

Interlanguage and the second language acquisition process

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the concept of interlanguage which is based on the assumption that the learner of a foreign language, at any particular moment in his learning sequence, is using a language system which is neither the native language, nor the foreign language. It is a unique language, with its own grammar, its own lexicon and so on. The rules used by the learner cannot be found in his own mother tongue, or in the Target Language. It is important to understand that the learner's language is a system in its own right. The question is: How does the language learner create his interlanguage? What are the basic processes and strategies that the learner adopts in order to acquire the language? Language transfer, overgeneralization at the phonetic, grammatical and lexical level and at the level of discourse, syntactic and semantic simplification are some of the key concepts related to interlanguage. In this perspective the errors of the language learner become interesting because they serve as indicators of the regularity that exists within the interlanguage system which is used by the language learner in order to satisfy his communicative needs at a given moment. As a conclusion in my opinion the better we know these concepts and the processes and strategies that the language learner goes through, the more effective our didactic interventions might be.

Keywords: interlanguage, error analyses, second language acquisition.

In this paper I intend to consider the following question: what is responsible for the form and function of a person's interlanguage? In order to answer this question, it will be necessary to examine what is meant by a number of commonly used terms such as transfer, interlanguage and interference. It will also be of use to review the history of interlanguage as a concept in order to understand where it came from and where it may be going.

Lado (1957) proposed that second language learners rely almost entirely on their native language in the process of learning the target language. Dulay and Burt (1974) suggested that transfer was largely unimportant in the creation of interlanguage. It may be useful to briefly consider the historical context of the development of interlanguage.

Contrastive Analysis

Lado (1957) and Fries (1945) are the names most closely associated with the CAi hypothesis. In a specific attempt to rationalise and order language teaching materials, Fries wrote:

The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner. (1945: 9)

The basic concept behind CA was that a structural 'picture' of any one language could be constructed which might then be used in direct comparison with the structural 'picture' of another language. Through a process of 'mapping' one system onto another, similarities and differences could be identified. Identifying the differences would lead to a better understanding of the potential problems that a learner of the particular L2 would face. Structurally different areas of the two languages involved would result in interference. This term was used to describe any influence from the L1 which would have an effect on the acquisition of the L2. This was the origin of the term transfer, and a distinction was made between positive and negative transfer. Positive transfer occurred where there was concordance between the L1 and L2. In such a situation, acquisition would take place with little or no difficulty. Negative transfer, on the other hand, occurred where there was some sort of dissonance between the L1 and L2. In this case, acquisition of the L2 would be more difficult and take longer because of the 'newness' (hence, difficulty) of the L2 structure.

These two concepts of transfer were central to CA and reflected an essentially behaviourist model of language learning, which described the acquisition of language in terms of habit formation. Reflecting Skinner's interpretation of laboratory experiments on rats (1957), where positive and negative stimuli induced certain 'learned' behaviours, language acquisition (certainly FLA) was described in the same way. The broad acceptance that these views had in the 50s and 60s encouraged the Audiolingual Method of teaching which focused on extensive drilling in order to form the required 'habits'. Error was seen as an unwanted deviation from the norm and an imperfect product of perfect input.

Challenging Skinner's model of behaviourist learning, Chomsky (1959) proposed a more cognitive approach to language learning which involved the use of a LAD. This device, he argued, was reserved exclusively for processing and producing language, and was separate from other cognitive processes. Moreover, Chomsky posited that there are 'language universals' which all babies have access to and which are essentially innate in humans.

This idea of 'innateness' was particularly interesting and brought into question the practices of Audiolingualism.

i For Abbreviations please see Appendix 1

Language, it was argued, was not simply a matter of habit formation, but rather had its own natural agenda and its own developmental course. Certain aspects of vocabulary learning may follow behaviourist principles, but an important piece of counter-behaviourist evidence is that children say things they could not possibly have heard from those around them such as “runned” and “falled”. Chomsky argued that children were perceiving regularities and forming rules for how the language works rather than simply imitating other people. Importantly, language was said to be rule-governed, structure-dependent and fundamentally generative.

Working with phonological and phonetic data in the early 1960s, Nemser (1971) began talking about ‘deviant’ learner language. Many of his ideas differed from essential concepts of **IL**. There were, however, certain points of concordance. He wrote, for example:

Learner speech at a given time is the patterned product of a linguistic system..distinct from [NL] and [TL] and internally structured (my emphasis) (Nemser 1971: 116)

Nemser also identified the **IL** equivalent of fossilisation as a system of “permanent intermediate systems and subsystems” (1971: 118). In his study of the production and perception of interdental fricatives and stops (1971), Nemser pointed out that productive and perceptive mechanisms were not isomorphic, and that this was not taken fully into account in either **CA** or **SLA**. He argued that in creating **IL**, learners sometimes made the **L1** or **L2** categories equivalent and sometimes they did not. Blends could also be expected but not only from **L1** and **L2** material. Nemser provided evidence for at least partial autonomy of an **IL** system: “The test data contain numerous examples of elements which do not have their origin in either phonemic system”. (Nemser, 1971: 134)

Brière (1968) and Selinker (1966) also provided results which supported Nemser’s basic idea that language transfer does occur, but not in an ‘all or nothing’ style, typical of the **CA** hypothesis.

The Birth of Interlanguage

Although Selinker (1972) coined the term “interlanguage”, it was Corder (1967) who is considered responsible for raising issues which became central to studies of **IL**. Building on ideas already explored by scholars such as Nemser (ibid.) above, Corder suggested that there was structure in learner language, and that certain inferences could be made about the learning process by describing successive states of the learner language, noting the changes and correlating this with the input. Moreover, Corder argued that the appearance of error in a learner’s production was evidence that the learner was organising the knowledge available to them at a particular point in time.

Errors, he stated, were the most important source of information, accounting for the fact that learners have a ‘built in syllabus’ and that a process of hypothesis formulation and reformulation was continuously occurring. The value of error-making in language learning was consequently reassessed, with a move away from seeing error as a purely negative phenomenon. Error analysis became a valuable tool in the classroom for teachers and researchers. Various taxonomies were devised to account for certain types of error (e.g. Dulay and Burt 1974). It was suggested that spoken and written texts produced different kinds of errors, that there were differences between grammatical and lexical errors, that it was possible to construct a gradation of serious and less serious errors. In short, language learning began to be seen as a process which involved the construction of an **IL**, a ‘transitional competence’ reflecting the dynamic nature of the learner’s developing system. As a result of the variety of errors and the difficulty associated with interpreting them, Corder proposed a ‘general law’ for **EA** and **IL**. He suggested that every learner sentence should be regarded as idiosyncratic until shown to be otherwise (Corder, 1981).

This is an important concept to bear in mind since it emphasises the fact that **IL** is a personal construct and process, and that while it may be true to say that certain tendencies are typical of certain learners from the same linguistic background, it cannot be true to say that all learners from that background will have such tendencies. As Kohn (1986) notes:

For the analysis of (inter)language processes, group knowledge is of absolutely no importance. It is the learner's own autonomous and functional knowledge and his own certainty or uncertainty which determines his interlanguage behaviour. (1986:23)

Evaluating Acquisition

It is perhaps useful at this point to briefly focus on language learning and consider the difficulties of defining terms such as 'acquisition'. Sharwood Smith (1986) claims that if a language item is used spontaneously by the learner in '90% of obligatory contexts', then it can be said to be acquired. But what does this mean? If a learner's production closely reflects **L2** norms of speaking, can it be assumed that the learner's competence is also at a similar level?

Clark (1974) warns about the dangers of 'performing without competence' where a student uses correct chunks of the language without analysis, giving the impression that the norm has been attained. Conversely, Sharwood Smith points out that it is equally possible that a learner may have 100% competence but 90% performance - 'competence without performance'.

For example, a rule may be 'acquired' (competence) without showing itself due to semantic redundancy or as a result of processing problems. A learner may be able to hear the sound $\text{y}\text{Ø}\text{y}$ very clearly and know that it is the correct phonological representation of "th" in the word "think", but nevertheless produces the sound /y/ instead. This clearly rejects the simplistic notion that performance reflects competence. The relationship between performance and competence is a complex one that is not fully understood, but I think it is necessary to make the point that in trying to identify transfer in **IL**, there is a danger of relying too closely on a product level analysis of data.

Natural Languages

In helping to define **IL**, it seems necessary to consider what is meant by 'natural language'. Adjemian (1976) suggests it is:

Any human language shared by a community of speakers and developed over time by a general process of evolution (1976: 298)

Arguing from the perspective of **FLLA**, Wode (1984) links the idea of a natural language with cognitive abilities. If general cognition determines structures of learner language, then why, he asks, do children and adults produce similar developmental structures? If cognitive deficits are used to explain children's language, then this is not applicable to adult language. While adults have a developed and clear concept of negation, there is considerable evidence that both adults and **FLLs** produce the same negative developmental structures when learning English (Dulay and Burt 1974). Therefore, Wode argues, the capacity to learn a 'natural language' is different from the ability to cognize one's environment. A Chomsky-like special type of cognition is implied, or as Wode refers to it, a 'linguo-cognition' (Wode, 1981). It is these systems which constrain and design the boundaries of 'natural' languages. Extending the argument further, Bialystok (1984) specifically suggests that **IL** has many properties of a 'natural' language because it is generated by the same cognitive processes as those responsible for **L1** acquisition.

A further characteristic of a 'natural' language is that it is adaptable to change.

This, Wode argues, is what makes it so useful as a means of communication.

There is a need for flexibility and a need to be able to transfer information from one language into another:

Consequently, any linguistic theory that does not adequately provide for transfer cannot possibly qualify as an adequate description of a language or as a theoretical framework for describing natural languages. (1984:182).

Universal Grammar in Interlanguage

In considering universals, there are perhaps two approaches worth mentioning:

1. The Chomskyan approach
2. The Greenbergian approach

The Chomskyan approach would employ the notion of **UG** which could define the classes of all possible human languages. Universal properties would be argued to be innate which means, for example, that children can construct grammars very quickly. A Greenbergian approach (1966), on the other hand, would “search for regularities in the ways that languages vary, and on the constraints and principles that underlie this variation” (Hawkins, 1983: 6).

Data showing surface feature language would need to be collected, and a wide range of languages would need to be considered. Consequently, for example, **SOV** languages are generally seen to have preposed rather than postposed adjectives.

Selinker (1972) claims that **ILs** are systematic in the sense of a ‘natural language’ and that **ILs** will not violate language universals. But what exactly is meant by a ‘language universal’? What is the source of a universal, and do all universals affect **IL**? Gass (1984) suggests five sources of a universal:

1. Physical basis (e.g. the physical shape of the vocal cords)
2. Human perception and processing devices
3. A **Language Acquisition Device**
4. Historical change
5. Interaction

These are the most common explanations given to the rationale behind universals. Gass and Ard (1980) propose that universals stemming from language/historical change are least likely to influence **IL**, whereas physical, processing and cognitive universals are the most likely to have an effect on a person’s **IL**.

Supporting a **UG** hypothesis in **IL**, Gass (1984) points to the hierarchy of structures in a language, for example the hierarchy of relative clause types which a language can relativise (Keenan and Comrie, 1977). Higher hierarchical positions are easier to relativise than lower ones (Tarallo and Myhill, 1983). Further evidence is provided by Kumpf (1982) in a study of untutored learners whose tense and aspect systems did not correspond to the **L1** or **L2**. It was argued that the learners created unique form, meaning and function relationships which corresponded to universal principles of natural languages.

While there seems to be a certain amount of evidence that **ILs** are consistent in that they do not violate constraints of **UG**, the question still remains as to what in fact they are or more precisely, what they are constructed from. As noted here by Kumpf (ibid.) and elsewhere by Corder (1967), **IL** is not a hybrid of the **L1** and **L2** although certain elements of one or the other or indeed both may be present. Much research suggests that transfer is an important element in the construction of an **IL** although this assertion raises several questions, namely: What is, or is not transferable between languages, and why should this be so?

Transfer

Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) suggest that there are two possible ways of describing the term 'interference'. One is from a psychological perspective, which suggests that there is influence from old habits when new ones are being learned. The second is from a sociolinguistic perspective which describes the language interactions which occur when two language communities are in contact. Three such examples are borrowing, codeswitching and fossilisation. Borrowing essentially means the incorporation of linguistic material from one language into another, for example, the borrowing of thousands of words from old French into Anglo-Saxon after the Norman conquest of 1066. Such words maintain their general sound pattern but alter the phonetic and phonological system of the new language. 'Integrated borrowing', according to Dulay and Burt (1974b), occurs when the new word in question is fully incorporated into the learner's **IL**. Selinker (1992) argues that this is in fact transfer.

'Communicative borrowing' on the other hand, reflects a communicative strategy which helps to get over the deficiencies of the **L2**. The learner falls back on structures or patterns from the **L1** in order to get a message across.

Selinker (1992) notes that if communication is successful, then transfer will (or may) happen. The danger is that successful communication does not depend entirely on formal correction. Persistent errors (e.g. wrongly incorporated errors, covert errors) could lead to fossilisation where a learner, uncorrected for the reasons mentioned above, but still able to successfully get their message understood, has no sociofunctional need to alter their **IL** and so it fossilises in that state.

Code switching describes the use of two language systems for communication, usually evidenced by a sudden, brief shift from one to another. This phenomenon is not an indication of a lack of competence, but rather tends to obey strict structural rules. Certain structural combinations, for example, are not possible, e.g. switching before relative clause boundaries or before adverbial clauses is 'illegal'.

A more behaviourist interpretation of interference was mentioned earlier; two types were suggested:

1. Positive transfer
2. Negative transfer

Both of these types refer to the automatic and subconscious use of old behaviour in new learning situations. Specifically, semantic and syntactic transfer of this nature reflects the most commonly understood uses of the term.

Corder (1983) suggested the need for a word other than 'transfer' which he claimed belonged to the school of behaviourist learning theory. He suggested the term 'Mother Tongue Influence'. Sharwood Smith (1986) refined the idea still further by suggesting 'Cross Linguistic Influence', which would take into account the potential influence of **L3** on **L2** where another learned language, but not the **L1** might have an effect on the learning of the **L2**. Also encompassed within the meaning of **CLI** is the notion of possible **L2** influence on **L1**.

'Transfer' is also used by educational psychologists to refer to the use of past knowledge and experience in a new situation, e.g. a literate **SLL** does not have to learn that written symbols represent the spoken form of the new language. Similarly, concepts such as deixis are already acquired when a learner comes to learn a second language.

For many people, the proof of the pudding is seen in transfer errors which reflect the equivalent structures of the **L1**. Thus, for example, if a Japanese learner consistently omitted the indefinite articles of a sentence, then negative transfer could be claimed. Conversely, if a French learner regularly included the correct definite or indefinite articles in a sentence, then positive transfer

could be cited. The ‘proof’ would be in the fact that in Japanese the article system does not exist, while French has a similar article system to English.

Generally speaking, in terms of article use, Japanese and French learners of English do tend to follow the pattern suggested above. Is the case therefore closed? Certain evidence suggests that the situation is somewhat more complex.

Felix (1980) describes an English boy learning German who used the word “warum” to mean both “why” and “because”. Felix points out that in, say, Spanish or Greek, this one equivalent word does carry these two meanings. So had the boy been Spanish, his error would almost certainly have been identified as interference. Errors, Felix suggests, will always correspond to structures in some language.

Butterworth (1978) noticed that Ricardo, a 13 year old Spanish boy learning English, often used subjectless sentences. He therefore attributed this to interference since it is perfectly acceptable to omit the subject in Spanish.

Felix, however, points out that it is also common in **FLA** to miss out the subject of a sentence. Dulay and Burt (1974), after studying 513 errors produced by Spanish children learning English, concluded that overall, less than 5% of the total errors were exclusively attributable to interference. Felix (1980) is clear that in certain circumstances interference does occur.

Nevertheless he concludes:

our data on L2 acquisition of syntactic structures in a natural environment suggest that interference does not constitute a major strategy in this area. (1980: 107).

There is also the perhaps surprising phenomenon of a lack of positive transfer where learners make mistakes that they should not have made given the similarity of their **L1** background to the **L2** in question (Richards, 1971).

Lo Coco (1975) in a study of learner error suggested that 5% to 18% of the errors observed should not have been made if positive transfer was in fact at work in the learner’s **IL**. Coulter (1968) noted how **CA** predictions were specifically falsified in an experiment on Russian learners of English. In Russian, there are five forms of the plural which contrast clearly with singular items in the language. Interference theory would suggest therefore that there would be no difficulty in acquiring the s-morpheme of English plurals. If anything there would be a positive transfer of complexity to simplicity since English has just the one plural form. Extended observation of the Russian subjects showed that this was not the case. In tests of production they failed to consistently produce the required plural forms.

All of this suggests that while transfer seems to be a reasonable and logical explanation for some part of the nature and form of **ILs**, there are certain reservations that should be born in mind. Only certain structures or forms seem to be transferable from the **L1** and the identification of these items is further complicated by the variables of context and the individual in question.

A question worth asking would be: Are there specific linguistic areas where the **L1** influences the **L2**?

Markedness

Kean (1986), in his paper ‘Core issues in transfer’, divides language into two areas:

1. Core

2. Periphery

Core areas of the language obey highly restricted, invariant principles of **UG**.

Periphery areas of the language reflect language particular phenomena – not defining properties of the grammars of natural languages. Kean argues that if an **IL** has a ‘well-formed’ grammar, then ‘core’ universals must be components of all such **ILs**. If such ‘core’ universals are not present, then the **ILs** in question cannot be described as ‘normal’ grammars. Therefore, for example, one should not find structure independent rules in a language.

Kean also discusses the pro-drop parameter. In Italian, for example:

1. The subject is not required
2. There is free inversion of overt subjects in simple sentences
3. Violations of the that-trace filter are admitted (e.g. “Who do you think that will come?”)

He points out that if only one of these is missing then all of them will be missing from a language. The suggestion is that the learner need only notice one of the three items listed above in order to know what kind of a language Italian is. Therefore a pro-drop parameter can be postulated, an either/or situation, where a person’s learning system acts as a ‘scanning device’ only picking up the marked values of a language.

Mazurkewich (1984a) adopts the core/periphery distinction outlined above where unmarked properties of language are identified with core grammar and marked properties with the periphery. Not being concerned with parameters as such, she argues that if a learner is acquiring a language with a marked structure, they will go through a stage of using the unmarked equivalent before the marked one is acquired. In other words, A strong **UG** hypothesis is maintained where in **L2** acquisition, **UG** reverts back to its preset options, taking no account of the learner’s prior learning experience with the **L1**. The prediction is that all **L2** learners will show the same developmental sequence of unmarked before marked, regardless of their **L1**.

This suggests a superficial resemblance to the ‘natural order hypothesis’ proposed by Krashen (1981) which tries to explain certain morpheme acquisition sequences by claiming they are part of a natural order. The crucial difference here is that specific predictions are made in advance of the data, based on the identification of structures as marked or unmarked. The subjects of Mazurkewich’s study (ibid.) were 45 French, and 38 Inuktitut-speaking high school students. Results from the study showed that the French speakers produced more unmarked questions than marked ones, but that conversely, the Inuktitut speakers produced more marked questions than unmarked. Mazurkewich argued that these results support her hypothesis that **L2** learners will learn unmarked before marked language items. White (1989), however, disagrees, pointing out that the behaviour of the native speakers of French is equally consistent with their carrying over the unmarked structures from their **L1**. Consequently it is impossible to tell whether the **L2** learners had reverted to core grammar or not. It seems that the pure **UG** hypothesis claiming that there will be an acquisition sequence of unmarked before marked cannot be maintained on the basis of Mazurkewich’s results (at least not for **SLA**). In the case of the French speakers it was impossible to identify the cause of their preference for unmarked structures. Was it due to the influence of the **L1** or to the emergence of a core grammar? The fact that the Inuktitut speakers behaved differently seems to suggest that the **L1** was indeed having an influence on the French speakers.

The Influence of L1 in IL - More Studies

There appear to be a range of studies which both support and question the influence of **L1** in **IL**. A question that needs to be asked is: what constitutes **L1** influence? Are there features that can be observed at a competence or production level which can categorically be said to arise from the

L1? In other words, does the appearance of **L1**-like features in **IL** represent proof of **L1** influence?

Lexis:

There seems to be considerable evidence for the influence of **L1** lexis on **IL/L2**. Ringbom (1978), for example, studying Swedish and Finnish learners of English, suggested that the results from his study showed clear and unambiguous evidence of **Cross Linguistic Influence**.

Negation:

Hyltenstam's study (1977) showed that learners from a variety of **L1** backgrounds go through the same stages of development in the acquisition of the negative particle in Swedish. Wode's research (1981) was aimed at finding a universal sequence, true in essentials of all learners of all languages.

He suggested that learners go through five distinct stages of development:

1. Anaphoric sentence external: "No"
2. Non-anaphoric sentence external: "No finish"
3. Copula 'be': "That's no good"
4. Full verbs and imperatives with "don't": "You have a not fish" or "Don't say something"
5. "Do" forms: "You didn't can throw it" (Taken from Cook 1991: 19)

Studies suggest that learners from different **L1** backgrounds do in fact follow the developmental order suggested by Wode.

Word Order

Once again, there is evidence and counter evidence of transfer in studies related to word order. Studies have focused on whether, for example, **SVO L1s** carry this pattern over into the **L2**. Rutherford (1983) suggested that Japanese learners did not use their **L1 SOV** in learning English. McNeill (1979) in fact argues for the **SOV** pattern as being the basic, universal word order in **L1** acquisition.

Subject Pronoun Drop:

The role of **CLI** in Subject Pronoun Drop (**SPD**) is not clear. There seems to be much evidence that such deletion takes place in the **L2** of Romance language speakers, but it is also argued that such deletion is not restricted to speakers whose **L1** has **SPD**. Meisel (1980) found that Romance speakers in their **L2** dropped pronouns more in the third than first person. This, seemingly, cannot be explained by transfer.

Semantic Differences:

In a study of Dutch learners, Bongaerts (1983) found that few of them had problems with the semantic distinction between:

1. "Easy to see" and
2. "Eager to see"

Bongaerts argued that this was because of a similar semantic distinction in Dutch which facilitated positive **CLI**. In another study, Bongaerts found that French, Hebrew and Arabic **L1** learners had considerably greater difficulties understanding and acquiring the same semantic distinctions.

Relative Clauses:

Schachter (1974) conducted a study involving four groups of students with different **L1** backgrounds - Arabs, Persians, Japanese and Chinese. In a quantitative study which involved counting the number of relative clauses produced spontaneously in a classroom situation, he found that the students could be divided into two distinct groups. Results showed that the Arab and Persian learners made the most mistakes when using relative clauses. Significantly, however, this group of students used relative clauses two or three times more than the Japanese and Chinese students. Schachter suggested that right-branching relative clause structures in Arabic and Persian, which is the same in English, were responsible for the relatively greater use of the clauses in spontaneous speech. As for the Japanese and Chinese students, Schachter attributes their limited use of relative structures to avoidance strategies. This occurs where a learner, confronted by a form of the **L2** that they are unfamiliar with or they find difficult, will simply avoid using that structure. Sometimes, this is very difficult to identify since relatively proficient students will be able to bypass using, for example, a certain difficult structure by using another similarly appropriate structure. Another effect of avoidance strategy, as seen in the study mentioned above, is the possibility that a certain structure (such as a relative clause) may hardly be used, or used very occasionally in set phrases which the student knows to be correct.

Simply quantifying the errors made in relation to this structure will not give a clear picture of an individual learner's competence. This is one of the main weaknesses of **EA** which can only assess what the learner chooses to show in their production.

Kellerman (1984) reviewing several studies of the kind mentioned above, cautiously suggests that **CLI** operates on the surface form of **IL** reflecting such processes as transfer. He goes on to argue that **CLI** operates on **IL** at smaller and larger levels than the sentence. Advanced learners, he claims, are equally affected by **CLI** as are beginners. The only difference perhaps, is that beginners tend to show **CLI** more overtly in their syntax whereas advanced learners tend to show **CLI** in less obvious, more discreet ways. e.g. through subtle semantic errors or through the use of avoidance strategies.

Conclusion

In conclusion it seems clear that there is considerable evidence to support the role of **CLI** in the development of **IL**. Studies indicate that in certain situations and under certain conditions, the influence of the **L1** can be clearly demonstrated. It is the nature of these situations and conditions that is not always clear.

The effect of **CLI** on **IL** is not necessarily instant or predictable. This is reflected in the development of **IL** which is non-linear - like a flower, development takes place at many different points at the same time, resulting in more of a spiral model of development.

While the predictions of a pure **UG** hypothesis are in doubt (at least in **SLA**), several studies suggest that there are universal parameters which a natural language will not violate.

The creation of **IL** can perhaps most importantly be seen as a process which is internally consistent, has many qualities of a natural language, and which is in direct opposition to a view of language learning as a system of habitformation.

I would suggest that three aspects of this process are continually occurring:

1. The learner is constantly making hypotheses about the **L2** input available to them. There is much evidence to suggest that the hypotheses tested will not contravene universal boundaries of natural language.

2. There will be a selective use of the **L1** knowledge. The process of selection and the extent to which it is conscious or unconscious is unclear.

3. There may be influence from other **ILs** known to the learner.

There would seem to be a need for further investigation to determine precisely the role of transfer in the development of **IL** and the acquisition of **L2**. In the position we are at present, it can only be tentatively suggested that the three aspects of the process mentioned above, must all interact in some as yet unknown way.

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Appendix 1

Abbreviations

- L1** - Native or first language
L2 - Target or second language
L3 - A third or other learned language
FLA - First language acquisition
SLA - Second language acquisition
FLL - First language learner
SLL - Second language learner
IL - Interlanguage
CA - Contrastive analysis
EA - Error analysis
SOV - Subject-Object-Verb language
SVO - Subject-Verb-Object language
CLI - Cross Linguistic Influence