a study of transfer with reference to UG can provide an interpretation of certain transfer types which earlier Contrastive Analysis approaches could not. A UG approach allows for a "creative construction" path of development (Dulay and Burt, 1974) in which parameter resettings may occur within the set of possible grammars. UG can account for differential acquisition of similar string-types by means of a theory of differing D-structures; clusters of properties that fall out as a consequence of one L1 parameter may be studied as a unit in the IL. The principles-and-parameters approach plays an additional role in connection with markedness in learnability: reflexive binding options in Korean and Japanese vs. English are the examples given, where unmarked subject-only binding (either subject or object binding in English) on the basis of positive evidence, while the reverse process leads to a nontarget grammar. Though admitting that actual transfer data are often incompatible with claims about L2 availability of UG, W. states that evidence still weighs toward this availability.

There is much evidence that L2 grammars overgenerate; the question is the extent to which L1s are responsible for this overgeneration. Helmut Zobl's paper "Prior Linguistic Knowledge and the Conservatism of the Learning Procedure" is an interesting attempt at teasing out the effects of L1s from maturational and other factors in the formation of wide vs. narrow grammars by investigating differential judgments on sentence acceptability tests taken by those for whom English is an L3+ as opposed to merely an L2. It is proposed that already multilingual (ML) speakers will more

readily accept L3+ sentences which reflect more marked, or superset, grammars than will unilingual (UL) speakers learning an L2. Groups of matched MLs and ULs provided judgments on English sentences, both grammatical and not, which exhibited arguably marked syntactic constructions including strict V-O adjacency, movement from VP in IO-DO structures, null NPs, COMP-deletion, superiority, movement from ECM clauses, long-distance wh-movement, and 'picture-noun' movement. In all cases the issue was whether MLs would tend to accept more sentences reflecting a more marked, less default-set grammar. While details remain to be provided of the behavior of particular languages already learned with respect to the parameters in question, there does appear to be a general tendency for MLs to be less conservative in their judgments, hence more prone to NNL over-generalization. These overgenerating IL grammars are related to overall claims that (a) the notion VP is less well-defined in the ILs of MLs, and (b) that c-command "plays a somewhat diminished role in [ML] grammar formation" (p. 192).

*LTLL*, then, offers two new data-based studies purporting to illustrate transfer, one new general theoretical paper, and one new hypothesis concerning fossilization. It is not clear why the volume includes so little new work; judging from the bibliography in Odlin's (1989) book on transfer, it may be that relatively little interesting work has been done since Gass and Selinker (1983). Whatever the reasons, the book contains some almost-classic older articles and some new ones interesting enough to provoke further investigations.

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