

Zhōng Jiè Yǔ Yǎn Xué Duō Wéi Yán Jiū [Multidimensional Studies in Interlanguage Linguistics].

Lianrui Yang 杨连瑞. Beijing, China: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2015. Pp. xxviii + 340.

Since the term “interlanguage” was coined by Larry Selinker in 1972 to refer to the systematic knowledge of a second language (L2) that is independent of both a learner’s first or native language (L1) and the target language (TL) (Ellis, 2008), it has received a tremendous amount of attention in the second language acquisition (SLA) research literature. After more than 40 years of study, researchers have reached the consensus that interlanguage is a linguistic system in its own right (Selinker, 2014) such that the interlanguage system has the basic characteristics of natural language and its intrinsic regularity can be identified at all linguistic levels, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. In line with new developments in interlanguage research, Professor Lianrui Yang has recently identified a new interlanguage construct, *interlanguage linguistics*, in this new monograph that is currently only available in Chinese. All of the various strands of interlanguage research are integrated into this new construct, suggesting the formation of this new discipline.

Focusing specifically on interlanguage development, the 32 chapters that constitute this new book offer fundamental information about both traditional as well as emerging topics in interlanguage research. The book highlights the interdisciplinary nature of the field in its selection of themes and chapters. Its chapters touch on topics ranging from theoretical constructs to multidimensional studies of interlanguage development.

For this review, the chapters have been grouped and organized under five main themes: (1) Interlanguage Phonology (Chapters 1-7), (2) Interlanguage Morphology and Syntax (Chapters 8-11, 14-15, 17-20), (3) Interlanguage Pragmatics (Chapters 12-13, 16), (4) Interlanguage Vocabulary (Chapters 21-28), and (5) Interlanguage Linguistics (Chapters 29-32). These subdivisions offer general and essential information regarding the status of research on interlanguage phonology, syntax, pragmatics, lexicon, etc. The general contents of each of these major thematic areas will be described next, followed by brief chapter-by-chapter summaries as well.

Theme 1, consisting of Chapters 1-7, discusses the development of the interlanguage phonetic system, and more specifically, factors influencing “phonological fossilization,” including physiological, psychological, cultural, and educational factors. More importantly, suggestions and strategies are provided to reduce or prevent fossilization. Studies of the Critical Period Hypothesis on phonological acquisition are also included in this area.

The introductory chapter, Chapter 1, provides a brief history of interlanguage scholarship and an overview of seminal interlanguage studies to prepare readers to reflect on various aspects of the interlanguage linguistics construct. Chapter 2 emphasizes that interlanguage development is not only constrained by L1 transfer, but also reflects linguistic universals to some extent. Chapter 3 discusses different theories, methods, and implications of interlanguage fossilization studies and specifically phonetic fossilization. Chapter 4 analyses the various scientific experiments on or against the Critical Period Hypothesis in second language acquisition,

compares the advantages and disadvantages of language learners of different age periods, and provides some foreign language education strategies in the context of China. Chapter 5 examines the function of Universal Grammar (UG) in interlanguage representation. Chapter 6 focuses on a shift in perspective in regard to language transfer from UG to cognitive science. To close theme 1, Chapter 7 analyzes characteristics of L1 transfer in the initial state of Chinese-English interlanguage.

Theme 2, comprised of Chapters 8-11, 14-15, and 17-20, focuses on characteristics of interlanguage syntax development. Syntactic features between spoken and written Chinese-English interlanguage discourse are also considered in this section.

Chapter 8 looks at the mechanism and theoretical basis of pseudo-passive structures in Chinese-English interlanguage. Chapter 9 provides a comparative analysis of syntactic features between spoken and written Chinese-English interlanguage discourse. Chapter 10 investigates the effects of three specific factors on the acquisition and production of relative clauses by Chinese English majors: types of subordinate clauses (single- or double-embedded), syntactic functions of relative pronouns, and the influence of time pressure on production. Chapter 11 surveys the effect of text reconstruction tasks on interlanguage written production, focusing on three dimensions: fluency, complexity, and accuracy. Chapter 14 explores pragmatic constraints on the acquisition of English preposings (i.e., pseudo-clefting, where a phrase in a sentence is emphasized by moving it from the predicate to the subject position) by Chinese English as a foreign language (EFL) learners as a function of information status (i.e., information-structural categories, such as old/given and new information in a sentence, that determine linguistic forms). Chapter 15 discusses the functions of topic and topic-chain from the perspective of discourse. It is argued that in the absence of morphological clues, Chinese EFL learners have more difficulty recognizing the pragmatic relationships found in preposing constructions, and therefore more cognitive effort is needed. Chapter 17 provides a very useful overview and discussion of interlanguage study from the perspective of the theory of relevance. Chapters 18 and 19 investigate the general characteristics of topic-prominent interlanguage development of Chinese EFL learners in the process of acquiring subject-prominent English structures. Chapter 18 looks at typological structures by identifying the interrelations between the pragmatic constraints and the acquisition of topic-prominent/subject-prominent typological features by Chinese learners of English. Chapter 19 examines the general characteristics of topic-prominent interlanguage development of Chinese EFL learners in the process of acquiring subject-prominent English structures from a discourse perspective. Chapter 20 explores the latest development of metaphor theory and the theory of language transfer from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, concluding that metaphor transfer from the native language is the most significant contributor towards the unnatural language produced in second language writing.

Theme 3 offers discussions on research methods for interlanguage pragmatics as well as principles for data collection in this area. Factors influencing occurrences of pragmatic transfer include differences between L1 and TL language structures, L2 proficiency, attitude towards L2 learning, etc.

While Chapters 12, 13, and 16 are technically found amidst the chapters in theme 2, the contents of these chapters serve as broad literature reviews of various issues in interlanguage

pragmatics research, so they are summarized here separately. Chapter 12 provides a very useful overview and discussion of the different theories and methods which could be used to study interlanguage pragmatics. Chapter 13 then expands upon issues associated with different interlanguage pragmatics research and data collection methods. In addition, it also discusses principle issues of data collection, emphasizing that interlanguage pragmatics research in China should first draw upon relevant research abroad before developing and implementing particular research methods. In Chapter 16, studies on pragmatic transfer are reviewed from the perspective of factors that influence the occurrences of pragmatic transfer.

Chapters 21-28, making up theme 4, present studies that apply categorization theory to explain the conceptual transfer of words and phrases during interlanguage development and vocabulary attrition. Categorization theory suggests that human acts of categorization fall roughly under three models: classical, prototypical, and exemplar. Thus, from the perspective of categorization theory, the author attempts to summarize three types of conceptual differences in words and phrases caused by categorization disparities. Furthermore, explanations are provided for these conceptual differences from three aspects: word family resemblance, cognitive models, and cultural models to illustrate the significant roles prototype, context, and cultural models play in interlanguage development. This section also analyzes a vast number of empirical studies dedicated to interlanguage vocabulary attrition over the past few decades, and finds that these studies can be roughly divided into two categories, namely, studies designed to understand vocabulary attrition itself and studies aimed to capture variables affecting vocabulary attrition. The majority of studies in the first category show that vocabulary is more vulnerable to attrition than other aspects of a second language such as phonology and morphosyntax, and productive vocabulary is more prone to attrition than receptive vocabulary. Analysis of the research from the second category reveal that many factors contribute to vocabulary attrition, including external, learner, and lexical factors.

Chapter 21 summarizes three types of conceptual differences in words and phrases caused by categorization differences. This chapter also explores implications for the conceptual transfer of words and phrases during interlanguage development in EFL settings. Chapter 22 investigates the processing mechanism of lexical neighbors by Chinese-English bilinguals. Chapter 23 explores how parameters are set for telicity in the interlanguage grammar. Chapter 24 investigates article accuracy order and usage patterns by Chinese learners of English and tries to identify possible developmental patterns for English article usage. Chapter 25 reviews some important approaches addressing language attrition, such as the regressive hypothesis, the retrieval failure hypothesis, the savings paradigm hypothesis, the relearning hypothesis, the interlanguage hypothesis, and the UG approach. Chapter 26 introduces several social psychological factors such as the age of attrition, sex, motivation, attitude, identity, language contact, etc. Chapter 27 investigates the situation of L2-induced L1 attrition and introduces six related theoretical models, namely, the regression hypothesis, the threshold hypothesis, the interference hypothesis, the simplification hypothesis, the markedness hypothesis, and the dormant language hypothesis. Chapter 28 then concludes by providing a reference for vocabulary teaching, vocabulary maintenance, and policymaking by reviewing vocabulary attrition research worldwide.

The concluding section, theme 5 that includes Chapters 29-32, provides a thorough synthesis of the studies and theoretical frameworks explored in this volume and also a critical reflection on relevant interlanguage studies. Based on these discussions, Yang emphasizes the critical need to propose a new field of *interlanguage linguistics* to pursue theoretically informed, methodologically sound, and pedagogically relevant research to expand the field.

Chapter 29 discusses several approaches that have appeared as a result of the emergence of cognition and cognitive science research. Of particular interest to SLA and language learning due to their basis in psycholinguistic processing are the theories of Parallel Distributed Processing, Competition Models, Processability Theory, Information Processing Theory, and Input Processing. Chapter 30 focuses on various individual difference factors that affect interlanguage development, including language aptitude, motivation, and learning strategies. Latest developments are reviewed and new directions for future research are also recommended. Chapter 31 highlights the interdisciplinary nature of SLA research and illustrates its broad research scope and the many diverse research approaches found in the field. Finally, Chapter 32 provides a thorough synthesis of many interlanguage theoretical frameworks, and is followed by a critical reflection on the interlanguage linguistics construct presented in the introductory chapter.

Indeed, *Multidimensional Studies in Interlanguage Linguistics* features engaging content with practical pedagogical implications. However, it also has two limitations. First, and critically, with the exception of Chapter 22 that examined Chinese-English bilinguals, only Chinese learners of English were investigated in this book, but research on learners from many different L1 backgrounds will be necessary before we can fully adopt interlanguage linguistics as a new field of study. So increasing the generalizability of interlanguage linguistics by adding several other languages of study should be an immediate priority going forward. Second, as one of the five themes in this monograph, Interlanguage Phonology was not thoroughly discussed as it was only really considered in two chapters (Chapters 2 and 3).

Despite these drawbacks, this monograph is one that will serve as an excellent resource for Chinese undergraduate and graduate students interested in learning more about interlanguage research, for both novice researchers exploring new territory and for experienced researchers looking to broaden their knowledge base or begin projects into new areas. This is the type of book that readers who are serious about developing an understanding of interlanguage development will want to dip into on many occasions. Finally, as Yang notes in his foreword, this is a book that “puts forward an interdisciplinary construct—*Interlanguage Linguistics*—for the first time” (p. xii). Yang is to be congratulated on producing such a fine piece of work, and hopefully an English translation will become available soon so that even more can benefit from its insights.

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