

Book Review

Crosslinguistic influence and second language learning

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Publisher:

Routledge, 2022

ISBN:

978-0-367-35782-5 (pbk)

Pages:

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As a prevalent phenomenon in second language acquisition (SLA), crosslinguistic influence (CLI) has attracted ever-lasting attention, as reflected by the publication of several monographs (e.g., Cai, 2021; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008; Odlin, 1989; Ringbom, 2007), many edited volumes (e.g., Alonso, 2016; Gass & Selinker, 1983), and numerous research articles. In these books and papers, mounting evidence for CLI has been accumulated in various areas of languages. In particular, CLI may occur between first language (L1) and second language (L2) in lexicon, grammar, phonology, discourse, and pragmatics, with its effects being both positive and negative. Besides, it has been shown that the occurrence of CLI is constrained by a variety of factors, such as linguistic and psycholinguistic factors and those related to learning environment and language use (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). CLI has been addressed from diverse theoretical perspectives including universal grammar, functional linguistics, and psycholinguistics (see Cai, 2021 for a review).

Previous publications on CLI tend to approach this phenomenon as part of language learning and use, failing to pay adequate attention to the ways of overcoming the difficulties rooted in negative CLI. It is with the publication of

Crosslinguistic Influence and Second Language Learning (McManus, 2022) that this situation has started to change. By focusing on the relationship between CLI and L2 learning, this monograph successfully integrates relevant theoretical models, empirical studies verifying CLI, and instructional studies in the hope of reducing negative effects of CLI in L2 learning.

The book intentionally focuses on four theoretical models sharing a similar idea and three linguistic areas in which crosslinguistic differences are evident. The models include the unified competition model (MacWhinney, 2005), the associate-cognitive CREED (Ellis, 2006), processing determinism (O'Grady, 2015), and inhibitory control model (Green, 1998), all of which ascribe a critical role to prior knowledge and experience in language learning. The areas chosen for demonstrating CLI are morphosyntax, vocabulary, and phonology, where CLI has not only been widely documented but has also been subject to pedagogical intervention. Within this scope, this book delineates a clear picture of CLI including its theoretical accounts, manifestations, and possible instructional interventions.

The book consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 lays the foundation for the subsequent chapters by clarifying McManus' functional view of language and experience-driven view of language learning as well as explaining some basic issues concerning CLI. Among these issues, the distinction between transfer and CLI deserves special attention. In this book, transfer refers to a learning process drawing on prior language knowledge and experience, whereas CLI emphasizes an outcome or product of that learning process. This distinction diverges from the common interpretation of these concepts in previous publications (e.g., Cai, 2021; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008; Odlin, 1989), where transfer and CLI are used interchangeably.

The following three chapters constitute the main body of the monograph. Chapter 2 reviews the above four models of L2 learning including their theoretical basics and predictions for L2 learning. It should be noted that some of the predictions of these models are later tested in the studies reviewed in the next two chapters. Additionally, Chapter 2 also discusses these models in terms of language knowledge and experience, inhibition, and transfer to demonstrate their similarities and differences and prepare readers for the following two chapters.

Chapters 3 and 4 are both devoted to the presentation of empirical studies but with different foci and goals. More specifically, the former reviews studies evidencing the role of CLI in L2 learning and the latter concentrates on instructional studies that have validated the effectiveness of pedagogical interventions drawing on L1 knowledge and experience. Chapter 3 synthesizes CLI studies in morphosyntax, vocabulary, and phonology, where L1 and L2 often differ considerably, which potentially leads to negative CLI. Each of these areas concerns four lines of research, among which the first three examine CLI from L1 to L2 and the fourth focuses on CLI from L2 to L1. For example, in the case of

morphosyntax, the effects of L1 on L2 have been captured by studies on learned attention and blocking, remapping meaning to form, and comparing L2 performance online and offline; the effects of L2 on L1 in turn have been manifested by empirical investigations that have found converging representations in L1 and L2. When illustrating these lines of inquiry with representative studies, McManus usually reports their objectives, methodology, and findings, followed by the discussions of their limitations and prospects for future studies. Finally, McManus summarizes this chapter by identifying some common themes shared by the studies with respect to the above three areas (morphosyntax, vocabulary, and phonology), such as how a learner's L1 and L2 are connected and the influence of inhibitory control on CLI and SLA.

Chapter 4 is a unique contribution to the field of CLI and SLA, as no previous monographs have included a similar chapter. It begins with the argument for applying explicit instruction to L2 learning in general and to CLI in particular. The main body of this chapter reviews typical evidence-based instructional studies on morphosyntax, vocabulary, and phonology to suggest that incorporating L1 knowledge and experience into L2 pedagogy is effective in overcoming learning difficulties caused by L1-L2 differences. Besides, McManus also discusses the limitations of previous studies and advocates ensuring methodological rigor in the design of instructional treatments, adopting multiple measures of L2 performance, and incorporating a delayed posttest.

In the concluding chapter, McManus revisits the three key ideas of experience, transfer, and competition, discusses how these ideas shape L2 knowledge, use, and cognition, and finally, theorizes CLI by distinguishing process from product in L2 learning. Another contribution of this chapter is that it suggests three avenues for future research, such as incorporating L1 knowledge and use in studies on L2 learning, conducting more longitudinal studies, and exploring the relationship between aspects of cognitive processing (i.e., working memory, inhibitory control, and categorization) and L2 learning and use.

Taken together, this monograph has two strengths that will appeal to researchers and teachers. On the one hand, three aspects of CLI concerning theoretical models, empirical evidence, and instructional studies are consecutively outlined in a well-planned order. Theoretical models are reviewed first in Chapter 2 as they respectively propose clear claims and predictions on CLI, which may be tested by empirical studies reported in Chapter 3. After compelling evidence of CLI is documented in Chapter 3, the necessity of reducing negative CLI is further substantiated, thus highlighting the value of conducting instructional studies in Chapter 4. On the other hand, it is constructive to combine the state of the art with critical comments. After summarizing the theoretical models in Chapter 2 and reporting empirical studies in Chapters 3 and 4, McManus usually provides

inspiring critiques. This is extremely valuable because understanding the earlier theories and studies helps to consolidate our knowledge base, and the comments point to gaps in existing research that need to be filled in the future.

Thanks to the two advantages outlined above, researchers and teachers can benefit greatly from reading the book. In particular, researchers can address the limitations of earlier studies with rigorous methodology, or undertake further studies along the directions suggested in the last chapter. Teachers, encouraged by the findings of the instructional studies, may apply some of these intervention techniques in their L2 classrooms to enhance the effectiveness of learning a new language. Such characteristics make the book an invaluable resource for understanding theoretical and empirical explorations of the role of CLI in L2 learning. Yet, it should be kept in mind that all the CLI mentioned in the book is linguistic in nature, thus neglecting conceptual transfer. As research into conceptual transfer has gained momentum in recent years (Cai & Chang, 2021; Jarvis, 2016; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008), this issue should have been addressed in the book or the author should have explained his decision not to include it.

Overall, this monograph is a timely contribution to CLI and SLA due to its integration of theories with empirical studies validating and manipulating CLI, its critical comments on representative studies, and its reader-friendly writing style. Thus, it will surely benefit learners, teachers, and researchers who are interested in CLI and L2 learning.

Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful to Mirosław Pawlak for his valuable comments and suggestions. This paper was supported by a grant from the National Social Science Foundation of China (Grant number: 19AYY008) awarded to Jinting Cai.

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