

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

SUZUKI Shigeyuki

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.

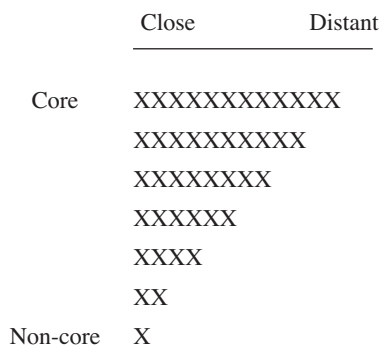


Figure1 (Gass and Selinker, p.131)

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 be not high because English is neither their major nor minor at school. They were twenty males and thirteen females.

The katakana word chosen for this research is *リサイクル* (recycle in English). *リサイクル* is a loan word from English widely used amongst most Japanese. Japan's most prestigious dictionary of the Japanese language carries the word *リサイクル* as a loan word from English.

(資源の節約や環境汚染防止などのために) 不要品・廃棄物などを再生利用すること。
(広辞苑 p.2792)

It says:

To recycle is to treat things that have already been used so that they can be used again.

Recycle is widely used as a loan word amongst Japanese, while the use of the word *reuse* is still foreign to them. This is supported by the fact that the above dictionary does not carry the word. So it will be the case that respondents use the loan word *リサイクル* where *reuse* (not recycle) should be used. It is presumed that the katakana word *リサイクル* is used in Japanese as a polyseme with two meanings. Common belief among Japanese people is that English is far from Japanese. In fact they are in different categories. In that sense, people believe without realization that the psychotypology of the two languages are far from each other, therefore the chances of transfer from Japanese to English are remote. One important

fact, however, that is missing in this statement is that, as is quoted from Kimura before, the Japanese language has lots of loan words from English. This helps a Japanese learner of English to feel English to be a psychotypologically close language to Japanese. Let the author draw the reader's attention to the following statement by Gass and Selinker (2001, p.129).

What is crucial is that the degree of language closeness is based on a learner's *perception* of both the distance (not necessarily the actual language distance) between the languages and on the learner's perception of the organization of his/her NL.

From this statement it is rightly said that a learner's perception influences transferability of the NL toward the TL. Loan words from English are believed by Japanese to be English words originally. So people's perception (namely, the psychotypology) of Japanese-English distance should be very close in the case of loan words from English. Some experiments were conducted to prove that transfer is likely with Japanese loan words from English.

4 - 1 Question 1

In this question respondents were asked to write the Japanese katakana word *リサイクル* where they thought appropriate. The actual instructions given to them in Japanese are translated into English as follows:

A loan word *リサイクル* is commonly used these days. Please write the katakana word *リサイクル* in the parentheses where you would think appropriate to be use.

The actual questionnaire given to the respondents in Japanese is in the appendix section of this paper.

4 - 2 Question 2

In this question the same questions were given to the students. This time, however, they were asked to put the English word *recycle* where they thought it appropriate. The instructions in Japanese are understood in English as follows:

When the following Japanese sentences are translated into English in which parentheses do you think it is appropriate to put the English word *recycle*?

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*, because the sentence says in Japanese that the shapes of bottles and cans are unchanged and used again as they are, which implies to use *reuse* not *recycle*. Let the author quote a dictionary definition of the English word *reuse* to make sure this is true.

When you reuse something, you use it again instead of throwing it away.

(Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary, p.1241)

Answers for other questions in Q1 are *リサイクル* (recycle in English). *Recycle* is defined like this in the same dictionary as above:

If you recycle things that have already been used, such as bottles or sheets of paper, you process them so that they can be used again.

(Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary, p.1206)

In Question1 2),3),4) the students wrote with high percentage the katakana word *リサイクル*, which should be the correct answer for those questions. Here let the author draw the reader's attention again to the fact that *リサイクル* is a polyseme as a Japanese loan word, because *reuse* in katakana has not come into the world of loan words in Japan. Therefore, as high as 42% of the respondents thought it okay in the first two questions to say *リサイクル*, which is inappropriate for the original meaning of the English word *recycle*.

(2) Question 2

To avoid observer's paradox (Labov, 1981) in question 2, participants were instructed to work only Q2 and asked not to go back to Q1. In Question 2 the questionnaire given to the respondents was exactly the same as Q1 except for the instructions on the top of the page. Here the questions were made so as to draw out the respondents' knowledge of the English word *recycle* and to learn if it is transferred from the Japanese katakana word as questioned in Q1.

Surprisingly enough, as in Q1, nearly as many students answered *recycle* as the appropriate choice of word in 1) (a), (b) of Q2. More specifically in (a) 42.4%, and in (b) 39.3% of the respondents wrote the English word *recycle*. This is exactly the same number of respondents as in Q1 with just one difference in (b) in which thirteen responses were obtained. What is crucial in here is that transfer did occur from Q1 to Q2.

As is discussed above, in English *recycle* and *reuse* are two different words used differently. But for those of the respondents who answered both Q1 and Q2 in the same way, the katakana word *リサイクル* is evidently transferred and then the English equivalent is used as is in Q2. What is drawn from the results obtained by Q1 and Q2 is that transfer strategy is adopted by respondents as Gass and Selinker suggest (figure 1 in this paper). The katakana word *リサイクル* acts as a core element of the two linguistically distant languages. Their figure tells that even between two languages far away from each other,

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.

References

- Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary. (1988) Collins
 ロッド・エリス(牧野高吉：訳)(2003) 『第2言語習得のメカニズム』ちくま学芸文庫
- Gass, S. & Selinker, L. (2001) *Second language acquisition*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey.
- Kellerman, E. & Sharwood Smith, M. (Eds.) (1986) *Cross-linguistic influence in second language acquisition*. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon.
- Kimura, T (1979) Language is Culture: Culture- based Differences in Japanese and English. In Taylor, H (Ed.) *English and Japanese in Contrast*. New York: Regents Publishing Company.
- Labov, W. (1981) *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press. Philadelphia.
- Lado, R (1957) *Linguistics across cultures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Shibuya, K (2003) Investigation of “ transfer strategy ” and constraints on transfer in the case of Japanese learners of English as a foreign language. *Studies in English Linguistics and Literature*. No.13 p.31-51
- 新村出(1998) 『広辞苑』第5版 岩波書店 p.2792
- 鈴木繁幸(1993) 「ある状況における副詞 here 及び there の研究」 『渦』第15号 p.91-100
- 玉崎孫治 「最近の Language Transfer 論」 田中晴美ほか (1987) 『言語習得と英語教育』英語教育協議会 (ELEC) p.247-264

(2003年12月17日受理)

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。