

BOOK REVIEWS

LANGUAGE TRANSFER: CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING. Terence Odlin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. 210 pp. ¥2,360.

Language transfer—or the influence of a previously acquired language, usually one's native language, on a second language—has long been a controversial topic among applied linguists and language teachers. In the heyday of contrastive analysis and audiolingualism in the 1950s, it was believed to be the major influence on second language acquisition (SLA). But in the '60s and '70s, with the Chomskyan revolution in linguistics and the emphasis on universal acquisition processes, and as it became clear that contrastive analysis by itself could not predict learner errors, many researchers lost interest in language transfer.

However, the 1980s saw a resurgence of interest in the phenomenon of transfer, as is evidenced by numerous journal articles, and by major collections of research papers by, for example, Gass and Selinker (1983) and Kellerman and Sharwood Smith (1986). Terence Odlin's *Language Transfer* is an ambitious attempt to integrate and interpret the research in a way that is in step with current SLA thinking. The author should be commended for producing a readable introduction to such a complex field.

Odlin gives a balanced overview of the study of language transfer from the perspectives of its historical roots, of problems in the study of transfer, of linguistic subsystems, and of nonstructural factors related to transfer. In contrast to the traditional view represented by Lado (1957), which portrayed native language influence as the central issue in language learning, transfer is now considered as but one factor—albeit an important one—in SLA. Language transfer, of both the positive and negative varieties, is seen to interact with universal processes and language typology, as well as with a complicated array of nonstructural factors, such as personality, age, and social context, in shaping second-language performance.

Language Transfer consists of ten chapters, each of which is divided into numbered sections. Throughout the book, consider-

able cross-referencing of sections has helped to integrate the material and to make it possible for readers to concentrate on topics that are of particular interest to them. In addition, each chapter begins with a clear introduction outlining the material to be covered. The author avoids the use of overly technical terms where possible, and those that are used have been put in a glossary at the end, where reference is made to the sections in which the terms first occur. There is also a very extensive bibliography. These features make the book suitable as an introduction to the field for newcomers, as well as a reference work for experienced researchers in language transfer or other areas of SLA. Nevertheless, certain parts may still prove difficult for the reader who has no background in linguistics.

The first three chapters introduce the phenomenon of language transfer and locate it within the context of SLA and linguistic research as a whole. In Chapter 1, the author notes the primary aim of the book is "to reconsider the problem of transfer in light of recent second language research" (p. 4). He outlines reasons why language teachers and linguists should consider more closely the problem of transfer. Teachers should consider it, Odlin maintains, in order to pinpoint the problems of particular groups of students, and to understand why certain aspects of the target language are difficult or easy for learners. In Chapter 2, a historical overview of the debate over the role of transfer is given. The controversy is traced to the nineteenth-century historical linguists whose main interest was not SLA or language teaching, but language classification and language change; that is, to the debate over whether language change can best be explained by a "tree model," where primacy is accorded to internal development, or by a "wave model," where linguistic borrowing and language mixing are seen as major influences. This debate, of course, parallels that between the contrastive analysts of the 1950s (whose major concern was cross-linguistic influence) and the universalists of the '60s and '70s (whose concern was internal development). Chapter 3 discusses four types of theoretical and practical problems in the study of language transfer: problems of definition (of what constitutes transfer), of comparison (across language systems), of prediction (of when learner errors will occur), and of generalization (in

relation to language universals and linguistic typologies). From these first three chapters emerges the author's perspective that neither an extreme universalist view of language learning, nor a view based exclusively on language transfer, can be supported, and that there is a need for a more balanced type of thinking.

The next four chapters examine empirical studies of transfer in relation to specific linguistic subsystems: discourse, semantics, syntax, and phonology and writing systems. The author makes it clear that this classification is somewhat arbitrary, and that there is considerable overlap among the subsystems. In all areas, however, the evidence points to the importance of language transfer in language learning. But, as this often operates together with factors of language typology and universal processes, it is sometimes necessary to look well below the surface to discover the exact role of transfer.

Chapter 4 may be of special interest to many *JALT Journal* readers, as it discusses areas in which one finds great differences between Japanese and Western languages, and where there is great potential for negative transfer and miscommunication in language learning. This chapter, "Discourse," actually deals with a wide range of studies, including those that many researchers would label as "sociolinguistics" or "pragmatics." The author's survey of research here focuses on two general areas: politeness, including requests, apologies, and conversational style; and coherence, including narrative structure and indirection. In both of these areas, many of the studies presented deal with differences between the Japanese and English discourse systems, and with related communication problems of Japanese learners of English.

One shortcoming of this section is that many of the studies cited point merely to differences between discourse systems (as did early contrastive analyses with phonology and syntax), and do not look at actual learner behavior. However, this can be seen as a reflection of the state of the art in relation to discourse transfer, rather than of the author's approach.

Chapters five to eight review research in semantics, syntax, phonology, and writing systems, respectively. Chapter 5 looks at the role of transfer in propositional semantics (which is closely related to syntax in "if-then" statements, for example, and active

vs. passive voices), as well as in the better investigated area of lexical semantics (e.g., transfer of vocabulary, metaphor, and morphological endings). Chapter 6 concentrates on three areas of syntax where the number of existing studies of both positive and negative transfer is large: word order, relative clauses, and negation. It is in such syntactic studies that the debate over the role of language transfer has been (and continues to be) most vocal, but it is also here where many of the attempts to reconcile language transfer with universal processes have been made. Chapter 7 looks at phonetics and phonology, the area where the role of native language influence is probably the least controversial. In this chapter the author also briefly examines how transfer affects one's performance in a foreign writing system, noting that there is a close connection between language orthography and native language pronunciation.

Chapter 8 is unique in its consideration of factors that are usually not discussed in contrastive studies: that is, "nonstructural" factors. These include personality, proficiency level, literacy, age of acquisition, and social context, among others. Many of these factors are related to individual variation in language learning, and hence pose problems for the researcher trying to describe the collective behavior of members of a linguistic community. In discussing these, the author draws heavily on the research on child bilingualism and on language use in multilingual communities, as well as citing research more directly related to SLA. This chapter should thus be of interest to a wider range of readers than some of the others.

Chapter 9 pulls together the research discussed in the previous chapters and draws out some common themes. Among these are the conclusions that transfer occurs in all linguistic subsystems, that it occurs in both informal and formal contexts, that it occurs among children as well as adults, and that similarities between languages can facilitate learning. A number of areas are then suggested for further research. These include social context, longitudinal comparisons, acquisition of non-European languages, and child bilingualism.

Chapter 10, which considers implications of the research for teaching, might on the surface appear to be the chapter with the

greatest relevance to *JALT Journal* readers. The author's conclusions are decidedly cautious, however, and rightly so, considering the complexity of the phenomenon of transfer and the incomplete nature of the research. Teachers who go into the chapter with the expectation of getting concrete suggestions on how to conduct their classes will be disappointed. The major implication here is that teachers should be aware of the existence of native-language influences in second language learning and that they should take an interest in the language and culture of their students. For most of us, that is certainly nothing new.

Seen as a whole, however, *Language Transfer* holds another, more implicit, message for language teachers. While the research may provide few clues as to how one *should* teach a class, it provides strong clues as to how one *should not* teach. In the same way that research on language universals discredited certain teaching methods, notably audiolingualism, that artificially maximized the role of native-language influence in language learning, so should the research Odlin describes discredit methods that minimize the role of transfer in favor of strong interpretations of linguistic innateness (e.g., the Natural Approach [Krashen and Terrell, 1983]). There is a lot of middle ground between the extremes of native-language influence and linguistic innateness, and it is the language teacher's responsibility to explore—and exploit—this territory.

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BILINGUALITY AND BILINGUALISM. Josiane F. Hamers and Michel H.A. Blanc. Cambridge University Press, 1989. 324 pp. ¥11,900 and ¥4,400.

Since 1953, when U. Weinrich wrote his classic study, *Languages in Contact*, scholars have moved from

the conception of the bilingual as someone whose speech shows interferences and who is at worst cognitively deficient and at best the sum of two monolinguals...to the conception of an integrated person...for whom bilingual experience may enhance cognitive functioning (p. 257).

Bilinguality and Bilingualism not only traces the history of this transition, but also attempts to bring the reader up to date on what the authors call the "state of the art" about bilingualism. In what could be viewed as a "textbook" on the subject of languages in contact, Hamers and Blanc try to introduce all major current theories on the subject, evaluate the experimental evidence to sustain or refute these theories, and indicate areas where further inquiry is required.

The range of scholarship covered in this single volume is extensive. In dealing with bilingualism on the individual, interpersonal, and intergroup levels, the authors adopt a multidisciplinary approach that includes linguistics, psychology, neurology, sociology, and education. Bilingual (French and English) and bicultural themselves, the authors are well equipped to handle the task.

The first six of the book's ten chapters deal with bilingualism on the personal level—what the authors call "bilinguality." The authors begin their study of this phenomenon by discussing the various definitions that have been made of bilinguality, ranging "from a native-like competence in two languages to a minimal proficiency in a second language" (p. 7). They then move on to discuss the systems used to measure bilinguality, concluding that all are inadequate.

Chapter 2, "The Ontogenesis of Bilinguality," notes that early research on bilinguality was conflicting: documented child biographies recorded the "harmonious development of the bilingual child," while early psychometric studies indicated developmental

delay in bilingual children, compared to monolingual peers (p. 31). In trying to determine the cause of this divergence, the authors discuss current research on the development of bilingual children, linguistic mixing, the neuropsychological development of bilinguals, and lateralization of the brain in monolinguals. They also discuss various types of bilinguals, bilinguality, cognitive development, and the role of sociocultural environment on cognitive development in bilinguals. Other topics include infant bilinguality, consecutive bilinguality, endogenous and exogenous bilinguality, additive and subtractive bilinguality, "semilingualism," and code switching and mixing.

By the end of this chapter, the authors have articulated one of the major themes of their work: the difference between additive and subtractive bilinguality. They show that, whereas bilinguality can actually enhance cognitive functioning when both languages are valorized, it can hinder development when a child's first language is not valorized by society at large. Frequently, a second language is used to introduce literacy skills before the child has been prepared for them in his or her first language. This means that subtractive bilinguality is most often a problem of children from minority groups. The authors therefore stress measures that can be taken by educators to prevent this phenomenon in minority children.

This theme is expanded in the book's third chapter, "The Social and Psychological Foundations of Bilinguality." The first two sections of this chapter deal with the development of language in a social context in general, while the third section relates this knowledge to bilinguality.

Chapter 4 tries to develop a model for the workings of the bilingual mind by comparing it to a computer. The terminology here is that of the age of electronics: the authors refer to switching, on-line processing, input, output, memory, storage, and retrieval, though they do not completely accept any current model for the functioning of the bilingual brain.

Chapter 5 begins a transition from the micrological to the macrological level, as the discussion turns to the sociopsychological concepts of culture and identity in the bilingual. The authors move from the individual to interpersonal relations and finally to inter-

group relations, and discuss the effect of group identity on speech patterns, including speech accommodation. They then move on to the way group affiliation effects personal perception of language. The view of languages in contact here takes on darker shades, as we see interethnic strife reflected in linguistic boundaries.

The authors point out that "As with the notion of ethnic group identity (which they had thoroughly discussed), language identity is very much a function of the interlocutor's perceptions" (p. 157). In fact, "what is defined by linguists as one and the same language...may in fact be perceived as different languages by different speakers of that language." They go on to give the example of Hindustani, which is viewed as three different languages because of the different cultural, religious, and political allegiances of the main groups that speak it. And, in what may seem a particularly relevant insight in these days of "language revolutions" in the Soviet Union, the authors note, "Contemporary history abounds in examples of nationalist movements based essentially, though not exclusively, on language demands" (p. 160).

This lengthy discussion of the political ramifications of languages in contact is followed by a chapter on bilingual education solidly based on the lessons of intergroup relations that preceded it. In addition to discussing the various problems of national language planning, this chapter clearly differentiates between the requirements of bilingual education for dominant groups and those for ethnic minority children.

This wide-ranging work concludes with chapters on second language acquisition and translating and interpreting. The former does not discuss teaching methodology, but instead describes the psychological and linguistic principles of bilingual development upon which second language education should be based. It stresses that "there is no simple and easy application of theories of L2 acquisition to L2 teaching" (p. 243), and indeed this chapter seems too abstract for the average foreign language teacher. The final chapter, too, while dealing with a fascinating subject, seems tangential to the major thrust of the work.

As can be seen from this brief outline of its contents, *Bilinguality and Bilingualism* integrates a vast amount of research. Its 42-page reference list—in itself a valuable resource for anyone interested in

bilingualism—includes 851 publications in English and French, the vast majority in English. It is current, with the latest entries published in 1988. Moreover, the cited research comes from fields as diverse as neurology and history, and covers an impressive array of countries and languages.

Although at times descriptions of research are obscured by highly technical terms, the authors are able to deliver balanced analyses of findings. They not only offer an excellent survey of what theories have been proven, but they also provide insightful suggestions as to what remains to be done.

For the reader without a solid background in the field, however, it would be helpful to have explanations of such research methods as longitudinal observation, evoked potential measures, and cross-language flanker technique. The reader unfamiliar with French, German, and Spanish may have trouble understanding descriptions of some experiments involving those languages. Section titles could also be more helpful. For example, the section discussing models for L2 acquisition is entitled "Contrastive analysis, error analysis and interlanguages."

Finally, the section on code alternation, while describing some very interesting studies, remains on too abstract a level to give much insight into this phenomenon. The authors are content to state that, like "code-switching, code mixing can be a bilingual's specific code which enables him to express attitudes, intentions, roles, and to identify with a particular group" (p. 152). Concrete examples of how bilinguals use code alternation to quote, to discuss certain topics, and most importantly, to personalize discourse or create dramatic effects that intensify narratives, would have given more life to the authors' argument that "code-switching can become an autonomous code..." (p.154).

Such faults should not detract from the positive contributions of this work: the volume provides a thorough description of what is known about a very complex subject that has only relatively recently received academic attention.

The authors state that the book is "meant for all those who are interested in language behavior" (p. 4). For many, however, reading selected sections might prove more useful than a cover-to-cover study. For example, parents striving to raise children bilingually

might find great comfort in Chapter 2, Section 3, dealing with bilinguality and cognitive development. Similarly, teachers and those who form education policy in multicultural areas could obtain a clear set of principles on how to prevent subtractive bilinguality in educating minority children (Chapter 8). For any reader, though, difficulties in reading *Bilinguality and Bilingualism* should prove well worth the struggle.

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ESP IN THE CLASSROOM: PRACTICE AND EVALUATION. Dick Chamberlain and Robert J. Baumgardner (Eds.). *ELT Documents: 128, Modern English Publications, 1988. 165 pp.*

In a world where advances in science and technology are being made daily, business is being conducted on multi-national levels, and mass communications are bringing people of all nations together, English has emerged as the medium of exchange. The need for professionals trained in English has become a major concern. The teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has arisen in an attempt to train professionals in the kind of English used in their domain of expertise.

Teachers in the field of ESL/EFL who are required to teach ESP are always on the lookout for resource materials which will give them practical and useful approaches to developing syllabi and course materials. *ESP in the Classroom: Practice and Evaluation* promises to be such a resource guide.

ESP in the Classroom is an anthology of articles originally presented as papers at the International Conference on English for Specific Purposes, held in Sri Lanka in 1985. The book is divided into five sections of three articles each. In their attempt to achieve this symmetry, the editors have at times placed an article in one section when it really belongs in another.

The first section, "Viewpoints," begins with the keynote address by the famous scientist and author Arthur C. Clarke, who lives in Sri Lanka. He notes the importance of English for electronic communications—gaining access to computer data bases, exchanging electronic mail, and so forth. The second article, by Kachru, although rather long and convoluted, points out the specialized needs of ESP at the intranational level. He makes a case for regional varieties of English by drawing a distinction between communications meant for the "inner" versus the "outer" circle. The last article in this section, by Dharmapriya, describes historically the rise of English during the late 1940s in Sri Lanka, and its subsequent decline. He emphasizes, however, that the use of English for science and technology, due to the lack of native language resources and reference materials, has again enhanced

the importance of English in Sri Lanka, as well as in other third world nations.

The second section deals with the teacher and the learner. Strevens makes a distinction within the field of ESP between English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). He states that learners in EAP are usually younger and less goal-oriented, whereas the EOP learners are often older, having worked in a field of specialization, and therefore have specific language objectives. Strevens sees ESP as a professional challenge which may result in general English teachers placing themselves in the new role of "enabler."

Ramani also advocates a "user-based" approach in which task-oriented, problem-solving materials are used. She describes her work with doctoral students in engineering who need English to publish their research findings. She stresses the importance of analyzing the discourse of journal articles; then, with the use of peer interaction, the students produce their own research findings in publishable form. The last article in this section, by Chamberlain, is a rather esoteric discussion about the role of the teacher. Like Strevens's paper, it highlights the teacher's role as language moderator.

The third section attempts to bridge the gap between the classroom and the world of work with a discussion of issues in methodology. Huckin writes that ESP's role is to develop a professional level of communicative competence in English within the frame of a four-year technical education. English courses in the first two years should follow a traditional method of technical textbook analysis and lecture comprehension exercises. In the final two years, the focus should shift to a "case study" method, which would require the development of problem-solving skills and technically appropriate argumentation. Team-teaching with faculty from the technical fields forms a vital component of Huckin's case study approach. Hutchison advocates a process approach to learning whereby students are challenged through the use of task-based assignments to increase their linguistic level to match their conceptual level. Mountford's article deals with materials rather than methods, so it seems misplaced in this section of the anthology. He criticizes available ESP materials as being either too subject

specific or too skill specific. He supports the production of teacher-prepared materials which would fit the needs and interests of the students.

The fourth section of the book addresses issues in the evaluation and administration of ESP programs. Alderson's rather lengthy article gives a good overview of the principles of testing in general, without every targeting the specifics of testing ESP. Pearson's article also is not ESP specific. He writes about the "washback effect" of testing. Teachers teach for exams. If the exams are proficiency based, the teachers will motivate the students toward this end. Tan's article describes in detail the English service department of a large English-medium polytechnic institute in Singapore. Especially interesting is her description of the coordination between the English department and the technical departments.

The final section of *ESP in the Classroom* raises issues in designing and implementing materials. The first article, by Cumaranatunge, does not in fact deal with materials, but describes the process of assessing the English language needs of domestic workers in West Asia. Baumgardner and Tongue advocate the dubious use of contrastive analysis to demonstrate standard English forms. They suggest contrasting non-standard English newspapers (such as can be found in Sri Lanka) with a native-speaker model. This article seems to be in direct opposition to the views held by Kachru (section one). The final article in this anthology, by Baumgardner et al., presents a case study describing materials used in a two-year engineering program in Sri Lanka.

As with any anthology, *ESP in the Classroom* offers some useful articles, while others lack merit for an ESP source book. As ESP is a relatively new field, there is much theory without much practical guidance for the classroom teacher. The title *ESP in the Classroom: Practice and Evaluation* promises more than most of the articles in this volume have to offer.

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