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Issues in Applied Linguistics

Title
Interlanguage and Interregnum

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/88f5d56s

Journal
Issues in Applied Linguistics, 3(1)

ISSN
1050-4273

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Publication Date
1992-06-30

DOI
10.5070/L431005148

Peer reviewed

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Editorial

Interlanguage and Interregnum

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> . . . in the making of constructs relevant to a theory of second language learning, one would be completely justified in hypothesizing, perhaps even *compelled* to hypothesize, the existence of a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a TL norm. This linguistic system we will call "interlanguage" (IL).
>
> Larry Selinker (1972)
> "Interlanguage"

It is now a good twenty years since the concept of interlanguage became a part of the everyday vocabulary of second language acquisition research. Indeed, the notion had a profound effect on applied linguists' understanding of what it means to learn an additional language, because it recast the nonnative speaker as an intelligent human being struggling to identify and create a systematic representation of a new language and led to the abandonment of the view which had cast the nonnative speaker as a rather dunce-like producer of error and deviant utterances, despite instruction, exposure, and practice. The concept of interlanguage also contributed to explanations for why most learners of languages failed to achieve target language proficiency and why a good deal of pedagogy was inhibiting rather than facilitating learners' development of a coherently organized approximation of the target language. Ultimately, the recognition that systematicity could be found at any second language proficiency level, no matter how basic, moved second language acquisition research closer to research being done on first language psycholinguistics and pidgins and creoles, as well as in cognitive science, and opened the way for contrastive analysis and error analysis to reinvent themselves as interlanguage research.

Issues in Applied Linguistics
ISSN 1050-4273
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Vol. 3 No. 1 1992 1-6

The rise of interlanguage research at once supported and challenged the by-then reigning Chomskyan paradigm. On the one hand, interlanguage research was discovering the rule-making processes of many different kinds of language learners trying to learn a range of languages under various natural, classroom, and quasi-experimental conditions, and thus the growing body of findings could be brought to bear on theoretical work concerned with Universal Grammar. But since the focus of interlanguage research was on the "performance errors" of actual learners, it also called into question, to a certain extent, the theoretical enterprise of trying to construct the intuitive rule-governed linguistic competence of ideal speakers from invented sentences and native-speaker grammaticality judgments and the theoretical school's declared disinterest in matters pertaining to actual language use.

In language teaching pedagogy, interlanguage research also forced teachers and testers to reassess their attitude to "mistakes," "errors," and "wrong answers" as symptoms of cognitive deficit or evidence of insufficient drill and practice. Instead, interlanguage research made it possible for language educators to treat error as an opportunity to diagnose their students' confusions about the target language and thus to tailor their pedagogy so as to facilitate the clearing up of those confusions. In other words, language pedagogy began to orient itself both to the order that could be gleaned from the disorder of nonnative language output and to the importance of individualization in second language learning.

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King Henry: An angel is like you, Kate, and you are like an angel.
Katherine: Que dit-il? Que je suis semblable à les anges?

. . .

O bon Dieu! les langues des hommes sont pleines de tromperies.
King Henry: What says she fair one? That the tongues of men are full of deceits?
Alice: Oui, dat de tongues of de mans is be full of deceits: dat is de Princess.

William Shakespeare
Henry V, V:ii:110-123

The bulk of interlanguage research has focused on morphology, syntax, and phonology, but the growing interest in recent decades in the personal, social, and political consequences of languages and cultures being in contact has led to the beginning of an expansion of interlanguage concerns to encompass questions of semantics, pragmatics, discourse, rhetoric, and literacy. In this first issue of the third volume of *Issues in Applied Linguistics,* three of the main articles concern themselves with some of these broader aspects of interlanguage.

The first article, by Arlene Clachar, reports on a pioneering study comparing the interlanguage proficiency levels of immigrant ESL students with results on a social-psychological questionnaire designed to measure a person's locus of control. The study explores the relationship between language proficiency and a person's sense of responsibility for and control over his or her own destiny when faced with socio-economic hardship, discrimination, and frustrations in self-expression. Clachar demonstrates the complexity of the locus of control construct and finds that one of its subscales, the locus of personal control, correlates significantly with interlanguage development. Her study makes a contribution to research concerned with the connections between motivational and affective factors and language proficiency.

The second main article in this issue, by Laurie Ann Haynes, investigates the target language variability between speaking and writing modes in the interlanguage development of nonnative speakers of English. Using the multi-feature/multi-dimensional approach developed by Doug Biber, Haynes tracks eleven linguistic features, representing three dimensions of the oral/literate continuum, in the spoken and written narratives of nonnative speakers, and compares those findings with the spoken and written narratives of native speakers. Haynes finds that the nonnative speakers' variability develops systematically toward native-speaker variability across the proficiency levels for both modes of elicited narrative. Her study contributes to research on interlanguage variability both in speaking and writing and within a particular genre and shows how well documented large-scale methodologies can be adapted for smaller-scale research projects.

Interlanguage variability is also the subject of the third article in this issue, by S. B. Makoni. Makoni's study focuses on how linguistic environment and discourse location can affect the morphosyntactic and lexical variability of the unplanned performance of learners of English at different stages of interlanguage development. Comparing narrative data elicited

from two levels of nonnative speakers, Makoni finds that variability increases with proficiency and varies more in particular linguistic environments and that, contrary to expectation, intermediate-level learners are more likely to inflect verbs with third-person *-s* if the grammatical subject is realized. Makoni's study makes a contribution to interlanguage research concerned with context-sensitive variability and with speakers of African languages.

Related to interlanguage and second language acquisition is the fourth article in this issue, by Yasuhiro Shirai, who advocates adopting a connectionist approach to answer questions about first language (L1) transfer. Shirai discusses in detail six conditions on L1 transfer, evaluates how they have been traditionally explained in the symbolic approaches to SLA, and offers a reexamination of these conditions from within a connectionist framework, basing much of his discussion on the recent work of Mike Gasser. Shirai's essay makes an interesting contribution to the question of which cognitive model can best facilitate an understanding of language processing, and he suggests several directions that future SLA research might pursue within the connectionist approach.

Our fifth main article is a short report from a reference librarian, Elaine Wagner, who set about trying to locate relevant and recent bibliography on older adult language learners, using a number of comprehensive reference databases. Wagner points out that the dominance of the critical-period hypothesis for language acquisition and the convenience for researchers in drawing their research subjects from the ranks of their own college students has resulted in a dearth of research on older language learners in non-university settings. Her search of several databases, which she describes in detail, turns up an interesting list of journal articles published in the last nine years in a wide range of disciplinary journals. Wagner's bibliographic essay shows how a high-tech literature search can facilitate inquiries into neglected areas of research and bring together appropriate literature from sources which might be scattered across a network of campus research libraries.

Our Special Feature in this issue of *IAL* presents the views of six faculty members and six graduate students from six different graduate programs in applied linguistics on the topic of training applied linguists for the future. The idea for this piece came from Marianne Celce-Murcia, who organized a panel discussion on "Training Applied Linguists for the Future" at the recent AAAL conference in Seattle, and who, assisted by Susan Strauss, *IAL*'s

Special Feature Coordinator, graciously offered to turn the panel into a special feature that would include the voices of graduate students. The result is the longest and, I believe, most controversial Special Feature we have ever run, for it cuts to the heart of the issue of what a graduate program in applied linguistics should look like as we near the end of the 20th century, given institutional constraints and the history and diversity of our field.

Finally, in the Reviews section, Marianne Celce-Murcia reviews the two-volume collection of selected papers from the 1987 AILA conference in Sydney, Australia, and Antony John Kunnan reviews a recent book on the political implications of multilingualism in India today.

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> *Lady Wishfort*: Well, friend, you are enough to reconcile me to the bad world, or else I would retire to deserts and solitudes. Dear Marwood, let us leave the world, and retire by ourselves and be shepherdesses.
>
> William Congreve
> *The Way of the World*, Act V

This issue marks my fifth, and last, issue with *IAL*. As Assistant Editor to Antony Kunnan, I saw the first three issues through to publication, and as Editor I oversaw the two most recent issues, including *IAL*'s first special guest-edited issue on Socialization through Language and Interaction. As I step down in order to devote my time and energies to my dissertation research, I would like to thank a number of people who have been supportive of *IAL* from its very beginning. The first to thank is Larry Selinker, quoted at the beginning of this editorial, who purchased the very first individual subscription to the journal, and all the other charter subscribers who put their money down when *IAL* was only an idea, thus providing us with some start-up funds that set our activities in motion. I must also express my gratitude to the faculty and administrative staff of the Department of TESL & Applied Linguistics at UCLA who have supported *IAL* materially, logistically, and spiritually, helping to make this extra-curricular activity a professionalizing activity for all the graduate students who chose to get involved.

A word of thanks is also due to all of the authors who submitted manuscripts to *IAL* and to all of the readers who agreed to referee manuscripts for the journal. It's all very well to decide to start a journal, but without manuscripts there would be no journal, and without referees there would be no quality control and no constructive input for accepted authors to revise their manuscripts. Finally, I must thank all my fellow graduate students who, over the last two and one half years, took on various editorial, managerial, and clerical responsibilities, on a strictly voluntary basis, and made *Issues in Applied Linguistics* into what it is today. Special thanks is of course due to those colleagues who shared the responsibilities of the editorial committee and the vision of the journal's mission--Antony Kunnan, Anne Lazaraton, Patrick Gonzales, Rachel Lagunoff, and Joseph Plummer.

It is Joseph Plummer, a first-year M.A. student, who has been appointed the next Editor-in-Chief of *IAL*. Joe took over the responsibilities of Managing Editor at the end of 1991 and brings a fresh view and unbounded enthusiasm for overseeing the next generation of editors and the next volumes of the journal, one of which is scheduled to be a guest-edited special issue on Neurobiology and Language Acquisition. As this issue goes to print, Joe is assuming the responsibilities of Editor-in-Chief. I hope all of our readership and the community of graduate student and faculty applied linguists will support Joe and continue to support the journal. It's off to a great start--let's all keep it going.

June 1992 Sally Jacoby

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