

Contrastive linguistics

An overview

The place of CA in Linguistics

- Sampson (1975) refers to 2 approaches to linguistics: the generalist & the particularist.
- Individual lang(s) + general phenomenon of human lang(s)
- Linguists either study languages in isolation or comparatively
- Linguistic typology: determine the “space limits of variation between lang(s) irrespective of their genetic affiliation” (Konig) + lang. universals

- Lang. typology has few parameters with a wide variety of lang(s), but CA has many parameters of variation & small no. of lang(s)
- De Saussure: diachronic (evolutionary phase) & synchronic (lang. state)
- Philologists study linguistic genealogy.
- James (1980: 3): CA is a linguistic enterprise aimed at producing inverted 2 valued typologies (lang(s) can be compared)

CA as interlanguage study

- Linguistics = human lang. in general
- Specialized linguistics = phonetics , dialectology (historical, geographical & social)
- Interlanguage study concerns the emergence of lang(s). CA belongs to interlang. Study as 'emergence' is an evolutionary concept (CA is diachronic)
- Second lang. or FL learning is interlang. diachronic study + translation theory (text replacement)

CA as interlanguage study

- 3 branches of interlang.: translation theory, **error analysis, & CA (monoling. becoming bilingual)**
- Interlingua (Melchuk, 1963): a system having the analysis signalling the SL and the synthesis signalling the TL (intermediate space, approximative systems (Nemser, 1971), transitional dialects (Corder, 1971))

CA: pure or applied

- Corder (1973): AL is not a science for it does not produce theory but consumes theory. James considers it as a science a consumer must be selective and have standards to evaluate. And AL is a hybrid discipline (linguistics, psychology, sociology), i.e. it relies not only on linguistics.
- CA is economic in that it seeks lang. universals (e.g. Ross , 1969, adj (s) are derived from NPs)
- James considers CA as applied CA.

CA & Bilingualism

- CA concerns individual bilingualism.
- Bilingualism is extant, but CA is incipient bilingualism
- CA starts with Lado's (1957) *Linguistics across cultures*
- CA concerns the ways wherein NL affects FL
- CA concerns parole , interference
- The historical stages in the pidginisation & creolization of lang(s) are similar to those a FL learner undergoes.

The psychological basis of CA

- Any learning process needs a psychological basis
- The psychological basis of CA is transfer theory
- Ellis: “ the hypothesis that the learning of task A will affect the subsequent learning of task B”.
- Learning involves the association of two entities.
- Associationism (Aristotle & Galton): it is the idea that mental processes operate by the association of one mental state with its successor states.
- Members of British School of Associationist include John Locke, Joseph Priestly, John Stuart Mill, etc.

The psychological basis of CA

- So, associationism & S-R theory form the psych. basis of CA
- S –R are stimulus & response (Skinner, 1957); they signal the second psych. component of CA
- They observed simplified settings & types of learning
- Do these serve a theory of real language – learning?
- There is a link between experimental and real – life learning (Underwood, 1957) & studies on bilingualism (Weinreich, 1953) referring to interference: instances of deviation from L1 & L2

Some problems of definition

- In non-verbal learning, the learner does not have to learn the responses (available) but their association with stimuli, but in L2 learning, both responses (utterances) & stimuli should be learnt.
- CA concerns teaching and not learning (convention of stimulus & response). The responses of L2 learners are associated to set stimuli.
- S & R in learning? Jakobovits (1970): S involves the environmental conditions that are antecedent to linguistic utterances + James: mental conditions to cover the affective stimuli in speech. A Stimulus is a communicative need (Richerich, 1974)

problems

- Can we include lang. in S or R definition? – it is in R because lang. adds “choice” + interlingual comparison which called “tertium- comparationis” (2 entities are not necessarily identical but have 1 quality in common)
- In S – defining, lang. behaviour involves both production & reception (analysis by synthesis) though it has defects.
- R in lang. behaviour is the utterance itself (linguistics), but “Ling. descriptions that account for lang. as a system ... deal with sentences , not utterances”

problems

- Sentences = form, Sapon (1971): (1) form relates to the product of psych., not with the psych. processes themselves. (psych. unreality of ling. descriptions), (2) linguists can make predictions only about form. Thus, in specifying Rs we must confine ourselves to their abstract form as sentences, not utterances.

Transfer Theory & CA

- Learners transfer their L1 forms & meanings & culture to FL (Lado, 1957)
- Osgood (1949) showed 3 learning tasks set in sequence; for each paradigm (A,B,C) tasks (1&3) are identical.
- Proaction is the effect of a certain prior activity upon the learning of a certain test activity.
- Retroaction is the effect of a specifiable interpolated activity upon the retention of a previously learned activity.

Transfer Theory & CA

- Task 3 is a performance task
- CA concerns proaction considering Task 1 as L₁ & Task2 = L₂
- How is Retro- of interest to CA? – (1) effects of L₂ upon L₁, (backlash, Jakobovits, 1969) & (2) L₁ is not forgotten via learning L₂ (oblivescence, Baddeley, 1972).
- (+ T) = positive transfer: identity of Ss & Rs are similar.
- (-T) = negative transfer: Ss are functionally identical and responses are varied.

Transfer Theory & CA

- 2 types of behavioural interpretation; production & reception.
- R 2 are meanings given to Ss (utterances) produced in L₂
- **Paradigm A** obtains where L₁ & L₂ employ the same formal device but serving different communicative purposes in the 2 lang(s). For example, AUX. – SUBJ. order in Eng. & Welsh: both start with Aux but Eng. = Q, Welsh= statement.
- Functional discrepancy between identical formal devices in 2 lang(s) should decrease to reduce Prob(s)

- **Paradigm B**: $S_1 - R_1$, $S_1 - R_2$ = Neg. transfer, translation equiv. = there is sameness of meaning with difference of formal devices, e.g. German uses $S - V$ inversion but Polish uses interrogative particle (Czy) which is misunderstood by Eng. learner of Polish as a conditional particle
- The **ordinary learning** sub-paradigm (structure & meaning = identical (a learner has to experience positive transfer himself.

- Paradigm C: $S_1 - R_1$, $S_2 - R_2$: Neg. transfer (non-identity of both Ss & Rs) = Lee's claim (1968): different or exotic lang(s) may not be difficult to learn.

Scale of Difference

- We (linguists) have to identify degrees of difference between Rs in the 2 lang(s) under CA & to establish the relationship between degree of linguistic difference & degree of learning difficulty.

CA & Behaviourist Learning Theory

- Corder: habit structure
- Skinner: Verbal Behaviour reviewed by Chomsky (1959)= Cognitive Psychology
- Slama – Cazacu (1971): in present scientific psychology transfer is considered a ‘controversial’ and hypothetical concept.
- Aiming at the structural specifications of language as put by Crothers & Suppes (1967): dealing with structure is crucial in exploring complex learning

Cross association

- H. V. George (1972) reconstructs the mental processes of induction and generalization which the L1 German learner of Eng. seems to be subject to. (German Frau vs. Eng. woman)
- George prefers to invoke the redundancy of the L2 as the direct cause of errors (woman & wife vs. frau)
- (wissen, können = know)

The ignorance hypothesis

- Set by Newmark & Reibel (1968)
- Selinker (1972): ignorance is a precondition to apply a strategy in learning (a learner has no linguistic competence in relation to a ling. aspect of the TL.
- Ignorance is not interference
- **Ignorance – without – interference** (Deskova, 1969) or what is called ‘avoidance strategy’ (Schachter, 1974): learners who face tenacious difficulty in some L2 structure they will avoid it by paraphrasing or near-equivalence

- Interference-without-ignorance: students are drilled until their performance is error-free. The errors will often have clear indications of L1 transfer-without ignorance.
- Backward interference: from L2 to L1 (no native is ignorant in L1)(backbreaking labour = schindarbeit)
- Weakness of the ignorance hypothesis

