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THE ROLE OF L1

Reflection

- Recall (reflect on) your personal experience in learning English (especially at the early stage of your learning).
- How did your first language influence your learning?
- What influences were they?
- How did you express ideas in the target language at that stage?

Understanding TERMS

- First language (L1) = mother tongue = native language
- Second language (L2), foreign language (FL), target language (TL)
- Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Behaviourist Learning theory:

- Learning is a habit formation: a habit is formed when a particular stimulus becomes regularly linked with a particular response.

Perception about habit

- Old habits inhibit/prevent the learning of new habits. Thus, L1 interferes SLA.
- This theory predicts that transfers (negative and positive) will occur from L1 to L2.

transfer

- Ellis (1994): "L1 transfer refers to the incorporation of features of the L1 into the knowledge system of the L2 which the learner is trying to build."

transfer

“[transfer is] the use of the native language (or other language) information in the acquisition of an L2 (or additional language)”

Gass (1996: 321)

“[transfer is] influence that the learner’s L1 exerts on the acquisition of an L2”

Ellis (1997: 51)

Transfer Realization

- Facilitation
- Avoidance
- Over use (overgeneralisation)

(Ellis, 1994)

Negative transfer

- Negative transfer will result in errors (as L1 and L2 are different).

Positive transfer

- Positive transfer WILL NOT result in errors (as L1 and L2 are similar).

Positive transfer

- **is transfer which makes** learning easier, and may occur when both the native language and the target language have the same form.
- E.g., both French and English have the word *table*, which can have the same meaning in both languages.

(AL. Dictionary/Longman)

Negative transfer/ interference

- **The** use of a native-language pattern or rule which leads to an ERROR or inappropriate form in the TARGET LANGUAGE.

E.g. : a French learner of English may produce the incorrect sentence

I am here since Monday.

instead of

I have been here since Monday

(Je suis ici depuis lundi = "I am here since Monday").

Differences of L1 and L2

- Differences in L1 and L2 will create learning difficulties while similarities will facilitate learning.

Errors

- Errors should be avoided. Errors are evidence of non-learning.
- Attempts must be made to predict when errors will occur by comparing learner's L1 and L2 (Contrastive Analysis/CA).

Contrastive analysis

- Strong form: all errors can be predicted by identifying the differences between L1 and L2.
- Weak form: only diagnostic.

Results of comparison:

1. No difference
2. Convergent phenomena
3. An item in L1 is absent in L2
4. An item in L1 has a different distribution from the equivalent item in L2
5. No similarity between L1 and L2
6. Divergent phenomena

Order of difficulty

- In terms of learning difficulty, 1 to 6 above are ordered from zero to greatest. (Is this the case?)
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Criticisms of CA hypothesis

- Empirical research
- Theoretical criticisms: Chomsky's attack on the behaviorist theory
- Practical criticism: linguistic aspect (descriptive basis of the comparison)

CA: Reappraisal

- The learning difficulty predicted by CA might be realized as avoidance instead of error
- Interference is more likely to occur when there is some similarity rather than when there is a total difference
- Error is a multi-factor phenomenon

Avoidance

- when speaking or writing a second/foreign language, a speaker will often try to avoid using a difficult word or structure, and will use a simpler word or structure instead.
- This is called an avoidance strategy.

Avoidance Strategy

a student who is not sure of the use of the relative clause in English may avoid using it and use two simpler sentences instead:

- *That's my building. I live there.*
- instead of
- *That's the building where I live.*

