

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the definition of language transfer and discusses the various studies on it. The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Error Analysis which provide the theoretical framework for the study on language transfer are also examined.

However there are various criticisms of the applicability of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis in predicting errors arising from language transfer. These criticisms are noted and the last section of this chapter deals with the current views on first language transfer.

2.2 What is Language Transfer?

2.2.1 Definition

Susan Gass and Larry Selinker (1983) are of the view that in order to understand the process of language transfer, if indeed it is a process, we need to understand what is meant by language transfer, for how one conceives of transfer depends in part on how one defines it. They then gave an account of how linguists and researchers viewed language transfer. Corder (1983) questioned the use of the term "transfer" because of its past association with a particular theory of language and psychology i.e. the behaviourist theory. Corder , prefers to speak of the role of the mother

tongue. This allows a broader interpretation of native language influence than does the word "transfer" as it was used in earlier conceptions.

In Corder's model, borrowing is a performance phenomenon. It does not constitute part of the learning process, but is more appropriately associated with a communicative situation. A learner in a given communicative situation may find himself/herself unable to express a certain concept and will hence "borrow" something from the native language or other languages known to the learner. Structural transfer in Corder's framework is basically a result of successful borrowing. When borrowing is repeatedly successful, the form or forms are incorporated into the interlanguage grammar and, in this sense, is part of learning.

Adjemian (1983, in Gass and Selinker) deals further with Corder's distinction between borrowing and structural transfer, admitting the difficulty in determining the etiology of an error which resembles a native language feature. He argues that in the case of a lexical item, we do not have a case of borrowing if a particular feature of rules appears over an entire class of lexical items, since the learner in this case has internalised some rule which no doubt reflects hypothesis formation. However, with structural transfer, when the learner-grammar has been affected, there will not necessarily be an awareness of the fact that a native language rule or form has been used.

In stark contrast to the traditional view of language transfer, Schachter (1983, in Gass and Selinker) bases her model of Hypothesis-

Theory developed largely by Levine(1975). When learning a particular structure of an L2, learners are guided by the types of hypotheses which they can make and the linguistic domains over which they can make them. These hypotheses and domains are constrained by the learner's previous knowledge. Previous knowledge includes not only knowledge of the native language or other languages known, but is cumulative in that whatever is acquired of the target language becomes part of one's previous knowledge and is thus available for further learning.

As a working definition, language transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired (Odlin, 1989 : 27). In essence, language transfer is a process of using native language (or other language) knowledge in the acquisition of a second (or additional) language.

2.2.2 Types of Transfer

What types of language transfer may be presumed to exist in any situation of native and foreign language contact? Language transfer is one of three kinds:

' *Positive language transfer* ' is identified as a process, which occurs whenever there is a statistically significant predominance in the native language of any one of two alternative linguistic entities, which is paralleled by such predominance in an analysis of the attempted production of a foreign language, the predominant entity being a non-error since it

occurs with an experimentally established norm of that foreign language (Selinker, 1983).

' *Negative language transfer* ' is identified as a process which occurs whenever there is a statistically significant predominance in the native language of one of two alternative linguistic entities, which is then paralleled by such predominance in an analysis of the attempted production of a foreign language, the predominant entity being an error since it deviates from an experimentally established norm of that foreign language (Selinker, 1983).

' *Neutral language transfer* ' is identified as a process which occurs whenever there is no statistically significant predominance in the native language of either of two alternative linguistic entities, which is then paralleled by a lack of predominance in an analysis of the attempted production of a foreign language, one alternative linguistic entity being a non error since it concurs with an experimentally established norm of that foreign language and the other being an error since it deviates from that norm (Selinker, 1983).

2.2.3 First Language Transfer

The main problem that any study of first language transfer meets with is the fact that language transfer is not easily distinguished from the other components of the complex second language learning situation. In other words, there is yet no way of providing direct evidence that transfer has in fact taken place. What researchers had to resort to is intelligent and

informed speculation as to the probable source of influence in the second language systems of learners. They identify as traceable to first language transfer those errors which have parallels in the first languages of their learners; and as traceable to other sources those errors which have no parallels in the mother tongues of their learners (Irene F.H. Wong and Lim Saw Choo, 1983).

From the observation of many cases, the grammatical structures of the first language tends to be transferred to the foreign language. The students transfer the sentence forms, modification devices, the number, gender, and case patterns of his first language.

First language transfer occurs very subtly so that the learner is not even aware of it unless it is called to his attention in specific instances. Even then he will underestimate the strength of these transferred habits which may be as difficult to change when transferred as when they operate in the first language.

The grammatical structures of a language have form and meaning. A good example is the plural inflection in English, with "s" as its form and " more than one " as its meaning. Every structure has distribution, that is, it occurs in certain situations or environments and does not occur in others. In English, the "s" plural occurs in noun heads as in *books*, *telephones*, ect., but it does not occur in modifiers of noun heads as *good* in *good books*, or *telephone* in *telephone books*, ect. In other languages a plural inflection does occur in modifiers of nouns as well as in nouns.

Therefore in transferring a native language structure, the learner transfers its distribution as well as its form and meaning (Lado, 1957).

According to Corder (1983), the part played by the mother tongue is a good deal more pervasive and subtle than has been traditionally believed. It plays a part at the start of learning, in the process of learning, and in the use of the target language in communication. He says that the mother tongue comes in as a heuristic tool in the discovery of the formal properties of the new language, facilitating especially the learning of those features which resemble the mother tongue. By heuristic tool, Corder means that the first language helps or allows a second language learner to discover and learn the second language for himself. Where languages are closest structurally, the facilitating effect is maximal. However, items and features that have been borrowed but which are not similar to the target language may get wrongly incorporated into the interlanguage system, giving rise to error which may sometimes be fairly persistent. The willingness of learners to borrow may be determined by their perception of the linguistic distance between their mother tongue and the target language. Hence learners try to avoid structures which differ from the mother tongue.

In a study of the procedure for measuring and verifying native-language-induced effects in the acquisition of English lexicon, Ard and Homborg (1983) highlighted several points for first language transfer. First, there is abundant evidence for native language influence in lexical learning. We can say where significant differences will occur, although we cannot say

absolutely where they will not. Second, the results of first language transfer depend on a matrix of similarity between native language and target language lexical items. Third, there is evidence for a native language effect even where there is no overt similarity between native and target languages. They further suggested that there are two major reasons why transfer in second language learning has proved to be such an elusive concept, one that many researchers have claimed not to have witnessed in their data. First, definitions of language transfer have been needlessly restrictive, eliminating much of what is important. Second, the devices used for measuring native language influence have been too subjective, too crude, and not sufficiently verifiable. They believed that once better measures are used to investigate native language influence, the effects of one's native language will be shown to be pervasive in second language performance and competence.

It is generally recognised by both theoreticians and language teachers that when attempting to communicate in a second language, second language learners often "transfer" elements of their native language onto the speech patterns of the target language. Gass (1979) remarked that despite the wide recognition of language transfer and the important role it has had in language learning and pedagogical research, its true nature has not been adequately established. She also noted that recent debate has largely centred around the putative existence of transfer as an important variable in second language learning, overlooking the more crucial

questions of (1) what "language transfer" consists of, (2) what language phenomena are and are not transferred, and (3) what constitutes evidence for the existence of transfer. In fact, recent research has primarily dealt with transfer quantitatively. For example, George (1972) claimed that one-third of the errors in his corpus could be accounted for by means of native language transfer. On the other hand, Dulay and Burt (1975) reported that less than 5 percent of the errors in their corpus could be attributed to patterns in the native languages of their subjects. Gass put forward her working hypothesis that, in attempting to understand the phenomenon of language transfer, it is necessary to determine what types of language phenomena are generally transferable.

Broselow (1983) has argued that language transfer does play a significant role in second language acquisition: certain systematic errors can be directly attributed to the use by language learners of a phonological rule in the production of second language forms. He has also speculated on the type of rule which can be transferred - morphologically restricted rules tend not to play a role in second language learning, while general rule such as epenthesis, which function to bring phonological forms into conformity with restrictions on possible phonetic syllable structures, are the ones most likely to be transferred. He has also noted one sort of error which is not attributable to language transfer and has suggested that universal principles of phonological patterning also play a role in accounting for the errors of language learners.

In a study done on word-order transfer, Odlin (1990) has concluded that word order is susceptible both to substratum and to borrowing transfer: that is, transfer of basic word order is possible not only in second language acquisition but also in cases of native-language attrition due to language contact. He has noted that despite the existence of basic word order transfer, examples of it are extremely rare. He offered three explanations for the scarcity of examples of such transfer: probabilistic effects of universal grammatical constraints; observational problems, including insufficient attention to the speech of individuals with low proficiency; metalinguistic awareness, which makes the basic word order of the native and target languages accessible and which encourages the monitoring of negative transfer. There is evidence suggesting that negative word-order transfer is most likely in situations involving little focusing, i.e. situations in which metalinguistic awareness is relatively low.

Irene F. H. Wong and Lim Saw Choo (1983) attempted to identify those errors in the use of English in Malaysia which may be attributed to language transfer. To them, the main problem that any study of first language transfer meets with is the fact that language transfer is not easily distinguishable from other components of the complex second language situation. There is as yet no way of providing direct evidence that language transfer has in fact taken place. Researchers in this area had to resort to intelligent and informed speculation as to the probable source of influence in the second language systems of learners. They try to identify as

traceable to first language transfer those errors which have parallels in the first languages of their learners; and as traceable to other sources those errors which have no parallels in the first languages of their learners.

Their method of investigation is a comparison of English essays written by learners with different primary language background. The research is complicated by the multilingual Malaysian situation and the fact that the primary and unrelated languages, namely Malay and Chinese, have many structural similarities. They hypothesised that many of the errors began as a result of learning strategies, especially those which involve simplification of the target language, whereas errors such as the confusion of tenses are perhaps a result more of intralingual transfer. Intralingual transfer is "items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the first language, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language" (Richards and Sampson 1974 : 6). These errors involve overgeneralisation, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and semantic errors. But the presence of parallels in the first language of the subjects has probably gone a long way towards reinforcing these errors and helping them fossilize, instead of having them replaced by forms which are nearer those of the target language.

In their study, Irene F. H. Wong and Lim Saw Choo (1983) used two groups of subjects, each with a different first language. The first group consisted of a class of Malay students, with Malay as their first language, from a semi-rural school on the outskirts of Alor Star, Kedah, who

can be said to have had very little exposure to English apart from formal instructions in school where they take English as a subject. The second group consisted of Chinese students from a school in Klang, a predominantly Hokkien-speaking area in the state of Selangor. These students would have spent six years of their primary education in Chinese-medium schools with Mandarin as the medium of instruction. They then transferred to a national secondary school in which Bahasa Malaysia, or Malay, is the medium of instruction, by first undergoing an additional year of intensive instruction in both Malay and English, after which they continued with English as a compulsory subject and Mandarin as an optional subject of instructions. Both groups of students were from Form Four, the penultimate year of secondary education (unless they do a further two years of pre-university studies).

Irene F.H. Wong and Lim Saw Choo (1983) concentrated solely on the written mode. The students were asked to write a free composition about themselves, spending about an hour on this. They focussed on the errors made by the students in their use of English. An error-based analysis was used for this study. Numerous errors of various types were found to occur in the two samples. The three major sources of errors appeared to be first language transfer, intralingual transfer, and general strategies of language learning and communication. They classified the errors into various types although such errors could not unambiguously be classified as having resulted from first language transfer. However, they

cannot automatically rule out the influence of language transfer also, since parallels are easily recognizable in the first languages of the two groups of subjects studied. They have grouped the errors into the following classes :

1. Omission of the possessive suffix for possessive nouns.

Example : My father exhibition (meaning "occupation") is a teacher.

2. Omission of the plural noun suffix.

Example : I have four sister and two brother.

3. Omission of verb suffix for the third person singular subjects (Present tense).

Example : She go to school by bicycle.

4. Omission of Be as auxiliary and as main verb.

Example : I studying in form 4.

5. Omission of Do-support in negativization.

Example : I not like a person who is stubborn.

6. Confusion in the use of the articles.

Example : I am Sarawakian Foundation student.

7. Use of Have in place of the existential "there is/are" construction.

Example : In my family have eight children.

8. Confusion of tenses.

Example : Every day in a free time I was singing.

9. Confusion in the use of pronouns.

Example : My best friend is Norma Hashim. I like she.

10. The omission of "to" in verb phrases.

Example : I like eat Satay, laksa, seafood and local fruits.

11. Errors in the matter of word order in noun phrases.

Example : I also take part in some activity school.

12. The transfer of syntax or structure.

Example : We all learn with my uncle money who is a lawyer and a
Member of parliament.

13. Literal translation of Malay expressions to English.

Example : To full my free time I will help my mother.

Sharwood Smith (1983) has commented that contrary to the belief that mother tongue influence should be assigned secondary status in attempts to explain the essential processes that underlie learner behaviour, there are good reasons to support those who wish to realign studies on first language influence in the light of current ideas about common or universal features of languages without rejecting it or characterising it as trivial. In his study on transfer in competence and performance, he distinguishes between the use of the first language in the production and comprehension of utterances in the interlanguage, and, on the other hand, the processes by which the learner perceives and exploits cross- linguistic relationships in order to transform his or her stable, underlying interlanguage knowledge. It allows for the possibility that not every transfer-like pattern in observable performance needs to be ascribed to that stable system, but that some of

those patterns may still be the result of past changes in underlying competence.

Fatimah (1989) did a local study on 20 students of the Intensive English Program at the Centre for Preparatory Education (CPE), MARA Institute of Technology, Shah Alam. Her area of study is on the effectiveness of Contrastive Analysis as a predictive tool of linguistic errors and difficulty of pronunciation. Her findings show that Contrastive Analysis is successful only when it comes to predicting first language transfer of the native Malay speakers of English, but is ineffective when it comes to predicting innovation rules made by the speakers.

Tan Poh Li (1994) did a study on 115 Ausmat (Australian Matriculation) students in the MARA Institute of Technology. This research is concerned with the study of lexical errors produced by Malay ESL learners of English. An important aspect of the study involved an attempt to evaluate the influence of first language transfer on their use of English lexical items. Her findings show that intralingual errors outnumber interlingual errors. Intralingual errors are errors caused by generalisations based on partial exposure to the target language whereas interlingual errors are errors caused by language transfer from the language known to the learner to the target language. Only about 11% of the erroneous forms may be attributed to first language transfer. First language transfer does not seem to be able to account for all the errors committed by the second language learners. Errors which occurred as a result of difficulties found within the target

language itself (or intralingual errors) made up the majority of the errors, that is about 88%.

2.3 The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Error Analysis

2.3.1 The Contrastive Analysis

The practice of Contrastive Analysis is based on the principle that the two types of relationship (difference and similarity) , which usually hold between the systems of two languages, have significant implications for a person who has acquired the use of one, when trying to learn the other as a Second Language(L2). This view arises from the belief, held by many linguists, that there are important differences between a First Language (L1) and an L2 not only in terms of their structure, but also in terms of their learning and teaching methods and situations.

In the acquisition of the L1, the learner is exposed to authentic speech data in the natural environment of the language being learned. He is an active participant in a real-life communication process in which the language is employed in the most intimate domains (e.g. the home). For most people, in contrast, an L2 is learned in the environment of the L1 and usually involves the formal presentation of selected and pedagogically manipulated inauthentic data. In addition, by the time they come to learn an L2, most people have reached what has been termed their "linguistic puberty" (Wolfe 1967) and have therefore lost the childhood facility for language learning. "Linguistic puberty" is the age (about 12 years) where a

person finds it increasingly more difficult to learn a language, be it the first language or the second language, because the innate facility for language learning during childhood is lost. They therefore see the new language "through the filter of the acquired system of their L1".

The principle of 'transfer', on which contrastive analysts base their practice, is that the possession of prior competence in the use of their L1 will influence the learners' perception of the L2. Though contrastive analysts often emphasise the inhibitive role of the difference between language systems, the similarities between them also play a facilitative role. Harris's original equation recognises this fact by describing the system of an L2 as including that of the L1 plus something: $L2 = L1 + (L2 - L1)$, and going on to claim with Fries (1945) that it may prove possible to acquire an L2 merely by learning only the difference between it and the L1, "leaving those features which are identical in both to be carried over untaught".

Nickel and Wagner (1968) also recognise the facilitative effect of similarities between language systems by claiming that the whole system of the second language does not have to be learned afresh, "since much of it will already be familiar because it is similar to the native language". It is the inhibiting influence of the L1 on the learning of the L2 that has engaged the attention of contrastive linguists who have sought, through pedagogical devices, to reduce, if not eliminate, that undesirable influence. This trend is defensible, since the linguist cannot, and need not, do any more about the similarities and their welcome influence.

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis has been divided into a weak and strong form (Wardhaugh 1970). In the “weak version,” the concept is a tool used to account for the errors which actually occur without an attempt to predict what those actually occurring errors will be. Therefore, language transfer in this view is considered as a means of “explaining” a learner’s errors. As such, it can hardly be considered a scientific claim, since it makes no predictions, thus rendering it unfalsifiable. On the other hand, within the “strong version”, language transfer is a basis for predicting which patterns of the target language will be learned most readily and which will prove most troublesome. Therefore, it is claimed that (1) one can compare two languages to determine similarities and differences in structure and (2) similarities are easily learned, while differences result in a greater number of errors.

2.3.2 Error Analysis

Error analysis is the investigation that seek to determine the types and causes of errors (and often the frequency of the various error types). The classification of errors is the basis of error analysis. While error analysis research has done much to show the complexity of acquisition behaviours, it is not without its own problems (Schachter and Celce-Murcia 1977; Long and Sato 1984). One of the major challenges for error analysis is deciding what category to assign a particular error. For example, omitting an article in English may quite arguably be a case of simplification with a Spanish speaker but a case of transfer with a Korean speaker. Aside from

such problems, the error analyses of the 1960s and 1970s often found some evidence of native language influence, even while opinions varied about the importance of such influence.

A local study was carried out by Padmanabhan Nair (1990) on 120 students from two secondary schools in Kuantan, Pahang. His study attempts to investigate the verb structure errors in the written compositions of Form Five ESL learners and to isolate specific areas of learners' difficulties. His findings show that the main problem of language learners was with the tenses. In terms of the categories of errors that were identified, the most problematic area was 'Wrong Forms'. This was followed by errors resulting from 'Omission of Forms', and 'Unnecessary Insertion of Forms'.

2.3.3 Criticisms of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

Despite the evidence of cross-linguistic influence in some error analyses, the credibility of contrastive analysis had been seriously damaged by the 1970s. Some scholars (e.g. Lee 1968; Wardhaugh 1970) suggested that the contrastive analysis had no predictive power and that contrastive studies could only be useful after the fact. In other words, a comparison of the native and target languages would be useful for explaining why certain errors arise, but in the absence of actual data about learners' errors little if anything could be reliably predicted.

Most of the criticisms of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis have been centred on the fact that contrastive linguists have concentrated on the differences between the systems of two or more languages and the

devising of pedagogical methods and materials designed to mitigate the inhibiting influence of the observed differences. The usual approach has been the prediction of the types of transfer problems from the system of one language to that of another, and the suggestion of ways in which such transfer problems can be prevented. At the same time, certain linguists have always frowned on the claim that it is necessary, or ever possible, to predict the transfer problems of second-language learners and go on to devise ways of preventing their occurrence.

One of the questions raised against the predictive power of contrastive analysis is that certain errors known to occur in the L2 speech of certain users/learners cannot be predicted. Such errors, referred to as "L2-independent" by Jain (1974), are traceable to external factors such as mental ability, state of mind, and pedagogical sources, which cannot be predicted. There are also certain unpredictable errors of intralingual influence (such as English "beated", by analogy from "kicked") which are attributed to learning strategies by Richards (1974).

A third aspect of the criticism is that not all of the predicted transfer errors actually occur in the L2 speech of learners. It is also argued that contrastive analysis fails to account for "many errors that learners seems to make" irrespective of his language background. In other words, L2 learners of a particular language often have some error patterns in common, in spite of their diverse L1 backgrounds. Other researchers (e.g. Schachter 1974) nevertheless offered empirical arguments for the predictive ability of

certain kinds of contrastive analysis. How much a contrastive analysis can or should predict has remained a controversial question up to the present.

2.4 Views in First Language Transfer

First language transfer is not entirely a mechanical transference of L1 structures, but is a cognitively complex mechanism involving factors previously uninvestigated in language transfer research. In some cases we are able to predict the range of elements that a learner will or will not transfer. Researchers now view language transfer in a much broader sense, allowing for influences of the native language in form of delay of acquisition on the one hand, more rapid acquisition on the other, overproduction of elements, avoidance and typological organisation (Gass and Selinker, 1983).

Language transfer is a phenomenon currently enjoying revitalisation as witnessed by the 1981 Michigan conference and the 1982 RELC conference; as well as by the contents of current issues of major journals in the field of second language acquisition. If we trace the fortune of first language transfer in language studies, the concept has been somewhat like a pendulum, swinging from all to nothing, and now settling somewhere in the middle. Researchers first considered language transfer, as the major force in second language acquisition, followed by a period when the existence of language transfer was minimised or even denied. We are now in a phase in which the pendulum has stopped swinging, and we are able to look at the phenomenon of language transfer for what it is, dissociated from

any particular theoretical framework. It is these so-called theoretical frameworks that have hampered linguists from providing language transfer with a theoretical basis that can be validated from a scientific point of view. Perhaps the greatest contribution to language transfer studies comes from recent work which takes language transfer out of a particular theory of language learning and places it within a broader framework that essentially encompasses the innate human facility for language learning, indicating that language transfer can be viewed as a significant aspect of second language acquisition within different and even non-compatible theories. The non-compatible theories are essentially the behaviourist theory of language learning, Chomsky's innate theory, Universal Grammar and interlanguage among others.

Hammerly (1991) revisits language transfer claiming that L1 transfer is strongest in "beginners and near-natives" and lowest in intermediate learners. As for the proneness of very advanced learners to L1 transfer, there is evidence to support Hammerly's claim that first language transfer is very advanced among advanced learners. The evidence is found in Gomes da Torre's study (1985) where he identified massive fossilization of L1 transfers in the English of Portuguese university students majoring in English.

Martohardjono & Flynn (1995) have presented data which suggest that in the acquisition of control structures L2 learners ignore what is made available to them in the L1, both in terms of particular grammatical

properties (finite/non-finite) as well as in terms of lexical properties. Instead they resort to a principle of Universal Grammar, minimality, which results in a marked preference for sentences with infinitival clauses. Their data then led them to the following conclusions:

1. L2 learners do not assume that the L2 is like the L1.
2. The Transfer Hypothesis (i.e. construction of the L2 grammar in terms of the grammatical features particular to the L1) fails to explain L2 learners' knowledge of deeper principles as well as systematic errors.
3. Theories that ignore such data will ultimately fail to provide a full account of learners' process of grammar construction and at best provide only superficial descriptions of peripheral phenomena in L2 acquisition.

In other words, according to them, L2 learners do not assume that the $L2=L1$. Transfer theories are inadequate in that they fail to explain both L2 learners' knowledge instantiated in the L1 (movement) as well as their preferences and systematic errors (control). They argue that at best transfer theories describe peripheral phenomena in L2 acquisition and that a principled theory of second language acquisition needs to incorporate a theory of Universal Grammar.

Lesley Wade-Woolley (1999) reported an experiment investigating similarities and differences in basic processing involved in the word reading of second language (L2) readers of English. The investigation

specifically targeted phonological and orthographic processes in context of language transfer from L1 to L2 during reading tasks. Groups of young adults who were native speakers of either Russian or Japanese and low-intermediate ESL learners were matched on a measure of English word reading and then compared on a number of cognitive and linguistic reading-related tasks. The findings of his experiment suggests that speakers of different first languages may bring processing strategies specific to their L1s to the task of reading new and familiar words in a second language, but no differences in accuracy necessarily appear as a result of different strategy use, even when the L1 and L2 orthographies and phonologies vary widely. He argued that these findings are important for two reasons. First, they add further support to the evidence of crosslinguistic transfer effects on L2 reading. Second, they are relevant for researchers studying the relationship between phonological processing and reading difficulties, because they point to a need for a further conceptual refinement of the exact nature of deficient phonological processing leading to reading disability.

Scott Jarvis (2000) argues that much of the confusion surrounding first language transfer could be eliminated if a unified framework were established in this area of enquiry. Such a framework would minimally require transfer studies to consider at least 3 potential effects of L1 influence: (a) intra-L1-group similarities; (b) inter-L1-group differences; and (c) L1-IL (first language-inter language) performance similarities. His study examines all three types of evidence in the English lexical reference of

Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking Finns at multiple levels of age and L2 exposure in three different but related elicitation tasks. The results of the study provide qualified evidence of all three types of L1 effects across tasks and across differences in learners' ages and years of L2 instruction. The results also suggest that learners' referential word choices pattern better according to L1 background than according to other variables. Some effects were found for a few outside factors, such as age, length of English instruction, and task type, but none of these variables produced as consistent effects as did L1 background.

We are now seeing results in language transfer research which in turn stems from the fact that our knowledge about the phenomenon has become cumulative. Researchers are beginning to construct theories based on the work of others. This was not possible when the pendulum was still swinging and when researchers were attacking the work of others rather than building on it. A goal for the immediate future is the accumulation of a larger database of what learners do and do not do. Theories with a broader universal base will ultimately follow.

2.5 Conclusion

There is little doubt that first language transfer has influence over the acquisition of a second language. The bone of contention is only on the extent of the influence of the first language and the intricate, and as yet unexplained, mental processes involved in the transfer. Some of the research on transfer does have implications for classroom teaching.

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The most important implication is that cross-linguistic influence has considerable potential to affect the course of second language acquisition both inside and outside the classroom. There is far too much evidence for anyone who looks closely at the empirical record to be sceptical about the significance of transfer. It is true that much uncertainty remains about many issues related to cross-linguistic influences, and it is undeniably true that researchers are far from able to predict with full accuracy when transfer will occur. However, it is also true that sceptics are far from able to predict when transfer will not occur. First language transfer is thus an important though incompletely understood factor in second language acquisition.