A REVIEW OF TRANSFER OF TEMPORAL CONCEPTS BETWEEN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

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INTRODUCTION

Language transfer can be seen as one of the major learning strategies nowadays. A foreign and/or second language learner —— in contrast to a child acquiring his first language —— does not have to learn underlying concepts such as time, space and location. He can use those acquired in his first language to learn another language. Since he has already acquired his first language and ways of thinking in the language environment, he can use its knowledge and concepts in learning another language. It does not, however, always go well by applying first language knowledge and concepts to learning a second language when the two language systems are different from one another.

In this study, I would like to focus on the problem of concept-based transfer in Japanese and English tenses, and review the related literature in this field in order to establish hypotheses to induce the transfer. Empirical study to test these hypotheses can be done in the future.

LANGUAGE TRANSFER

The concepts associated with time differ among language communities. It can be assumed that a first language influences the acquisition of a concept in the second language. We can look at both language systems and compare them for the analysis of differences and similarities by following the basic idea of contrastive analysis.

The basic assumptions of contrastive analysis about the process of language learning are based on the assumption that language learning is habit formation, and an old habit (i.e., the first language) hinders or gets in the way of learning a new language; or otherwise facilitates the formation of a new language.

Before the 1960s, in the language learning and acquisition theory, the behaviorist approach of psychology dominates, and the errors are simply the results of imperfect learning: that is, the process of habit-formation has not yet been completed. The learner's errors are viewed as an interference by his first language, where first-language habits prevent the learner from learning the second or foreign language. When the first language habits are helpful to acquiring the second (or foreign) language, it is considered a positive or facilitative transfer. Thus, the errors are analyzed by comparing the first-language and the second-language systems, which is called "contrastive analysis."

Lado (1957) provides the earliest procedural statement and assumptions of the contrastive analysis hypothesis. He states that people tend to transfer the forms and meanings as well as the concepts of their culture to the foreign language and culture, both productively when speaking or writing, and receptively when trying to understand the language. He continues that the key to ease or difficulty in foreign language acquisition

lies in the comparison of two language systems.

Kimizuka (1977) discusses the basic concepts of language transfer based on the assumptions Lado made. The difficulty in learning English for Japanese students originates from the fact that Japanese is remote from English in its sound, structural and conceptual system. She illustrates common mistakes in the use of tense made by a Japanese learner of English. She has a traditional view of twelve tense forms in English where the tense form is determined by absolute time reference such as present moment, future, and past, which is not based on the absolute time in Japanese but is relative to the sequence of events. In Japanese if the event in the subordinate clause happens before the action of the main clause, the tense in the subordinate clause is always in the -*ta* form of the past tense:

Japanese: *Haru ni nattara, mata kimasu.*

       (spring) (become) (again) (return)

       "I return again when the spring came."

English: I will be back again when the spring comes.

Resulting from this contrast, Kimizuka takes some examples of the misuse of English tense in compositions that a Japanese student writes.

Examples:

When I finished high school, I will have to go to college.

(When I finish high school, I will have to go to college.)

I like to be an engineer when I grew up.

(I would like to be an engineer when I grow up.)

                                  (Kimizuka 1977: 66)

On the other hand, the subordinate clauses are usually expressed in the present form of the tense when the verb in the main clause is in the past form in Japanese. This tense pattern causes a Japanese learner of

English to misuse tense in English. An example of such misuse is given in Kimizuka.

Example:

He took a picture and movie when we are living at Japan.

(He took a picture and movie when we lived in Japan.)

(Kimizuka 1977: 67)

In Japanese the present tense form is usually used to express the action or the state of the future, except that there is implication of the speaker's willingness or possibility in it. A learner may look at the future event in the framework of the Japanese tense and misuse the present tense form when expressing the future event in English as in this example from Kimizuka.

Example:

He brings it to me tomorrow.

(He will bring it to me tomorrow.)

(Kimizuka 1977: 67)

One of the other problems in transfer from Japanese into English is that any verb in Japanese can be denoted in the progressive form by adding *-te* or *-de* after the inflected ending of a verb which is followed by the auxiliary verb as in this example: *mi-te-imasu* (I am looking); whereas, such English stative verbs as know, have, see, etc., are scarcely used in the progressive form.

Example:

They were knowing that the man was ill.

(They knew that the man was ill.)

(Kimizuka 1977: 68)

Recently there have been doubts about the validity of contrastive analysis for learner's errors. Corder (1975) explains the following rea-

sons for the doubts.   First, not all errors and difficulties can be traced to the influence of the mother tongue; second, what contrastive analysis predicts as a difficulty does not always turn out to be so in practice; and third, it is a purely theoretical problem that under the interference theory the learner must unlearn (or forget) the first language rules in order to learn a foreign language.

Under the assumption of current theories of language acquisition and learning, the learner is viewed as a generator generalizing language. This is the same hypothesis that underlies first language acquisition. Children construct their own rules of grammar creatively in the process of language acquisition.   The notion applies to assume that a second language learner also actively constructs rules from the data he encounters and gradually approaches the target-language system.   Second language acquisition is then based on the assumption that a learner possesses a certain kind of competence or "interlanguage" grammar as Selinker (1972) advocates rather than a set of dispositions to respond to stimuli as in a behaviorist's view.   Therefore, making errors is looked at as evidence of the learning process.   The error analysis or the investigation of the errors provides us with the most significant data on the learner's interlanguage developments and his learning process.

Krashen (1983) articulates the theoretical assumptions by stating his five hypotheses in the book *The Natural Approach*.   The first hypothesis is called the "Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis" in which Krashen distinguishes two ways of developing competence in second language. One is "acquisition," the "natural" way to develop linguistic ability through communicating messages.   Another one, "learning," is an "explicit" knowledge of the rules of language structures.

The second hypothesis is called the "Natural Order Hypothesis" in

which grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable order and children and adult learners acquire grammatical structures in the same order. This assumption is based on the empirical studies of nine grammatical morphemes investigated in the acquisition process in English as a second language. According to the studies, the progressive (-ing) is acquired first, followed by the plural, copula (to be), auxiliary (progressive), article (a, the), irregular past, regular past, third person singular (-s), and finally possessive.

The third hypothesis is called the "Monitor Hypothesis" in which the knowledge of the grammatical rules acquired in formal learning is assumed to work to repair or make self-correction on learner's uttered or written production. The monitor activates before or after utterances have been produced. According to Krashen, the optimal monitor user is a good language learner.

The fourth hypothesis is called the "Input Hypothesis" in which the receptive comprehension is primarily important in language acquisition. Productive ability in second language will emerge on its own with time. Krashen explains that the learner will move from a stage i (where i is his current level of the second language competence) to a stage $i+1$ (the stage immediately following i in the hypothetical natural acquisition order) with enough comprehensible input to a learner who can be provided with enough context and extra-linguistic information.

The fifth hypothesis is called the "Affective Filter Hypothesis" in which human psychological factors such as anxieties, the lack of self-confidence, or the lack of motivation become a mental block, which is called "the affective filter" by Krashen, against incoming language input. When it is high, a learner may recognize what he hears or reads, but he does not understand it. Therefore, the lower the affective filter, the

better the chance a learner will acquire a target language.

The theory advocated by Krashen predicts that a learner of second language acquires and develops his own interlanguage system by himself if there are enough comprehensible inputs to a learner and the affective filter is low. Errors are seen as an evidence of progress of a learner's interlanguage, i.e., developmental errors, and they need not to be corrected since he will make self-correction with his monitor as the monitor hypothesis predicts, and direct corrections will not help a learner acquire the rules. The language developments follow the "natural order" as the natural order hypothesis predicts. The direct correction of errors will rather inhibit a learner's acquisition since it enhances the level of his anxiety as the affective filter hypothesis predicts.

Corder (1967) speculates that the process of first and second language acquisition is fundamentally the same. Corder (1971) also proposed a procedural method to distinguish erroneous utterances a learner makes.

Richards (1971) suggests a three-way classification of errors: (1) interlingual errors, which correspond to the transfer errors from the first language, (2) intralingual errors, and (3) developmental errors, but basically he argues about two types of errors: transfer errors and developmental errors.

However, he categorizes the developmental errors according to their source of errors. They are 1) Overgeneralization: this happens when a learner uses his knowledge of target language rules, for example, errors of the subject-verb agreement such as *It only need a spoonful of salt...*[1] can be put into this category. Richards discusses the cause of

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1 The data is taken from Takai (1986).

overgeneralization in this case such as the omission of the third person -*s* as a learner tries to reduce his linguistic burden.

2) Ignorance of Rule Restrictions: Richards discusses the ignorance of rule restrictions as the application of rules to contexts where they actually do not apply. A good example is the misuse of prepositions such as *people in present (buy a tube)...*[2] This should be "people at present."

3) Incomplete Application of Rules: Richards discusses the incomplete application of rules as the developmental stage of the rule application that requires the production of acceptable sentences. For example, Richards discusses the same difficulty in the use of a question among learners of many different language backgrounds such as *Why we use a teethpaste?*[3]

4) False Hypothesized Concepts: Richards discusses that this is due to faulty rule learning at various levels and categorized into the developmental errors such as the confusion between *too, so,* and *very.*

Thus Richards' model of error analysis expands to a developmental error analysis that is based on the theoretical assumptions made first by Chomsky that language learning is an 'active' and 'creative' process. From this point of view in errors, the first language influence is not so important but "developmental" factors influence the cause of errors while a learner is learning a second language. Researchers become more dubious about contrastive analysis and turn their attention to similarities in the language acquisition process among all second language learners regardless of their first language. Language transfer is therefore considered a minor source of error.

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2 The data is taken from Takai (1986).
3 Ibid.

However, in the past few years there have been some researchers who became interested in language transfer, not as a transfer of first language structures but as one of cognitive strategies that can be assumed in the second language acquisition process. For example, Schachter and Celce-Murcia (1980) discuss the notion of avoidance originally claimed by Schachter who hypothesizes that a learner avoids a different grammatical structure from his first language when producing a second language. Schachter (1974) examines a set of 50 compositions from language groups of Persian, Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese and finds that Chinese and Japanese learners produce far fewer relative clauses than do the Persian and Arabic learners. She hypothesizes that a difference of language structure influences on the results. There are no transfer errors recognized in form and meaning but a first language influence for avoidance.

Von Stutterheim and Klein (1987) advocate a "concept-oriented" approach vis-a-vis a form-oriented approach for the discussion of interlanguage system which a learner develops in a second language acquisition process. They take a learner learning German as a second language as an example and show how he uses the German past-tense morphology of regular verbs (the suffix *-te*). It is used to refer to the concept of present time in the context the learner uses. Von Stutterheim and Klein hypothesize that the form *verb* + *-te* is used independently of the concept which it expresses in German, but it is functioning in the learner's interlanguage system which the learner has developed based on his native language concept.

The basic idea of this "concept-oriented" approach is that language expressions are bound by the speaker's concepts whether they are innate or learned in a community. A second language learner, therefore, must already have these concepts such as temporality, modality, and locality

and does not have to learn these like children acquiring their first language. Each language has different ways of expressing concepts. Von Stutterheim and Klein look at a specific concept, the concept of temporality and discuss that it is language-specific because there are some differences in each language in selective or obligatory and implicit or explicit tense and aspect markings, and in the choice of a specific linguistic device such as adverbial phrases. Since there are these differences between his native and target language, a learner may be predicted to use the concept in his native language, at the early stages at least, as a source to build up his interlanguage.

Language transfer can thus be analyzed from its functional aspect rather than on the appearance of specific linguistic forms. Researchers look into more fundamental mechanisms which humans experience through perception and reflection on reality in the community, all of which build up the various components of concepts. When a learner acquires specific forms and items in a second language, his acquired strategies for expressing a concept may influence his second language acquisition.

TEMPORAL CONCEPTS BETWEEN JAPANESE AND ENGLISH

Temporal concepts can be analyzed into various categories such as "location on a time axis," "completion of an action," and "relative time or temporal relations before or after," according to each language's internal structure (von Stutterheim and Klein 1987: 194). I would like to look at the ways that temporal concepts are expressed in both English and Japanese.

Hinkel (1992) discusses the difference in time concepts among communities by taking an example of culturally different perspectives on

the boundary of a day:

> In nonsecular Muslim and Jewish cultures, days begin at sunset and not at midnight as in Western civil convention. On the other hand, the Japanese consider sunrise the beginning of a new day (p. 557).

Temporal concept can be expressed in different forms among languages. While English uses verb tense to refer to time, Japanese uses nouns and adverbs (Hinkel 1992: 557). "Because tense systems are language-specific" (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1983: 61) and both temporal concept and linguistic markings in English are different from these in Japanese, a Japanese learner of English may face difficulty in learning English tense marking as well as in picking out the temporal concept.

English tenses are traditionally categorized into twelve different tenses viewing both tenses and time as linear form (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1983: 62-66), and present, past, and future tenses locate the time of situation or event relative to the present time. This traditional approach comes up "an oversimplification in the presentation of complex tenses such as the present perfect" (ibid. p. 66).

DeCarrico (1986) distinguishes and defines three concepts, tense, aspect and actual time. She defines time as "the meaning of the conceptual time frame" (p. 667), or an interval scale measured by clocks, calendars, etc. Tense and aspect are defined by "the forms that verbs take" (ibid.). She follows the Bull framework adapted by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983) to explain tense and aspect. According to the framework, the English tense-aspect system is oriented from three points of view in time: present, past, and future. Each English tense can be

placed on the appropriate point of time: simple present, simple past, and simple future tense.   This point in each time frame is called "basic axis time corresponding to the moment of reference" (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1983: 67).   Aspect can be explicated by the two points of view referring to "a time before the basic axis time" and "a time after the basic axis time" (ibid.).

Richards (1981) claims that "there are two tenses in English: present and past" (p. 392) since tense is viewed as a grammatical term referring to the morphological verb forms that are used to denote the time of the events in a sentence by viewing from the time of the utterance. Semantically present tense is viewed as in the time of the event or situation relevant to the present time that is the moment of speaking (e.g., *Tom is out*).   Past tense describes the event or situation in the time before the moment of speaking (e.g., *Tom sang*).   Tense is thus described as deictic (Comrie 1976 & 1985, Lyons 1977, Richards 1981).

Lyons (1977) argues that the main difference between tense and aspect is that tense is described as deictic but "aspect is non-deictic" (p. 705).   Tense gives information on time of event or situation, but aspect gives "information about the kind of event that the verb refers to" (Richards 1981: 392).   An event may be viewed whether it is "changing, repeated, habitual, complete, etc." (ibid.).   Richards (1981) claims that there are two aspects in English: perfective (e.g., *I have finished my homework*) and progressive (e.g., *Tom is singing*).

Comrie (1985) introduces "the time line diagram" (p. 2) for defining three basic tenses: present, past, and future.   The present tense is defined by the location where the present moment, or the moment of speaking is represented by a zero point on the line.   The past tense is defined by location where the event in the past is placed to the left of the point, and

the future tense is defined by the location where the event in the future is placed to the right. These basic tenses with the present moment as deictic center are called "absolute tense" (p. 36). Comrie also introduces "relative tense" (p. 56), where the point of view for location of an event is some other point in time given by the context than the present moment. For example, in English the time reference of *being* depends on the one of the main verb in the following sentence: *Being late, John cannot find a good seat;* vs. *Being late, John could not find a good seat.*

Hornstein (1993) cites Reichenbach's theory of tense which claims that the temporal location of event is analyzed by its relationship to the moment of speaking. The present tense is explained in that the event time and the moment of speech coincide, and in the past tense the event time precedes the moment of speech, while in the future tense the event time follows the moment of speaking. The theory introduces a reference time besides the event time and the moment of speaking as in the following example: *John will have left at 3 o'clock* (Hornstein 1993: 12). In the above example the event, John's leaving will happen some time after the moment of speaking, and before *3 o'clock* which specifies the point of view in time and is called the reference time.

Ando (1986) looks at tense with the relationship between the moment of speaking and the reference time defined in the Reichenbachian theory of tense. He argues that tense system in English does not correspond with the one in Japanese. Though *-ta* form in Japanese is traditionally considered as the past tense marker as in this sentence, *kinou wa tooka dat-ta* (Yesterday was the 10th) (p. 172), it is analyzed by Ando as an aspect marker denoting "completion." He argues that *-ta* form does not always indicate the past time on the time line defined in the Reichenbachian theory of tense. For example *-ta* form in *aa, tukare-ta* (I am tired)

(p. 173) does not imply the past time event, but the present situation.   He takes six examples to reason out why Japanese verb inflection *-ta* form is analyzed by the completion as an aspectual marker rather than a past tense marker.   He points out another important difference in tense expressions between Japanese and English.   For example, in the sentence, *dekakeru toki wa amega futtei-ta* (It was raining when I went out), the verb *dekakeru* (go out) is not marked by *-ta* form though the verb *futtei-ta* in the main clause is marked by *-ta* form showing the past time.

While English tense is basically defined by a deictic category that locates situations in time concerning reference to the present moment as a center, the expressions of time in Japanese verbs do not always apply in the deictic category with the present moment as a center location. The events in time differ either in that they are complete or incomplete by using the *-ta* form for completion.   There must be a possibility for a Japanese learner of English to use the Japanese temporal concepts to express himself in English.

Hirataka (1991) investigates utterance in the interview with 27 learners of Japanese among whom are 23 native speakers of Chinese, 2 native speakers of Korean, one native speaker of Tagalog and Thai respectively, and learns that a beginner uses three kinds of strategies to express the concept of time in Japanese before he acquires aspectual markers in grammar.   The first strategy is to use adverbs to express the relationship with time concept such as *saisho* (in the beginning) marking for the beginning of an event, and *atode* (afterwards) showing the consequent event.   The second is to use a chronological order in discourse. The third is to use a discourse pattern stating the topic of a story in the first half and explaining it in the next half.   The fourth is to express the time concept with chunks of thematically organized discourse.   He

discusses limitations of his analysis based on "the concept-oriented approach" (see von Stutterheim and Klein 1987): First, the source of influence on learner's Japanese is not clear whether it is his acquired concept of time in first language or his incompletely learned concept in a text and a classroom. Second, it is not clear whether a transfer, if any, is based on the learner's native language or concept of the language.

Hinkel (1992) investigates the ESL (English as Second Language) learners' perception of the English tense and aspect system. She collects 4 sentences from each of 8 English tense-aspect combinations taken from ESL grammar texts and asks the subjects with different first language backgrounds (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Arabic) to describe the tenses and aspects with a multiple choice questionnaire. These 32 sentences are controlled not to be affected by lexical time markers such as time adverbials and verbs with momentary or durational meanings.

She compares the results of ESL learners with the ones taken from native speakers of English as a control group, and finds that there are statistically significant differences between native speakers' choice of time reference and non-native speakers' (p<.01) except for "*right now/at the moment of speaking*" (p. 563). She also finds that native speakers chose significantly different aspectual descriptions from non-native speakers including present progressive. From this data she concludes that "the substantial differences between NS (native speaker) and NNS (non-native speaker) perceptions of tense meanings seem to indicate that NSs and NNSs view time spans and their divisions and measurements differently" (p. 568).

It is noteworthy that, according to her data, Japanese learners of English with extensive English grammar training and TOEFL scores

above 500 still have difficulty with understanding the association of meanings with morphological markers in the simple past tense (p. 564).

CONCLUSION

English requires morphological markers to the verbs referring to basic tenses defined by time deixis (Comrie 1985, Lyons 1977). When teaching English tenses in Japanese English education, a teacher traditionally explains the meanings and morphology of each tense in an example sentence with Japanese translation {e.g., As soon as he <u>heard</u> the news, the man turned pale (*sono shirase o <u>kiku</u> yainaya otoko wa massao ni natta*) for simple past tense}. Since Japanese language does not share the same concept of tense with English (Ando 1986), Japanese learners of English may be confused with the morphology of English tense markers. On the bases of reviewing the literature I would like to conclude this paper by stating the following three hypotheses that require further investigation.

1. Japanese learners' native intuition of time concept is different from the deictic time concept which is used by native speakers of English. Using Japanese translation for orientation of English tenses may make tense errors adhesive. In other words, the more advanced learners in overall English proficiency may make fewer errors in the use of English tenses.

2. If a morphological reference (e.g., *-ta* form) in Japanese shares the mutual concept of time with English (e.g., simple past tense), fewer errors appear in the use of English tenses. For example, where English simple past tense is sometimes translated in the Japanese expression denoting past event, there may be fewer erroneous sentences.

3. Since Japanese and English share the same time concepts of some lexical markers such as *today, tomorrow,* and *yesterday*, these adverbs help reduce learners' errors in the use of English tenses.

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