

whether a fixed set of questions are asked from all the subjects or whether subjects are asked different questions based on the nature of the interaction at the time of the interview. The advantage of the structured approach, like the use of closed questionnaires, is in its ease of data classification and interpretation.

An issue related to the use of interviews is whether they are conducted in groups or individually (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Group interviews can be used for small groups, each consisting of 4 or 5 subjects. However, although students may gain better insights into their learning behaviours while being interviewed in groups, there is still the risk of the distortion of the individual's account as a result of other members' reports. That is, students may be influenced by other members' accounts, and they may report using strategies which, in fact, they have never used. That is, subjects responses may be affected by social desirability. "In [small group interviews]... respondents may be fearful of producing a socially unacceptable answer" (Cohen, 1998:29). The degree of formality is another issue which must be taken into account while making use of interviews for data collection purposes. If the interviewer is very formal, the subjects may be reluctant to talk about their affective or social learning strategies. (Cohen, 1998)

Diary studies, as well as dialog journals, provide the researchers with another tool to investigate the learning behavior of L2 learners. In this data collection approach, the learners are required to write retrospective accounts of their L2 learning experience and the techniques they use for improving the efficiency of their learning. Such learner generated accounts can provide the researchers with a wealth of information about

the learners' strategic preferences. However, the researcher will be faced with the problem of structuring and categorizing the data obtained. In addition, since there will be a time lapse between the learning experience and its transformation into writing, some aspects of the experience may be forgotten or distorted.

Researchers can also resort to recollective methods for data collection purposes (Cohen, 1998). "A recollective account refers to a learner's description and interpretation of a language learning experience that took place months or even years before" (p.43). In this data collection technique, learners will recount their target language experience as a whole. The major difficulty with this method is that the subjects may forget many of the relevant details important in language learning strategy research. In addition, it may lead to "highly individualistic and possibly distorted accounts of students' learning experiences" (Cohen, 1998:44). However, recollective studies may result in increased learner awareness, a valuable objective in itself.

Think-aloud, or self-revelation (see Cohen, 1996, for a full description), is another data collection technique in L2 learning strategy research. In this technique, the learner will verbalize his thoughts as he tries to overcome some L2 learning difficulties. The verbal production of the learner is believed to be a reflection of his on-line thinking process. However, there are some caveats that must be borne in mind when think-aloud is used for data collection purposes. In order to obtain rich and relevant data through self-revelation, the subjects must receive training as to how to verbalize their thoughts. This training could be done through the teacher, or sometimes the researcher, acting as a model for the subjects. A danger, however, in the use of think-aloud

is that it may distort the learner's thought processes. The fact that the subjects must think out loud and at the same time solve a learning problem may result in reports which are far from what actually takes place in the learners' mind. In addition, the subject may report what he *thinks* is going on in his mind rather than what is *really* taking place. In other words, learners may be hypothesizing about their mental processes by observing their own products.

Another issue considered important in the use of think-aloud data collection method is the language through which the reports must be provided by the learners. For elementary L2 learners, the use of the L2 for the purpose may prove impossible since the learners are not yet proficient enough to be able to exactly report their thoughts. In such cases, the use of the native language is recommended. However, thinking in the L2 and providing a verbal description in the L1 may interrupt the normal flow of the learner's thought patterns. For more advanced students, there seems to be no major difficulty in the use of the L2. In addition, since it is impossible to obtain verbal reports on large samples, researchers usually rely on single cases or very small groups as subjects. The generalizability of the data in such instances will be highly questionable when we consider the personality factors that influence the learner's approaches to internalizing a second language system. The analysis of the data collected may prove to be a relatively difficult, subjective task.

More recently, some researchers have advocated the use of computer for data collection purposes in language learning strategy research (Cohen, 1998). The problem with computer tracking is the fact that the researcher will have no access to the learners'

mental processes since only behavioral strategies can be investigated through the use of this technique.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Ellis (1994) propose a multiple data collection procedure in which data is obtained through the use of different data collection techniques applied to the same group of subjects. However, such a suggestion raises questions as to the degree of its practicality.

Potential areas for research

A good aspect of learning strategy research is the fact that in spite of the short life of the concept, second language learning strategies have received considerable attention in the professional journals and in language teaching textbooks. There are now a large number of articles and research papers addressing one or more aspects of second language strategy use, and undoubtedly a lot more will be published on the issue in the years to come. It is almost impossible to give a summary of the research done in the area since the number of the studies available is unbelievably large, and there are now numerous studies dealing with personal, cultural, and cognitive aspects of strategy use (though some of them have resulted in conflicting results). In addition, there are now a large number of papers available that investigate the relationship between L2 learning strategies and the learners' proficiency level, their study major, their sex, etc. The addition of intervention studies in which learners have been explicitly taught to make use L2 learning strategies, (Strategy Based Instruction, or SBI) will make the number of the research projects carried out extremely large. One should not also neglect the numerous studies done on the use of learning strategies in mastering the different aspects of the second language, such as

reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, speaking, and listening.

An area which needs immediate research, however, is the development or the validation of data collection instruments for quantifying the strategic behavior of L2 learners. The lack of a reliable instrument has made the comparison of the findings of different studies difficult, if not impossible, and the verification of results an insurmountable task. Even SILL, in spite of its wide application in different research projects, suffers from serious construct validity defects (to be published in another paper).

Another research area, which has not been tried so far, is the influence of the classroom and class structure on the learners' use of L2 learning strategies. It is highly probable that the learners' use of L2 learning strategies will be either positively or negatively affected by the kind of the class they are placed in and the instructional material provided for them. It is also likely that the teacher's personality and attitude toward the learners and the instructional material available will affect the learners' L2 strategic behavior.

Finally, clearing away the present terminological confusion and coming up with theoretically directed and scientifically supported definitions for learning strategies and their diverse manifestations should be one of the priorities of the future researchers in this area. In addition, one can also investigate the question of whether language learning strategies, with their different and at times fuzzy classifications, form any hierarchy in which lower order strategies (if there is, in fact, such a category) are subsumed into higher order ones (Woods, 1997)

Conclusion

Second language learning strategies must be regarded as a teaching asset in the classroom since they help the learners to develop autonomy and independence from the teacher. The fact that these strategies are amenable to instruction means that learners can be assigned a more active role in the class through making them responsible for their own learning. The fact that language learning strategies, unlike other cognitive variables, are under the control of the learners makes further investment and research in this area a worthwhile enterprise.

References:

- Anderson, J.R. (1983). *The architecture of cognition*. Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press
- Anderson, J.R. (1985). *Cognitive psychology and its implications*. Second edition. New York: Freeman
- Bialystok, E. (1990). *Communication Strategies: A psychological analysis of second language use*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell
- Brown, H.D. 1994. *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall International
- Cohen, A.D. 1996. "Verbal reports as a source of insights into second language learners strategies". *Applied Language Learning*, Vol. 7, nos. 1&2, pp. 5-24
- Cohen, A.D. 1998. *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language*. Essex: Longman
- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1989). *Research methods in education*. Third edition. London: Routledge
- Crozier, R.W. 1997. **Individual learners: Personality differences in education**. London: Routledge
- Ehrman, M.E. and Dornyei, Z. 1998. *Interpersonal dynamics in second language acquisition*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Ellis, R. (1986). *Understanding second language*

- acquisition. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Ellis, R.** (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Faerch C. and Kasper, G.** (1987). From product to process-introspective methods in second language research. In **Faerch C. and Kasper, G. (eds.)** *Introspection in second language research*. Philadelphia, Pa: Multilingual Matters
- Faerch, C. and Kasper, G. (eds.)** 1983. *Strategies in interlanguage communication*. London: Longman
- Farnady, H.** 1996. *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Tehran: Payan-Noor
- Flavell, J.H.** 1970. "Developmental studies of Mediated Memory" in **H.W.Reese and L.P. Lipsitt (eds.)** *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*. New York, Academic Press
- Flavell, J.H.** 1976. "Metacognitive aspects of Problem Solving" in **Resnick L.B. (ed.)** *The nature of intelligence*. Hillsdale, N.J., Erlbaum
- Flavel, J.H.** 1979, "Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of psychological inquiry". *American Psychologists*, 34,906-911
- Fontana, D** (1988). *Psychology for language teachers*. London: Macmillan Publishers.
- Hall, S.** 1997. "Language learning strategies: From the ideals to the classroom tasks" Paper presented in Singapore at the World Conference on Thinking, June, 1-6, 1997
- McDonough, S.H.** (1995). *Strategy and skill in learning a foreign language*. London: Edward Arnold
- McLaughlin, B.** (1992). "Conscious vs. unconscious learning". *TESOL Quarterly*, 4, 617-634
- Naiman, N., Frohlich, M., & Todesco, A.** (1978). "The good second language learners" *TEST Talk*, 6, 58-75
- Nisbet, J. & Shuchsmith, J.** (1986). *Learning strategies*. London: Routledge
- O'Malley, J.M., & Chamot, A.U.** (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Oxford, R.L.** (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle
- Oxford, R.L.** (1994). "Language learning strategies: An update". *Eric Clearinghouse on languages and linguistics*
- Oxford, R.L.** (1996). "Employing a questionnaire to assess the use of language learning strategies". *Applied Language Learning*, 7,25-45
- Rubin, J.** (1975). "What the good language learner can teach us" *TESOL Quarterly*, 9, 41-51
- Rubin, J.** (1987). "Learner strategies: Theoretical assumptions, research history and typology". In **Wenden, A.L., & Rubin, J. (eds.)** (1987). *Learner strategies in language learning*. Hemel Hemstead: Prentice Hall International
- Rubin, J.** 1981. "Study of cognitive processes in second language learning". *Applied Linguistics*, 11: 117-31
- Schmidt, R.W.** 1990 "The role of consciousness in second language learning". *Applied Linguistics*, 11,129-158
- Stern, H.H.** 1983. *Fundamental concepts of language teaching*. Oxford: OUP
- Tarone, E.** (1983). "Some thoughts on the notion of communication strategies". In **Faerch, C. & Kasper, G. (eds.)**. *Strategies in inter language communication*. London: Longman
- Tarone, E.** 1981. "Some thoughts on the notion of communication strategies". *TESOL Quarterly*, 15:285-95
- Wenden, A.L.** 1998. "Metacognitive knowledge and language learning". *Applied Linguistics*, 19, 515-537
- Woods, D.** 1997. "Decision-Making in Language Learning: A Lens for Examining Learner Strategies". *The Language Teacher Online*. URL: <http://Langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp/jalt/pub/tlt/97/oct/woods.html>
- Williams, M. & Burden, R.L.** *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivis approach*. Cambridge: CUP

A New Dimension of Contrastive Linguistics

Mohammad M. Fallahi
Professor of Linguistics and TESOL
Iran University of Science and Technology
Tehran

چکیده مقاله

کاربرد زبان شناسی مقابله ای در زبان آموزی، مدت هاست که بعد جدیدی از نظر تحلیل اشتباهات زبان آموزانی که زبان انگلیسی را در ایران به عنوان زبان خارجی می آموزند، فراهم کرده است. امروزه مدرسان اعتقاد راسخ دارند که: «علت تعداد قابل ملاحظه ای از اشتباهات زبان آموزان را می توان در تداخل زبان مادری در زبان خارجی پیگیری کرد.» در این مقاله مؤلف بر آن است که فزاینده های از نظام واژگانی انگلیسی را با برابری های خود در زبان فارسی مقایسه کند و از این رهگذر نشان دهد که چگونه واژگان انگلیسی می تواند در فرایند یادگیری از صافی ساختارهای فارسی عبور کند و در نهایت موجب بروز اشتباهات یا لغزش هایی در بیان نوشتاری یا گفتاری زبان آموزان شود.

Abstract

The application of contrastive theory to the study of foreign language-learning has for a

long time added a strong dimension to the discussion of errors made by the students learning English as a foreign language in Iran. Teachers now believe that they have a principled means for accounting for a good number of errors, namely those that are result of interference in learning a foreign language from the habits of the first language. In this article, the author examines several representation relationships between English and Persian lexical systems concentrating on the notion of transfer which has been so powerful an element in its pedagogic appeal.

1. Introduction

1.1. Terence Odlin (1989) asserts that when

people hear a speaker with a **foreign accent**, they often try to guess the speaker's background. Sometimes racial features and sometimes a style of clothing will help listeners guess correctly, but often the only reliable clue seems to be how the individual talks. In such cases, questions put to the speaker such as "**Are you German?**" or "**Are you Spanish?**" suggest an intuition about the nature of language, an awareness, however unconscious, that the native language of a speaker can somehow cause the individual to sound **foreign** in speaking another language.

The detection of foreign accent is just one example of the awareness that people may often have of cross-linguistic influence, which is also known as **language transfer**. That awareness is also evident from time to time in other linguistic phenomena such as semantic, syntactic and lexical features that people use while communicating the foreign/second language.

1.2. In the flourishing days of structural linguistics and the pattern practice, language teaching methodology which derived insights from such an awareness and applied it to linguistic description, nothing seemed of greater potential value to language teachers and language learners than a contrastive description of the learner's mother tongue and the target language. If one could juxtapose the structures of the native language against those of the target language, course designers, teachers and learners would be better able to plan their learning and teaching; better able to foresee difficulty and consequently better able to manage resources and direct learning and teaching effort (James: 1987).

1.3. Yet, in the 1970's the bubble seemed to

burst; contrastive analysis no longer claimed as much pedagogic attention, although, significantly, the decade saw the establishment of major contrastive linguistic projects, especially between English and European languages, e. g.: German, Polish and Serbo-Croat.

Fisiak (1981) in his preface to **Contrastive Linguistics and Language Teacher** indicated that "despite strong critical voices, coming particularly, although not exclusively, from America, a large number of applied linguists and language teachers in Europe and elsewhere have found applied contrastive linguistics useful in language teaching, materials development and the analysis of errors" Accordingly, Odline (1989) asserted that despite the counterarguments, there is a large and growing body of research indicating that transfer is indeed a very important factor in second language acquisition.

1.4. In recent years, however, a more balanced perspective has emerged in which the role of transfer is acknowledged and in which transfer is seen to interact with a host of other factors in ways not yet fully understood. This reassessment of the significance of language transfer is lucidly demonstrated in the new addition to Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series. In his timely book called **Language Transfer**, Terry Odlin (1989) presented a comprehensive and original amount of the nature of language transfer and its role in second language acquisition. He documented the historical development of the concept of language transfer, explored the role of transfer in discourse, semantics, syntax, lexicon, phonology, and writing systems, and examined the way language transfer interacts with

linguistic as well as cultural, social, and personal factors in second language learning and use. In the process, he surveyed a large body of literature and examined data from many different languages.

1.5. To contribute to this worldwide reassessment of contrastive analysis, the author is intended to produce a model analysis of contrastive study associated with a certain number of English and Persian lexical items in order to delineate the pedagogical implications of transfer theory in Persian language learning criteria.

2. Contrastive Lexical Model

In order to provide a model analysis, we may find five kinds of relationship between the lexical components of English and Persian as follows:

2.1. One-to-One Representation Relationship (One Lexical Item in English Standing for One Corresponding Item in Persian):

2.1.1. To understand this kind of relationship let us consider the English words: **house** and **home**. In English these two words both denote the same thing--**dwelling**, with different connotation. In Persian, too, **xaane** "**house**" and **manzel** "**home**" both denote the same thing-- **maskan** "**dwelling**" with exactly the same connotations. It means that the words **house** and **xaane** both usually mean a building which serves a living quarter. In the same manner, the words **home** and **manzel** mean a family's place of residence as a social unit. The consequence of this observation is that a Persian speaker, finding these two English words sharing the same denotative and connotative values in Persian, realizes very

close similarities between them and, therefore, develops insights into these two new words without any difficulty. The learning burden in this case is chiefly that of learning a new form, **house** or **home**, for a meaning already habitually grasped in the native language.

However, the pedagogical problem with this category is that the Persian students most often assume that the words of their native language should always represent the natural labels for the corresponding words in English. They can hardly realize that the modes of expression differ in both English and Persian as a function of linguistic structure combined with difference in culture making, thus, impossible to work within the semantic structure of their native language in learning English lexicons.

2.1.2. To indicate the mother-tongue transfer concerned with such a presupposition, let us consider the group of **Prepositional Objects in English vs. Dissimilar Prepositional objects in Persian**.

The following examples will delineate the problem:

Chart 1

1E.

I	apologized	to	him
		Prep.	Obj.
Np1	Tr. V	Np2	

1P.

man	az 'from'	oo	mazerat xaastam
	Prep.	obj.	
Np1	Np2		Tr. V

Interlingual transfer: I apologized *from him.

2.1.3. Other examples of this group are(1) to plead **with** somebody: **be** "to" kasi eltemaas

kardan ⇒ to plead ***to** somebody; (2) to complain **of** (or **about**) somebody: **az** "from" kasi šekaayat kardan ⇒ to complain ***from** somebody; (3) to insist **on** (or **upon**) somebody: **be** "to" kasi esraar kardan ⇒ to insist ***to** somebody.

2.1.4. What we learn from the aforementioned examples is that although the denotative and connotative values of certain words in English are sometimes translatable into the same values in Persian, there are many lexicons in this group of words that are not the same in all their structure and thus a complete sameness is not to be expected in language behavior concerned with this category of lexicons

2.2. Divergent Relationship (Several Lexical Items in English Standing for Only one Lexical Item in Persian)

2.2.1. This kind of relationship is a mechanism of direct mother-tongue transfer in the acquisition process of lexicons. In this mechanism, a Persian speaker is encountered with different English lexical items to which he finds only one corresponding counterpart in Persian. For instance, the English words **land**, **earth**, **globe**, and **ground** all stand for only one Persian word: **zamin**.

2.2.2. Let us consider the following examples:

2E. My friend owns a piece of **land** in Tehran.

2P. doostam dar Tehran yek gatch **zamin** daarad.

3E. The **earth** revolves around the sun.

3P. **zamin** dore xorsid migardad.

4E. The **globe** is a planet inhabited

by man.

4P. **zamin** sayyaareh ist ke be se-koonate bašar dar aamadeh ast.

5E. The electric circuit is connected to the **ground**.

5P. madaareh electriki be **zamin** vasl šodeh ast.

2.2.3. A Persian-speaker assuming that his native language has a word to word correspondence to English tends to make the following errors without being aware of the fact that each of those lexical items in English has a certain application in a given context.

6E. My friend owns a piece of ***earth** in Tehran.

7E. The ***land** revolves around the sun.

8E. The ***ground** is a planet inhabited by man.

9E. The electric circuit is connected to the ***globe**.

2.3. Convergent Relationship (Several Lexical Items in Persian Standing for Only One Corresponding Item in English)

2.3.1. In this category several lexical items in Persian may correspond to only one lexical item in English. For example, the Persian words (1) **bahaar** (**spring**: the season between winter and summer); (2) **česme** (**spring**: a natural issuing of water from the ground); (3) **phanar** (**spring**: an elastic device, as a coil of wire, that regains its original shape after being compressed or extended), and (4) **Jast-o-xiz** (**spring**: the act of jumping up or forward), all stand for only one English corresponding word: **spring**.