

Inter language and  
learnability : from  
Chineseto English

INTERLANGUAGE AND LEARNABILITY

江苏工业学院图书馆  
藏书章

Xmu 2007 2045 P200

# LANGUAGE ACQUISITION & LANGUAGE DISORDERS

## EDITORS

Harald Clahsen  
*University of Essex*

William Rutherford  
*University of Southern California*

## EDITORIAL BOARD

- Melissa Bowerman (Max Planck Institut für Psycholinguistik, Nijmegen)  
Patricia Clancy (University of California at Santa Barbara)  
Werner Deutsch (Universität Braunschweig)  
Kenji Hakuta (Stanford University)  
Kenneth Hyldenstam (University of Stockholm)  
Peter Jordens (Free University, Amsterdam)  
Barry McLaughlin (University of California at Santa Cruz)  
Jürgen Meisel (Universität Hamburg)  
Anne Mills (University of Amsterdam)  
Csaba Pleh (University of Budapest)  
Michael Sharwood Smith (University of Utrecht)  
Catherine Snow (Harvard University)  
Jürgen Weissenborn (Max Planck Institut für Psycholinguistik, Nijmegen)  
Lydia White (McGill University)  
Helmut Zobl (Carleton University, Ottawa)

Volume 11

Virginia Yip

*Interlanguage and Learnability*

# INTERLANGUAGE AND LEARNABILITY

FROM CHINESE TO ENGLISH

VIRGINIA YIP

JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY  
AMSTERDAM/PHILADELPHIA



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences — Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Yip, Virginia, 1962-

Interlanguage and learnability : from Chinese to English / Virginia Yip.

p. cm. -- (Language acquisition & language disorders : ISSN 0925-0123; v. 11)

Includes bibliographical references (p. ) and index.

1. English language--Study and teaching--Chinese speakers. 2. Language and languages--Study and teaching. 3. Interlanguage (Language learning) I. Title. II. Series.

PE1130.C4Y55 1995

428'.007--dc20

95-23743

ISBN 90 272 2477 3 (Eur.) / 1-55619-249-5 (US) (alk. paper)

CIP

© Copyright 1995 - John Benjamins B.V.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm, or any other means, without written permission from the publisher.

John Benjamins Publishing Co. • P.O.Box 75577 • 1070 AN Amsterdam • The Netherlands

John Benjamins North America • P.O.Box 27519 • Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 • USA

## Contents

Acknowledgments	xi
List of Abbreviations	xiii
List of Tables and Figures	xv
<b>Chapter 1. The Theory of Interlanguage</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0. Introduction	1
1.1. CIL as a Language: From Error Analysis to Interlanguage Grammar	4
1.2. Investigating Interlanguage Competence	7
1.2.1. Data and Methodology	7
1.2.2. Comparative Grammar	10
1.3. The Nature of Interlanguage	11
1.4. Prior Linguistic Knowledge and Language Transfer	14
1.4.1. Changing Conceptions of Transfer	15
1.4.2. Transfer vs. Creative Construction	18
1.5. Universal Grammar	19
1.5.1. Accessibility of Universal Grammar in SLA	22
1.5.1.1. Full Access to UG	23
1.5.1.2. Partial/Indirect Access to UG	24
1.5.1.3. Maturation vs. Continuity	25
1.5.2. Universal Grammar and Language Typology	29
1.6. Conclusion	31
Notes to Chapter 1	32

<b>Chapter 2. A Framework for Second Language Learnability</b>	<b>35</b>
2.0. Introduction	35
2.1. The Logical Problem of L1 and L2 Acquisition	36
2.2. Learnability Theory	37
2.2.1. The Nature of Input	39
2.2.1.1. Direct Positive Evidence	39
2.2.1.2. Indirect Positive Evidence	40
2.2.1.3. Direct Negative Evidence and the 'No Negative Evidence' Hypothesis	42
2.2.1.4. Indirect Negative Evidence	43
2.2.2. The Problem of Overgeneration	44
2.3. The Subset Principle	47
2.3.1. Preconditions for the Subset Principle	50
2.3.2. The Subset Principle in L2	54
2.4. Preemption	57
2.4.1. Preemption and Indirect Negative Evidence	58
2.4.2. Productive Mechanisms and Preemption in SLA	60
2.4.3. The Uniqueness Principle	60
2.4.4. Preconditions and Domains for the Uniqueness principle	62
2.4.5. The Uniqueness Principle in L1 and L2	64
2.5. Conclusion	67
Notes to Chapter 2	68
 <b>Chapter 3. Comparative Typology and Learnability</b>	 <b>73</b>
3.0. Introduction	73
3.1. Status of Topic	73
3.2. Topic-prominence vs. Subject-prominence	74
3.2.1. Base-generated and Derived Topic Structures	78
3.2.2. The Scope of Passives	79
3.2.3. Null Subjects and Objects	81
3.2.4. Absence of Expletive Subjects	83
3.2.5. Topics, Definiteness and Existential Structures	86
3.2.6. Topic Chains and the Analysis of Topic Structures	88
3.3. Topic-prominence and Learnability	89
3.4. Conclusion	91
Notes to Chapter 3	92

**Chapter 4. Pseudo-passives:****"These sentences can analyze many ways"****97**

4.0. Introduction	97
4.1. Pseudo-passives in CIL	98
4.2. The Pseudo-passive as a Malformed Passive	99
4.2.1. The Passive in English and Chinese	101
4.2.2. Against the Passive Diagnosis	105
4.2.3. Alternative Analyses: Middle and Ergative Derivations	105
4.3. The Pseudo-passive as Topicalization	107
4.3.1. Topicalization in Chinese and English	110
4.3.2. Transfer of Topic Structures	112
4.4. Judgment Data	115
4.5. On Learnability	120
4.6. Conclusion	122
Notes to Chapter 4	123

**Chapter 5. Ergative Constructions:****"What is happened with these verbs?"****129**

5.0. Introduction	129
5.1. Passivized Ergatives in CIL	130
5.2. Comparative Grammar of Ergative Constructions	130
5.2.1. English Ergative Structures	132
5.2.2. Chinese Ergative Structures	134
5.3. Interlanguage Ergatives	135
5.4. Judgment Data	139
5.5. Learnability: Why Are Ergative Constructions So Hard to Acquire?	143
5.5.1. Expunging Passivized Unpaired Ergatives	145
5.5.2. Acquisition of Paired Ergatives	146
5.6. Conclusion	149
Notes to Chapter 5	150

**Chapter 6. Tough Movement:****"Never easy to be learned"****153**

6.0. Introduction	153
6.1. <i>Tough</i> -Movement in English	154
6.2. "Pseudo- <i>Tough</i> -Movement" in CIL	154



6.3. Comparative Grammar of Raising and <i>Tough</i> -Movement	156
6.3.1. Raising and <i>Tough</i> -Movement in English	156
6.3.2. Raising Constructions in Chinese	157
6.4. Pseudo- <i>Tough</i> -Movement as an Interlanguage Innovation	159
6.5. <i>Tough</i> -Movement Acquisition in L1 and L2	162
6.6. <i>Tough</i> -Movement and the Typology of Raising	163
6.7. Judgment Data	166
6.8. Learnability	168
6.9. Conclusion	170
Notes to Chapter 6	171
 <b>Chapter 7. Existential Constructions and Indefinite Subjects:</b>	
<b>"There are sentences cause learnability problems"</b>	<b>175</b>
7.0. Introduction	175
7.1. Existential Pseudo-relatives in CIL	176
7.2. Comparative Grammar of Existential Constructions	178
7.2.1. Existential Constructions in English	178
7.2.1.1. English Presentational Relatives	179
7.2.1.2. English Existential Relatives	180
7.2.1.3. The Presentational Amalgam Construction	181
7.2.2. Existential Constructions in Chinese	183
7.2.3. Definiteness of Subjects	187
7.3. Analysis of the CIL Pseudo-relative Construction	189
7.3.1. Infinitival Existential Constructions	190
7.3.2. Participial Existential Constructions	191
7.4. Learnability and Acquisition of Target Structures	192
7.4.1. Preemption by Existential Relatives	194
7.4.2. Preemption by Indefinite Subjects	194
7.5. Conclusion	198
Notes to Chapter 7	200
 <b>Chapter 8. Summary and Implications</b>	<b>203</b>
8.0. Introduction	203
8.1. Implications for SLA Research	204
8.1.1. Interlanguage Analysis	204
8.1.2. Complementarity of Generative and Typological Insights	206

8.2. Second Language Acquisition and Learnability	207
8.2.1. L1 and L2 Learnability	208
8.2.2. The Subset Principle in L2	209
8.2.3. Preemption and the Uniqueness Principle in L2	211
8.2.4. Status of the Subset and Uniqueness Principles	213
8.2.5. Complementarity of Learnability Principles	214
8.3. Conclusion	215
Notes to Chapter 8	216
Appendix A: Questionnaire on Pseudo-passives and Related Structures	217
Appendix B: Questionnaire on Ergative Verbs and Related Structures	219
Appendix C: Questionnaire on <i>Tough</i> -Movement and Related Structures	221
References	223
Index of Authors	239
Index of Subjects	243



## Acknowledgments


This book is a substantially revised version of my Ph.D. thesis written at the Department of Linguistics at the University of Southern California. I am grateful to many colleagues and friends who have assisted me in one way or another to bring this work to completion. Above all, I thank the ubiquitous speakers of "Chinglish" (intended in an affectionate sense) who provided the data for analysis in this book, and without whom the project would never have been conceived in the first place.

I thank all my mentors, too numerous to enumerate, who have taught me linguistics; the researchers who have demonstrated to me that the study of language acquisition, whether first or second, could be so stimulating and rewarding; and the scholars who have bridged the two fields by applying linguistic theory to language acquisition. The work of Robert Bley-Vroman, Lydia White and Helmut Zobl has been especially inspiring in this respect. Among my own mentors, I feel most deeply indebted to Bill Rutherford and Jackie Schachter, whose research and publications have inspired me since before I came to be their student. Bill has kindled my interest in second language learnability. He has always been most generous with his time and private library, and I owe special thanks to him for reading the revised manuscript and providing much-needed guidance and comments as well as his practical help in bringing this book into being. Jackie has been a wonderful friend and colleague. Her perceptive feedback and exemplary standards have contributed to shaping the thesis in various ways. It has been my privilege and pleasure to work closely with both Bill and Jackie and to benefit from their expertise. Thanks are also due to Nigel Duffield and Tim Shi, whose invaluable comments and suggestions have led to numerous improvements. Special thanks to my colleagues in the CUHK

English department, especially Thomas Lee and Gladys Tang, who have provided much-appreciated stimulation and discussion on topics of mutual interest in acquisition.

My one-semester leave from the Chinese University of Hong Kong has been instrumental in giving me the luxury of concentrating single-mindedly on the book. I am also grateful for a Staff Development Grant from the university which supported my stay in Los Angeles during my leave, where I benefitted especially from discussions in the reading group at USC orchestrated by Bill Rutherford, Joe Allen and Hiro Oshita. A grant from the Hong Kong Research Grants Council (project HKU 238/92H) also supported preparation of this book.

Stephen and Timothy Matthews have made the hard work seem worthwhile and the effort the least. I thank Stephen for his strong belief in this work and for never failing to remind me of it. His help in every possible form has made life "easier to be lived". His keen intuitions for linguistic structures and enduring passion for music have been sources of inspiration at every step along the way. The arrival of little Timothy, a bundle of endless fun and surprises, has added much spice to our life and opened new vistas in language acquisition.



## List of Abbreviations

AGR	agreement	L2	second language
CIL	Chinese-English interlanguage	LOC	localizer
CL	classifier	PASS	passive
COMP	complementizer	PFV	perfective aspect
CONT	continuous	POSS	possessive marker
DE	definiteness effect	PROG	progressive aspect
DET	determiner	PRT	sentence final particle
ECM	exceptional case marking	RC	relative clause marker
EXIST	existential (verb)	REFL	reflexive marker
EXP	experiential aspect	SLA	second language acquisition
IL	interlanguage	SUBJ	subjunctive
IMPERF	imperfect	TM	<i>tough</i> -movement
INFL	inflection	TOP	topic
LF	logical form	TP	topic phrase
L1	first language	UG	universal grammar



## List of Tables and Figures

### Tables

4.1. Grammaticality judgments for pseudo-passives and related structures (level 201: intermediate)	117
4.2. Grammaticality judgments for pseudo-passives and related structures (level 202: advanced)	117
5.1. Comparison of grammaticality judgments for passive and ergative constructions (level 201: intermediate)	141
5.2. Comparison of grammaticality judgments for passive and ergative constructions (level 202: advanced)	141
6.1. Grammaticality judgments for <i>tough</i> -movement and related structures (level 201: intermediate)	166
6.2. Grammaticality judgments for <i>tough</i> -movement and related structures (level 202: advanced)	167

### Figures

2.1. Four types of evidence in the input	39
2.2. Learnability scenarios	48
2.3. The <i>pro</i> -drop parameter: Intersecting sets	52
3.1. Passives in CIL and English	81
3.2. Topic structures in Chinese and English	90



4.1. Group judgments for pseudo-passives and related structures	118
4.2. Passives in CIL and English	120
4.3. Topic structures in CIL and English	121
5.1. Typology of verbs	131
5.2. Group judgments for passive and ergative constructions	141
5.3. English passives and CIL passivized ergatives	144
5.4. Ergatives in CIL and English	144
6.1. Group judgments for <i>tough</i> -movement and related structures	168
6.2. Raising in CIL and English	169
7.1. Existential constructions in CIL and English	195
7.2. Indefinite subjects in CIL and English	196
7.3. Intersecting grammars	198