

The Impact of the Language Transfer in Different Age Ranges

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Abstract. Language transfers occur when people learn and use different languages. The present literature focuses on studying Second language Acquisition (SLA) or language transfer-related issues. In the modern world, there are many people who acquire and use bilingual or multilingual which has become a common social phenomenon. This research will focus on how language transfer affects different age ranges and different learning environment situations. After studying a large number of literatures on second language acquisition and positive or negative language transfer at different ages, it is found that age and language transfer do not necessarily correlate in a direct way. Language transfer is mostly related to the motivation for learning a second language, the level of learning in L2 and the learning environment. Age has little effect on language transfer. In the other words, age is only one of the factors of positive and negative language transfer rather than the main factor.

Keywords: Language transfer, children, adults, second language acquisition.

1. Introduction

In recent years, English is becoming more and more common in the world, therefore, there is importance in learning English or learning a second or third language, and is used as a tool of communication in many situations. The author Odlin (2004) mentioned in the study that age is one of the factors which affect language transfer, but there are several authors Ellis (1994) and Jarvis (2004) did not mention that [1-3]. Age affects language transfer is a controversial topic, so the author decided to collect a large of literatures on language transfer for analysis and study. The author will analyze how the second language learners or third-language learners use language transfer and study whether language transfer affects by the learner's environment and age range.

The research focuses on the language transfer of non-native English speakers and learners about the relationship between their ages. What factors influence the language transfer ability of non-native speakers of English, such as age ranges, learning environments, and motivation to learn the target language? This thesis focuses on the factors that language transfer as a second language speaker of English among learners of different ages and the impact that learners' learning of second language acquisition.

There are more and more people are studying overseas or born into bilingual or multilingual families. The author will categorize the literature which is testing different age groups and introduce the topics, methods, and findings of the other studies. The author will analyze other factors that made different age people to learn a second language acquisition. Therefore, studying the language proficiency of people of different ages can learn about their learning L2 motivation and the effects of the environment for learning a second language. People should focus on learning about the positive or negative effects of these factors on them in different age groups.

2. Language Transfer Definition

Language transfer can be defined as the influences of one language to another in speaking and writing situations by bilingual or multilingual learners [3]. It is emphasized that the influence of one language on another does not refer to the mother tongue or the second language. In some cases, it also denotes a language transition from a second to a third language. There are two types of language transfer: positive language transfer and negative language transmission. When two languages are similar and learning is easier, there is positive language transfer; conversely, when two languages

diverge or become fossilized, there is negative language transfer [4]. Moreover, research indicates that varying levels of second language learning are related to native language learning and positive language learning in the transfer of languages. As Corder mentioned in his article that many students who low level of a second language are extremely dependent on their first language which may lead to negative or positive language transfer, and there are some studies have shown that the negative language transfer is particularly pronounced in middle-level students [5].

3. Ages That Affect the Language Transfer

3.1. Children

Pasquarella, et al. focus on the study of morphological awareness transferred between languages in bilingual Chinese-English children [6]. There are explicit mentions of language transfer between English and Mandarin in morphological awareness. There is a very close connection between Chinese vocabulary and English compound awareness. Morphological awareness, which is the capacity to reflect and control voice, is a crucial determinant of predicted literacy structure [6]. Morphological awareness is important for learning basic vocabulary, word reading and reading comprehension [6]. In other words, morphological awareness is the basis of L2 learners' language transfer ability. However, in the study of the author, there is only a small number of research have looked at how morphological knowledge affects bilingual children's development across languages [6].

The second article (Gottardo et al., 2001) study the phonological skill was correlated across L1 and L2 [7]. The author collected 65 children whose L1 is Cantonese and whose L2 is English. The research method involves tests of reading comprehension in both English and Mandarin as well as phonological, syntactic, and orthographic processing abilities. The authors Gottardo et al., (2001) results that there is a correlation between phonological skills in L1, L2 and reading ability in the second language, which implies that the data supports the importance of phonological knowledge in L1 to L2 language transfer [7]. The result of the study emphasized negative transfer's consequences involved underproduction, overproduction, production errors, and misinterpretation during language transfer from L1 to L2.

The third research is the factors of language transfer, encompassing the degree of similarity between the first language and the target language and the level of proficiency in the transfer from the first language to the second language [8]. This study divided 54 bilingual Vietnamese-English children and Spanish-English children aged 6 to 8 years old into three groups by different levels of proficiency: a low L1 proficiency Vietnamese-English group, a low L1 proficiency Spanish-English group, and a high L1 competence Spanish-English group. Children were assessed on 8 vocabulary terms using narrative-based activities by the authors Pham & et al. (2018) [8]. The results in the article showed there are improvements in first language proficiency for all groups after narrative-based activities, but there is only the third group which is Spanish-English high proficiency showed improved L2 after narrative-based activities. The conclusions of the article demonstrate the significance and effect of first-language proficiency for language transfer to a second language [8]. Also, the study illustrates that language transfer from the first language to the second language is more effective during the childhood period [8].

In general, morphological awareness is the basis of children's first and second language transfer. The higher level of proficiency in children's first language, the better their proficiency to learn and speak the second language, but there is no evidence that language transfer is closely related to the age of children. The impact of language transfer in children is primarily related to the child's proficiency in their first language.

3.2. Adolescents

For adolescent students, the authors (Siu & Ho., 2015) tested the syntactic skills of 413 young Cantonese-English bilingual students in Hong Kong (202 first graders and 211 third graders students) in bilingualism and compared the structure and role of the two languages which is Chinese and

English in reading comprehension [9]. The authors Siu & Ho (2015) tested word sequence skills, morphosyntactic skills, and reading comprehension in both the first and second languages and concluded that young bilingual students are better able to use correspondences between the syntax of the L1 and L2 to support second language learning in their writing and reading comprehension [9].

According to several research, language acquisition has a significant influence on second language acquisition (SLA). In China, middle schools set English-required subjects and promote a second language for young students. The second article focuses on language transfer for young students whose mother tongue is Chinese and also mentioned the impact of positive and negative language transfer on adolescents [4]. The study also found that language transfer had some negative effects on low-level L2 students in reading comprehension and writing aspects. Due to the detrimental effects of negative language transfer on young students in a second language, the author Zhao (2019) provides suggestions for this limitation which is that improving English teaching is necessary for middle school students to learn L2 [4].

There are limited articles on adolescent language transfer, but through the study of adolescent language transfer, it is found that teenagers are more easily to get a negative transfer when they learn a second language, because they are extremely dependent on their mother tongue.

3.3. Adults

Adults tend to have negative language transfer when learning a target language. The author Cortés, (2005) mentions and studies the negative language transfer effects between Spanish and English [10]. According to analyzing the most frequent mistakes learners make due to this transfer, learners will both understand why they make such a mistake, and they will be able to predict the mistake in the following situations [10]. The author also mentioned language transfer and age which is adults seem to be more easily transferred than children, children usually did not conscious of using different languages, but adults are not.

There is an article focusing on the negative transfer of language, especially L1 negative transfer such as phonological, morphological, lexicon, syntax, and discourse errors [11]. The participants in the study focused on common errors in the writing of Chinese college students who were not English majors and the study demonstrate the negative transfer that occurs when adults learn a second language or target language. The author Xu's (2022) conclusions indicate that negative language transfer is unavoidable in bilingual and multilingual adult students [11]. The second literature investigation into the function of language aptitude in second language acquisition (SLA) was done utilizing a mixed methods approach [12]. A technical school and three different universities were represented among the Hungarian adults who participated in the quantitative technique, which examined their SLA motivation and background environments. The results of the study (Zólyomi, 2022) indicated that older students scored higher on the test and that males scored significantly higher in grammar concepts [12]. According to the authors' study, which can be connected to our topic of language transfer. Language transfer and age may be related and there are several factors, such as learning techniques, motivation, environment, and language habits, that affect the language proficiency of L2 learners. [12].

Deng & Wang mainly talks about how adult L2 learners are hard to acquire verb separation including separation patterns that are complex and numerous [13]. According to the authors Deng & Wang (2019), the decomposition and oral production in Chinese verb separation are challenges for Adult L2 learners [13]. The authors involved 28 Chinese learners of a second language in a study that included three tasks: verb decomposition, grammatical judgment, and oral translation. The findings of the article indicate that the decomposition of Chinese verb separation and oral translation is difficult for adult L2 learners.

There are similarities between the articles (Pasquarella, et al., 2011) and (Deng & Wang, 2019) in that the authors examine the grammar and vocabulary of language transfer for English as a second language learner and the difference is authors selected different age groups for their study [6,13]. For

the findings of these two studies on language transfer, the authors did not demonstrate whether there was a direct effect of language transfer and age ranges.

Overall, in studying the cases of adults, it was found that negative language transfer often occurs during their learning of a second language. Some authors Deng & Wang, (2019) and Xu, (2022) have mentioned the language transfer of adults in writing and oral aspects. However, it was found that there was no direct effect between age and language transfer [11, 13]

4. Other Factors That Affect the Language Transfer

According to a large number of papers on language transition factors, in addition to age range as a factor in language transition, there are several factors that may affect people learning the second language which is a different learning environment, family cultural background, such as bilingualism or multilingualism environments. These are factors that can affect learners' second language acquisition. In this part, the author collects some literatures that other factors that affect language transfer in second language acquisition.

Depending on the topic of language transfer impacts of positive and negative language transfer and age, some authors have studied and compared the issue of language transfer at different ages. The author Montrul (2010) talks about comparing the first language influences adult L2 learners in a manner similar to how L2 influences early bilinguals' L1 [14]. The study looked at the Spanish clitics, clitic left dislocations, and differential object marking (DOM) using 67 heritage speakers and 72 English L2 learners. The author Montrul (2010) mentions the findings that the role of age in second language acquisition (SLA) and there are permanent effects of language transfer, but there is no particular effect in the grammar aspect [14].

The second article mainly collects and analyzes 33 articles with four domains in different countries. The study of the research mainly researches language transfer in decoding skills, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and morphological awareness [15]. The authors Yang & Sheng (2017) mainly analyze the research results moderated by location [15]. The result of the research 33 articles is that language transfer in learning is possible because English and Chinese have similar linguistic characteristics.

These two articles comprehensively discuss the effects of language transfer on different age ranges, and find that the effect of age is only a small factor. For example, Montrul (2010) mentioned that language transfer has an impact on second language acquisition but has no impact on the grammar aspect [14]. Meanwhile, the author Montrul (2010) does not mention the relationship between language transfer and age ranges [14].

5. Conclusion

There are numerous elements that influence language transfer throughout the target language acquisition period. This research mainly focuses on the effects of language transfer on three different age groups. First, in part of children's age range, there is not much evidence that age impacts second language acquisition and language transfer. A synthesis of the literature on language transfer finds that there are many factors that contribute to people's second language acquisition and that the impact is depending on a variety of factors. For example, the study of literature on adolescents is limited, but some authors found that adolescents are more trend to get negative language transfer, which is related to their language environment, and their learning environment. The last age division is adults, and depending on a large body of literature it was found that negative language transfer occurs frequently in adults, and also finding there is no direct effect of language shift and age. In general, the literatures on language transfer and age are limited, and there is a need for more studies on language transfer at different ages and on positive and negative language transfer. Most articles focus on negative language transfer rather than positive language transfer. There should have more study participants and research learning L2 motivations in the future.

The author wishes that future studies on age, language transfer, and second language learning would be conducted more frequently because the author is a teacher and educator. Therefore, there will be more participants available to help educators to study and analyze the impact of language transition on different age groups. In recent, there are more and more people studying, living and working abroad who are from different family structures (such as bilingualism and multilingualism), and different cultural background means that people will have much more opportunities to communicate cross-cultural. This is a positive, meaningful and wonderful development for the linguistic and education fields.

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