

UDC 81:372.881

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L1 Transfer /L1 Interference in Students' Academic Writing (Theory)

This paper provides a brief overview of theorizing in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Second Language Writing (SLW) regarding how writing can provide insight into how language is learned by outlining contemporary, interdisciplinary research that has emerged in this area. What proponents of integrating these two areas (SLA and SLW) argue is that research adopting more traditional ways of looking at language acquisition often fail to take into account the dynamic nature of the linguistic repertoires of multilingual speakers and developing a more nuanced understanding of the multilingual speakers themselves. Adopting assumptions related to 'adaptive transfer', this paper assumes that interactions between a multilingual language user's language resources are dynamic, idiosyncratic, and culturally fluid. [3] This paper provides the theoretical framework for a corresponding paper looking at a corpus of marked forms generated from the final papers of multilingual Central Asian university students taking an EAP course.

Key words: Second language writing, second language acquisition, English language education, English in higher education.

Элиз Эн, С. Әбдіраманова

Қазақ студенттерінің академиялық жазылым жұмыстарында кездесетін орыс тілі интерференциясы

Бұл мақалада шет тілін оқыту барысында жазылым әрекетінің орны мен маңызы туралы мәселені көтерген теориялық ғылыми зерттеулерге қысқа шолу жасалады. Нақтырақ айтқанда осы салада зерттеу тақырыбын пәнаралық байланыста қарастыратын еңбектерге ерекше назар аударылады. Аталған ұстанымды қолдаушылар тілді оқытудың дәстүрлі әдістерін қолдаушылар көптілді тіл үйренушіде қалыптасқан тілдік білім мен жаңа тілді үйрену үдерісінің өзара ықпалдасатын және оның қозғалыстағы үдеріс ретінде бағаламайтынын басшылыққа алады. Тіл үйренушінің танымында орын алатын ықпалдасу үдерісінің табиғаты сан қырлы. Бұл тіл үйренуші санасында қалыптасқан тілдік біліммен қатар мәдени, аялық білім қорларын қамтиды. Ұсынылып отырған мақала орталық азиялық университеттерде «академиялық ағылшын тілі» курстарын беруде кездесетін қиындықтарды зерттеумен айналысатындар үшін теориялық-әдістемелік негіздерді қамтамасыз етеді.

Түйін сөздер: шет тіліндегі жазылым, шет тілін оқу, ағылшын тілін оқу, жоғары оқу орнындағы ағылшын тілі.

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Интерференция русского языка в академическом письме студентов-казахов

Данная статья дает краткий обзор теоретических работ в области изучения иностранного языка и обучения письму на иностранном языке, в частности, относительно того, какое представление о процессе изучения языка может дать обучение письму. Особое внимание было уделено современным, междисциплинарным исследованиям в этой области. Сторонники интегрирования этих двух областей утверждают, что исследования, основанные на более традиционных способах овладения языком, не учитывают динамическую природу языковых репертуаров многоязычных учащихся, а также не придают значение разработке их более полного понимания. Принимая во внимание предположения, связанные с «адаптивным переносом», эта статья предполагает, что взаимодействие между языковыми ресурсами у многоязычного учащегося динамично, своеобразно и культурно обосновано. Эта статья обеспечивает теоретическую основу для работ, изучающих особенности использования иностранного языка, которые были выявлены в письменных работах студентов центрально-азиатского университета, изучающих «английское академическое письмо».

Ключевые слова: письмо на иностранном языке, изучение иностранного языка, обучение английскому языку, английский язык в высшем образовании.

Introduction

In many ways, texts are like onions. Just like one onion is the sum of all its layers, any final text (whether for class, publishing, or for personal use) is the sum of the writer's experiences, skills, etc. Texts reflect the process of writing (one layer), the writer's language and other training (another layer), and in a classroom or educational setting, the constraints of assignments, assessments, etc. (more layers). Looking at writing production as uncovering these layers then can provide insight into the multifaceted nature of language learning, particularly in the process of developing reading and writing competencies for bi- or multi-lingual language speakers. [1] This article is the theory portion of the project and is followed by a further discussion of the actual project in this same journal.

Language interference and language transfer are terms often used in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research to describe how interactions with and between language speakers' linguistic repertoires takes place. Language interference describes the way that the speaker's first language (or dominant language) may interfere with the production or generation of forms in the target language. Language transfer then refers to the process of carrying over or extending structures, vocabulary or forms from the dominant language into the target language. [2]

However, while this is traditionally how language transfer and interference research has been framed (L1 speakers working in a second language), what this fails to take into account is the dynamic nature of the linguistic repertoires of multilingual

speakers and a more nuanced understanding of multilingual speakers themselves. [3] This paper is an attempt to start exploring this by looking at multilingual Central Asian university students and their writing in the aforementioned advanced English reading and writing course.

Background

In the winter 2012 issue of *The Journal of Second Language Writing*, authors focused on the contribution of and controversies in looking at second language writing in terms of second language acquisition theory and learning. [4] This paper contributes to the discussion by continuing to engage in the discussion between the SLA and Second Language Writing (SLW) interface by focusing on the classroom as a context through which to examine some of the issues raised. [5] What this issue highlighted was the traditional divide between researchers doing SLA research and those doing SLW work. Contributors grappled with the reality that while writing is a part of the language learning process (and therefore a legitimate area of study for SLA researchers), the fact that writing does introduce new variables into the discussion, e.g., the fact that with writing assignments students are often given extended amounts of time to write and rewrite the material thereby not providing sufficient spontaneous linguistic materials.

The special edition journal was followed up by a book edited by Stephen May that brought together researchers working in SLA, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and bilingual education who argued that breaking down

these walls between areas of research are essential to capture the sociolinguistic reality driven in part by this current stage of globalization. [6] Terms that fall under this attempt include 'lingua franca multilingualism,' 'contemporary urban vernaculars,' 'code meshing,' 'flexible bilingualism,' 'metrolingualism,' 'translanguaging,' and 'polylingual languaging' which all have slightly different foci but are all attempts to capture the dynamicity between the linguistic repertoires of language speakers/users. [6] What this discussion continued to problematise was that (1) it is important to no longer make the monolingual speaker the frame of reference in this discussion and (2) the need to challenge notions of native vs. non-native speaker-ness as a relevant category in critical applied linguistics discussions. [6; 7]

Stille and Cummins argued that the concept of 'plurilingualism' better reflects the dynamic nature of an individual's linguistic repertoires. [8] As they noted, the underlying assumption here was that 'individuals draw upon the diversity of their linguistic resources according to changing social contexts and circumstances.' [8] The pedagogical implications of having this type of perspective is teachers see students as having changing identities and choice, being able to access different resources to try and communicate to others. Instead of error correction, the focus is on understanding what is taking place in the language classroom and enabling students to exercise agency, i.e., making the certain language choices versus simply focusing on error correction. In this way, teachers can help students more effectively learn other languages by using their linguistic repertoires more advantageously. [2] Similarly, Martinez noted that empowerment is not just developing rhetorical or socio-cultural competence but also making students (speakers) aware of their linguistic resources. [9]

Conceptually, the problematisation of native vs. non-native-ness as legitimate ways to frame language use can be traced back to the arguments that Braj Kachru have been making since the 1970s. Arguing that seeing and legitimizing English spoken in the 'Inner Circle' countries, i.e., England, the United States, Australia, not only delegitimizes multilingual English language speakers, e.g., English language speakers in post-colonial contexts like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka or Singapore, it fails to recognize the linguistic systematicity that language speakers demonstrate. Thus, the Kachrus argued that instead of categorizing speakers as native or non-native speakers of English, the language

community should recognize varieties of Englishes leading to the concept of 'World Englishes'. [10; 11] Extending the concept to writing, Yamuna Kachru provides an overview of her research regarding World Englishes and writing rooted in a contrastive rhetoric perspective. [12]

Uysal explored this contrastive rhetoric perspective by looking at Turkish language speakers writing in English. [13] The driving question was 'Do writers from shared cultural backgrounds display similar common writing patterns and do these patterns vary when comparing texts written in their L1 vs. L2?' After conducting a study of 18 Turkish expatriates living in the US, Uysal's conclusion was that causality was difficult to establish because there were so many factors that needed to be taken into consideration. But while there were a number of factors that played a role in shaping the final text, there were clear patterns that could be attributed to language and culture which were reflected in the text.

Corpus-based research focuses on looking at generated texts and what patterns emerge when looking at different levels of linguistic materials. Engber focused on the relationship of lexical proficiency to the overall quality of the compositions that were generated by looking at criteria like lexical variation, richness, density, and error. [14] Gledhill conducted a corpus and genre-based analysis of academic articles with the intention of determining how phraseological choices reflect 'instantial knowledge' which is 'knowledge that is determined at the point of expression in the text.' [15, 16] Martinez compared the use of the first person pronoun (plural) in a corpus of biology academic papers produced by native and non-native speaker of English. [9] She found that the greatest variance between the NES and NNE papers occurred in the results section, where the first person was used by NES to show ownership of the results. [9] Taking a mixed methods approach, Li and Schmitt conducted a case study of one international student's writing journey through a one year master's degree program and explored what made a piece of writing 'feel' like a non-native speaker of English wrote it. [17]

Another body of research examines the way these various tools used in corpus-based research could be used to help students deductively determine or learn what words, structures, and forms could be used where. Walker looked at how one teacher used corpus data to see how aspects of the lexis are associated in different disciplines or fields with a focus on collocation formation. [18]

The assumption here was that if the teacher and student take a more inductive approach (that is looking at the data and then developing working rules) this would lead to a more long term impact on the students' language repertoires. Friginal conducted an exploratory study looking at whether corpora could be used to help students develop better writing skills. [19] By taking a quasi-experimental group with a control and experimental group, he provided frequency counts across the groups and distribution of different linguistic features (e.g., links between adverbs, reporting verbs, tense, and passive vs. active sentence structures). Friginal concluded that the most growth seemed to be in the area of linking adverbials (e.g., likewise, similarly, in addition to, for example). [19] He concluded with the question 'how can further research looking at linguistic features (and how students use and learn them) can be enhanced by this type of research?' Durrant argued that helping students use deductive skills in examining corpus data can be used to enable them to become better at understanding and using patterns through these

commonly occurring instantiations (e.g., verb + that) instead of in a decontextualized or abstract word list might help learners get a better grasp of meaning and bias them to using them in more appropriate ways. [20]

Conclusion

As Coxhead and Byrd noted, for the language and writing teacher, there is a tension between trying to teach composition and writing skills while facing the reality that some students do not have the linguistic proficiency necessary to have communicative competence as writers in the language of instruction. [21] This challenge certainly warrants further discussion. However, the aim of this paper was to provide an overview of the type of research that has been conducted on this topic. In the other article in this volume by Ahn and Abdramanova, this theoretical portion is followed up with looking at a corpus produced by 40 students in an university-level, EAP course focusing on research reading and writing.

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