

A Study of “ Language Transfer ” in the Case of the Loan Word *Recycle*

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和文要旨：本論文では「転移」に関し扱った。言語的に異なる範疇に属する英語と日本語であるので、一般的には「転移」は生じづらいと考えられている。だが、言語的に離れている両言語であっても、学習者が心理的に近いと感じることのできる状況においては、「転移」が生じるのである。その際には、中核的要素の有無が転移発生のきっかけを作るのである。外来語の「リサイクル」を一例として実験を行い、「転移」の発生を調査した。

【キーワード】 転移、中核的要素、心理的類型、リサイクル

Abstract : This paper discusses language transfer from Japanese to English. Since the two languages are in linguistically different categories, it seems that language transfer rarely occurs. The fact is that it does occur in a certain situation. Transfer is more likely to happen in accordance with the learner's perception of NL-TL distance. Whether or not a language learner adopts a transfer strategy in such linguistically distant languages as Japanese and English is up to his/her psychological perception of the languages. In the case of distant languages, core elements also play an important role for the learner to perceive the TL to be close enough to transfer. This is to be proved by an experiment.

【Keywords】 transfer, core elements, psychotypology, recycle

1. Introduction

Lado first introduced the term “ transfer ” in his book *Linguistics Across Cultures* (1957). Since then many linguists have been discussing language transfer. This view went from full acceptance to non-acceptance and then again to full acceptance. Gass and Selinker define the phrase language transfer in their book (2001, p.456) as follows:

The use of the first language (or other languages known) in a second language context

Shibuya elaborates this in his article (2003, p.31)

In cases where L2 learners lack knowledge of some form in the TL but have to use the TL they may be prepared to convert NL into TL forms to circumvent the knowledge

deficit when they feel both languages are similar enough to each other. In instances where the L2 learners feel some element to be very particular to the NL, however, they may be unlikely to assign those elements to TL equivalents when they produce the TL.

Language transfer, which is also called cross-linguistic influence by Kellerman and Smith (1986), is further argued by Gass and Selinker (2001, p.131). They maintain that there are three interacting factors in the determination of language transfer.

- (a) a learner's psychotypology, how a learner organizes his or her NL
- (b) perception of NL-TL distance
- (c) actual knowledge of the TL

Psychotypology is understood as the learner's perception of NL-TL distance: how the learner views the structures of the TL or how close or remote the learner feels the TL to be.

2. When does language transfer take place?

Shibuya (2003) states that transfer is more likely to happen in accordance with the learner's perception of NL-TL distance. That is to say, it does so with the learner's perception of the psychotypology. Just like the word *perception* implies, psychotypology is the degree of language closeness based on a learner's perception of the distance between the NL and the TL. It does not necessarily mean the actual distance of the two languages. This psychotypology is "rather subjective, individual, and language-based" (Shibuya, p.35). It could be rephrased that a learner's psychotypology is not static. It will change as his/her knowledge about that TL grows.

Gass and Selinker (2001) revises Kellerman's model of language transfer. In the figure revised by them, Kellerman's concept of coreness is explored. They go so far as to say that they can predict where transfer will and will not occur. They continue:

The greatest likelihood of transfer is in core elements, regardless of perceived distance. The second area of probable transfer is between languages perceived as close (e.g., Spanish/Italian, Dutch/German), regardless of the status of core versus noncore elements. (Gass and Selinker, p.131)

The following figure clearly illustrates as to where transfer will and will not occur.

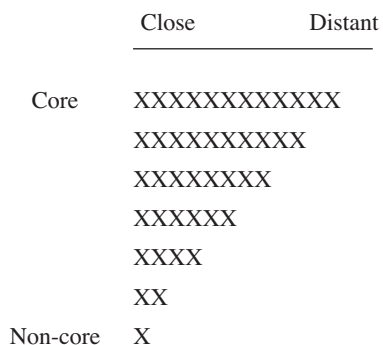


Figure1 (Gass and Selinker, p.131)

The Xs in this figure indicate the extent to which the NL is expected to influence the L2. What should be noticed here is, just as discussed so far in this paper, the degree of language closeness is based on a learner's perception of the two languages. The figure also indicates the greatest likelihood of transfer is in core elements, regardless of the perceived distance of the NL and the TL. The second area of probable transfer is between languages perceived as close, regardless of core versus noncore elements.

Linguistic typologies between English and Japanese, determined objectively by such things as structural similarities / dissimilarities of the two languages, are so widely different that the psychotypology determined by a learner's perception would likewise be believed to be widely different. Such being the case, the occurrence of transfer from Japanese to English should be infrequent. Does that mean transfer does not take place from Japanese to English? Are there any *core elements* between Japanese and English? Are there any possibilities for Japanese speakers to perceive English as close?

The purpose of this paper is to further examine the notion of *transfer* as outlined by Gass, Kellerman, Selinker and Shibuya by extending the research to a new sample group and to explicitly test if the notion is truly applicable to the Japanese learners of English.

3. Hypothesis

English is an Indo-European language, whereas Japanese is categorized as an Asiatic language. They are not typologically close to each other at all. Just as discussed so far, between those languages that are typologically far from each other the chances of transfer are believed to be quite low, except for the core elements explained by figure 1. Does a Japanese learner of English seldom ever transfer his/her ability of the NL to the TL?

The author would like to draw the reader's attention to the fact that in the case of Japanese loan words from English, the transferability of Japanese to the TL is higher than might be expected. Perceived NL-TL distance for the language learners can be said to get closer in the case of loan words. Psychotypology is also said to get closer when considering loan words from English.

Kimura (1979) maintains that Japanese uses approximately 7000 English words. It is easily estimated that the number is much higher now than when Kimura wrote the article. Psychotypology between Japanese and English is not close at all

when those two languages are taken into consideration as a whole. It, however, is naturally believed that psychotypology gets closer when loan words are to be the focus of consideration. It is, therefore, hypothesized that for loan words from English, a learner's transferability will be high, because they believe such loan words as they use in everyday conversation are originally English and therefore they are used correctly. Loan words should be discussed differently from other original Japanese words.

4. Experiments

Thirty-three university students were chosen for this research. All of them finished six years of English study at both junior high and high school, and another year at college. They are currently university sophomores. Even though at their college they have three ninety minute classes a week, the respondents motivation to learn English could be supposed to

4 - 3 Question 3

In this question respondents were asked to make explicit the differences in English between *recycle* and *reuse*. The translated version of this question is as follows:

In English there are *recycle* and *reuse*. Are there any differences or none in their meanings? Please write your answer. If you have no idea, leave it blank.

In Japanese a katakana word *リサイクル* is used as a polyseme. It not only conveys the meaning of *recycle* in English but of *reuse*. That is because *reuse* is not yet one of those loan words that are commonly used in this country, and so is different from *recycle*. From this it is easily assumed that the katakana word *リサイクル* acts as a core element of the two languages. If this is the case, these questions will significantly show that transfer is sure to be adopted by a learner just as figure 1 suggests.

5. Results

5 - 1 Data acquired from the experiments.

	Question1	Question2
1) (a)	42.4% (14people)	42.4% (14people)
(b)	42.4% (14people)	39.3% (13people)
2)	63.6% (21people)	48.4% (16people)
3)	87.8% (29people)	72.7% (24people)
4)	69.6% (23people)	63.6% (21people)

5 - 2 Data Analyses

(1) Question 1

In question1 1) (a),(b) if you read the question sentence carefully the answers for both (a) and (b) should not be the katakana word *リサイクル*. As many as fourteen students out of thirty three answered *リサイクル* for (a) and (b). If it is in English like in Question 2, the answers are definitely *reuse*,

in the case of core elements transferability will be high. This can be concluded thanks to the results acquired from Q1 and Q2. Their figure reflects the reality and that transfer strategy is used by Japanese learners of English.

(3) Question 3

The last question Q3 was conducted separately from the other two questions to make sure that the students know the difference between *recycle* and *reuse* in English. The question originally done in Japanese is read in this way in English:

English has *recycle* and *reuse*. Are there any differences in their meanings? (or the same?) Write your opinion.

As many as twenty-eight (84.8%) students responded unanimously that there is a difference and the difference is just like the dictionary definition that is mentioned earlier in this paper. Among those who answered ‘ Yes, there is a difference in English between *recycle* and *reuse* ’, 39.2% of the respondents chose *リサイクル* in Q1(a) and 28.5% in Q1(b). As for Q2 (a), it was 50%, and Q2 (b) 35.7%. What is clear here is that even though 84.8% of respondents know that *recycle* and *reuse* are not the same in English, they transferred the polysemic meaning of the katakana word *リサイクル* into the English word *recycle*.

6. Conclusion

Gass and Selinker maintain that “ Considerations of similarity/dissimilarity are central to a learner's decision-making process ”.(2001, p.128) In this sense the respondents who used their knowledge of the katakana word *リサイクル* to transfer it into the English equivalent must have believed *リサイクル* and *recycle* to be similar to each other. And their psychotypology was close enough to adopt a transfer strategy based on their intuitions.

The main purpose of this paper was to conduct a survey about transfer strategy. It is now proved that even between Japanese and English, which are linguistically distant

languages, for certain lexical words that are used frequently in *katakana* transfer strategy is being employed by Japanese speakers of English. It is indeed certain that the respondents surely employed transfer strategy, but the reason why they did has not been made clear by this survey because no interview was done. If the psychological aspects of the respondents are made clear, that will pedagogically be a big illumination in the study of second language acquisition.

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Appendix

(The questions were actually given in three separate sheets.)

問い1)

外来語の「リサイクル」という語は、今日では広く一般的になっています。

次の文章中の()内で「リサイクル」が入ると思うところに、「リサイクル」と書いてください。

- 1) 日本では「ピンビール」のピンは5円で引き取られ、洗浄後再びビールを詰め込むことによって、ピンの((a))が行われますが、缶ビールの缶が引き取られ、それをそのまま洗浄後再びビールを詰め込むことで、缶を((b))することはありません。
- 2) ペットボトルをつぶして出すことによって()しやすくなると考える自治体があります。
- 3) 近頃ではごみとして収集されたペットボトルを()し、洋服が作られています。
- 4) 自動車の廃車の部品の中には、形を変えて()されるものが増えてきた。

男 女

問い2)

下の日本語を英訳した際に()内に入れる語として recycle が入ると思う()内に recycle と書いてください。

- 1) 日本では「ピンビール」のピンは5円で引き取られ、洗浄後再びビールを詰め込むことによって、ピンの((a))が行われますが、缶ビールの缶が引き取られ、それをそのまま洗浄後再びビールを詰め込むことで、缶を((b))することはありません。
- 2) ペットボトルをつぶして出すことによって()しやすくなると考える自治体があります。
- 3) 近頃ではごみとして収集されたペットボトルを()し、洋服が作られています。
- 4) 自動車の廃車の部品の中には、形を変えて()されるものが増えてきた。

男 女

問い3)

英語には recycle という語と reuse という語がありますが、意味にどのような違いがあると思いますか(or 同じ??)。思うところを書いてください。

男 女

ご協力ありがとうございました。