

淡江大學九十學年度碩士班招生考試試題

系別：西洋語文研究所

科目：英文作文

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Methodological Rigor in the Study of Transfer:
Identifying L1 Influence
in the Interlanguage Lexicon

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Numerous conflicting claims exist concerning the nature of L1 influence. This article argues that much of the confusion could be eliminated if a unified framework were established for this area of inquiry. 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 performance similarities. This 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 suggest a subtle yet demonstrable presence for L1 influence in this area of interlanguage performance.

Perhaps no area of second language research has received as much attention and remained as elusive as the influence of the first language (L1). Despite the myriad studies that have been conducted in this area over the past four decades, there still remains a surprising level of confusion in the field concerning when, where, in what form, and to what extent L1 influence will manifest itself in learners' use or knowledge of a second language (L2). One area of confusion concerns the degree to which L1 influence accounts for learners' interlanguage (IL) production errors: The reported levels of L1-induced errors range from an almost negligible 3% to a striking 51% (Ellis, 1985, pp. 28-30). Such a considerable discrepancy, according to Ellis, is probably partially due to differences in experimental design between different studies (e.g., differences in language level, task type, learners' ages, L1-L2 typological proximity), and ultimately to "the lack of well-defined and broadly-accepted criteria for establishing which grammatical utterances are the result of language transfer" (Ellis, 1994, p. 29).¹ Until now, L1 influence has been treated largely as a you-know-it-when-you-see-it phenomenon, and although most researchers may indeed recognize L1 effects when they see them, the lack of consensus concerning what L1 influence is and how it should be investigated may mean that different researchers have not seen (or even looked for) the same effects.

A second area of confusion involves the findings of studies that investigate constraints on L1 influence, or factors that interact with it (e.g., Ellis, 1994, p. 342). Chief among these constraints is L2 proficiency. Before considering the research, one can deduce six possible directions that L1 influence might take in relation to L2 proficiency:

1. L1 influence *decreases* with increasing L2 proficiency.
2. L1 influence *increases* with increasing L2 proficiency.
3. L1 influence *remains constant* with increasing L2 proficiency.
4. L1 influence *ultimately decreases, but nonlinearly*.

5. L1 influence *ultimately increases, but nonlinearly*.
6. L1 influence *ultimately never decreases nor increases, but its presence continually fluctuates* as L2 proficiency increases.

Although 1-6 represent the range of logically possible directions that L1 influence could take in relation to L2 proficiency, hardly anyone would a priori assume that the results of transfer studies would support all six. Yet, this is essentially what one finds when reviewing even just the relatively recent literature. That is, some studies have shown that L1 influence decreases with IL development (e.g., as the learner gains awareness and control over L2 conventions; in grammar see Dommergues & Lane, 1976; Jansen, Lalleman, & Muysken, 1981; Seliger, 1978; Taylor, 1975; in lexis see McClure, 1991; Sjöholm, 1995; in phonology see Major, 1986; Wenk, 1986), whereas others have shown that L1 influence increases with IL development (e.g., as the learner acquires the L2 tools necessary for expressing his or her L1-based perspectives; in grammar and lexis see Hyltenstam, 1984; Klein, 1986; Klein & Perdue, 1993; Wode, 1977; in pragmatics see Takahashi & Beebe, 1987). Still other investigations have suggested that L1 influence neither increases nor decreases with proficiency (in lexis see Hiki, 1995; Poulisse, 1990; Takahashi & Tanaka, 1992; in phonology see Bohn & Flege, 1992), or that it fluctuates substantially before taking a terminal direction (in lexis see Engber, 1992; Jarvis, 1998; Jordens, 1977; Jordens & Kellerman, 1981; in phonology see Sato, 1987; Wieden, 1990). As before, the gross inconsistencies among findings related to L1 influence make one wonder whether transfer researchers have truly been investigating the same phenomenon.

A final example of confusion concerning L1 influence has to do with theoretical assumptions. One of the basic tenets of the original Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was that "the greater the linguistic difference between some aspect of the L1 and the L2, the greater the likelihood of interference" (Kellerman, 1995, p. 126; referring to claims made by Fries, 1945; Lado, 1957; Stockwell, Bowen, & Martin, 1965). This assumption was later replaced by its opposite, as the findings of transfer-related studies especially in the 1970s and 1980s showed that similarities rather than differences between the L1 and L2 account for most of the attested instances of L1 influence (e.g., Andersen, 1983; Kellerman, 1983; Ringbom, 1987; Wode, 1978; Zobl, 1980). The field's current understanding of L1 influence, however, as represented in Kellerman's (1995) *transfer to nowhere* principle, is that "transfer can now come about through both similarity and difference" (p. 142; cf. Odlin, 1989, p. 27)—a claim that "may seem strange since the net result is a step backward" (Kellerman, 1995, p. 142).

Thus, in a certain sense, transfer research has come full circle. This does not, of course, mean that no progress has been made in this area of inquiry; after all, the field's knowledge base and understanding of L1 influence have increased considerably over the past three decades, and the current state of the art is far more sophisticated than at any time in the past (Ellis, 1994, p. 339). On the other hand, it is still unsettling to witness the level of confusion that remains in the field, particularly in the form of conflicting claims made about the nature of L1 influence and its interaction with other factors. In the following section I explore some of the possible reasons for the contradictory findings, and I propose a minimal set of methodological standards that might be adopted by researchers who work in this area in order to ensure that our results are mutually comparable and that our findings can truly be generalized. After outlining the standards, I report on a study that adopted these measures.

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Attached is an excerpt from the introduction of the article "Methodological Rigor in the Study of Transfer: Identifying L1 Influence in the Interlanguage Lexicon" by Scott Jarvis (*Language Learning* 50:2, June 2000, pp245-309). Write an essay in which you summarize Jarvis's main point(s) and then give your response to some aspect of his excerpt from the point of view of an English learner or teacher in Taiwan.

Assume that your reader will NOT have access to the Jarvis article. Carefully attribute the information in your essay so that it is clear which ideas in the essay are from Jarvis (or his sources) and which are your own. Your summary of Jarvis and any other use of material from the article must be in your own words (paraphrase or summarize) or appropriately quoted.

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