

LA TRANSFERENCIA LINGÜÍSTICA: PERSPECTIVAS ACTUALES

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175

Although language transfer is not a frequently discussed topic, it attracted the interest of researchers even before the 20th century. Attention to the phenomenon intensified in the mid-20th century when authors such as Fries (1945) identified the role of L1 in learning second languages. Since then, the concept of transfer has been explored in relation to different theoretical perspectives, currents of thought, and teaching methodologies (Odlin 1989; Gass and Selinker 1992). This polyhedral concept is presented in a recent work by Rosa Alonso Alonso, professor and researcher at the University of Vigo (Spain), who works in the field of language acquisition and applied linguistics. She specializes in the role that languages play in the learning of other languages. In this work, published in the “Interlingua” collection by Editorial Comares, the aim is not to provide new perspectives on the subject but rather to offer a global overview of the concept for those, especially students, who do not have sufficient command of English to access the vast literature on the subject. This ambitious project condenses a diachronic and synchronic review of the most important internationally published works on the subject in roughly 120 pages. It also aims to fill a gap in the literature, since there have been no previous studies of this nature in Spanish.

The first chapter offers a historical review of the concept of transfer. It explains where we come from and where we are going and shows why transfer is regarded

today as beneficial for language learning. It concentrates on the major trends —generativism, cognitive perspective, interlanguage, etc.— based on which a theoretical and applied approach is used. The presentation of theories helps to explain how some currents are informed by others and how the concepts associated with transfer are interwoven. Since the text has a strong pedagogical focus, it contains graphics (too few, perhaps), definitions of concepts, conclusions, and a collection of effective examples that help the reader to understand the theories. However, readers of this text, who are likely to be primarily neophytes in the subject, may be overwhelmed by so many new and complex concepts. The chapter ends with the idea that transference and fossilization were the greatest achievements of the previously mentioned trends.

In order to better understand the concept of transfer, all of its various characteristics are considered in Chapter 2. The 1990s were the key period for the study of the relationship between language and cognition. The concepts derived from this relationship and presented in this section include directionality, positive and negative transfer, transferability, rhythm and route, linearity, perception and production, etc. Each section starts with key authors, presents examples and ideas, and formulates questions yet to be answered. The main objective is to demonstrate that interlinguistic influence is a complex phenomenon determined by multiple variables (age, mother tongue, context, etc.). At all times the author tries to elucidate —albeit with varying success— the relations between these ideas and the theoretical advances discussed in Chapter 3.

176

In Chapter 3, the author highlights the absence of shared ideas among current theoretical models. This chapter offers a detailed description of the current fundamental theories: the inhibitory control model (Green 1986), the competition model and the unified model (MacWhinney 1987), the generativist universal models, and finally linguistic relativism beyond the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Carroll 1956). The examples provided are not only linked to adulthood (see p. 45), and the concept of transfer is always approached from an interdisciplinary perspective. Moreover, the author extensively explains the transfers that occur at the conceptual level and investigates the mental representations that flow between L1 and L2 (Jarvis 2007).

Chapter 4 focuses on new technologies and innovative data-collection procedures. This chapter discusses a new stage in studies of language transfer, placing emphasis on the importance of nonverbal communication and new technologies (magnetic resonances, eye tracking, etc.). Although traditional tools used in the field of transfer studies (grammatical judgments, discourse analysis, etc.) are ignored, these tools could be very useful for potential studies proposed by the author throughout the work, which include longitudinal ones. This is especially

important bearing in mind that this work is intended for those with no expertise in the field.

Chapter 5 defines the concept of transfer using the language acquisition approach. Specifically, it addresses the contemporary multilingual reality that introduces new aspects into the paradigm. The author mentions the importance of an in-depth analysis of L3 acquisition models: prediction models, empirical models, and linguistic processing models. However, it is explained that despite the differences between them, all these models have proven the influence of languages other than L1 on language learning. Again, concrete examples from a variety of languages help to explain these phenomena and identify future lines of action.

Chapter 6 follows on from the ideas discussed in Chapter 4 and deals with the following three topics: the use of L1 in the classroom, various approaches to teaching and classroom activities, and native and nonnative teachers. It is surprising, however, that the *Common European Framework* (Council of Europe 2001) is not mentioned until this chapter despite the fact that the concept of transfer is central to the Framework and that the document helped to generate the concept of transfer as it is used today. Neither is there any mention of socio-constructivism, which is the basis for the models of language teaching (L2, L3, Ln) most widespread in the West today, and in which transfer is a key element. Finally, after emphasizing the need to break the myth that native speakers are better language teachers, in Section 6.3 the author goes on to describe the Integrated Multilingual Approach. The description of this new approach is superficial, not effectively linked to the communicative approach, and is only contextualized in Catalonia. In light of this, it should be emphasized that the Integrated Plurilingual Approach, or Integrated Language Treatment (“Tratamiento Integrado de Lenguas”), is the educational model in force in the Basque Autonomous Community (Gobierno Vasco 2020) and aims at creating synergies between school subjects so that transfer between languages can be facilitated. The model therefore represents a whole curricular revolution that is already being applied in different contexts. Since the book deals with current perspectives, it would have been interesting to delve into this topic further.

All in all, *La transferencia lingüística: perspectivas actuales* is a highly informative treatise, aimed at those who wish to discover the world of transfer and obtain clues on what to read, how to research, or how to teach. In addition, it is a rich source of ideas about the questions that remain open and that can stimulate readers to continue exploring the research field of linguistic transfer.

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