

Another way of Transformation

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Abstract:

The Present study investigates another way of transformation based on Transformational Generative Grammar . This transformation concerns a linguistic phenomenon which constitutes the problem of the research. This phenomenon discloses itself through the Arabic Musical Tune by which Arabic Songs are transformed into English .

The current study consists of six sections. Section One is the Introduction in which the role of Music in Language Learning is discussed, besides providing a general theoretical background about Language . Section Two provides some basics on Foreign Language Learning . Section three treats with the problem of linguistic phenomenon diagnosed by the researcher. Section four investigates, analyses and justifies the linguistic phenomenon. Section Five deals with conclusions drawn from the study ,while the last section Six provides some suggestions.

طريقة أخرى للتحويل

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ملخص البحث :

تبحث الدراسة الحالية في طريقة أخرى للتحويل تستند إلى النحو التحويلي والتوليدي. ويتعلق هذا التحويل بظاهرة لغوية تمثل مشكلة هذا البحث . تقوم هذه الظاهرة بالكشف عن نفسها من خلال اللحن الموسيقي العربي الذي يتم بواسطته تحويل الأغاني العربية إلى الإنكليزية.

تتألف الدراسة الحالية من ستة أقسام . القسم الأول/ المقدمة ، وتتناول الدور الذي تلعبه الموسيقى في تعلم اللغة ، بالإضافة إلى تقديمها لخلفية نظرية عامة عن اللغة . أما القسم الثاني فيتعرض لبعض الأسس عن تعلم اللغة الأجنبية. وأما القسم الثالث فيتعامل مع مشكلة الظاهرة اللغوية التي قام الباحث بتشخيصها . وأما القسم الرابع فيبحث في الظاهرة اللغوية ويعمل على تحليلها وتبريرها . وأما القسم الخامس فيتناول الاستنتاجات التي تتوصل إليها الدراسة ، بينما يتعرض القسم السادس والأخير لبعض المقترحات.

1. Introduction :

Among the many gifts given by God to man is language . Without language, man is at a loss . Abnormal children for example, have been helped greatly to acquire a language, but have not been compensated for the divine normal gift of acquiring it. This is on the one hand .

On the other hand, "All normal children everywhere learn language . This ability is not dependent on race, social class, geography, or even intelligence(within a normal range).This ability is uniquely human."(Fromkin and Rodman,1983:344).

Also, the necessity of learning a language is different from other kinds of learning. Man for example, can live a normal life without knowing physics, but he cannot dispense with language or even sign language, for example in case of being abnormal.

Moreover ,learning a language somehow differs from learning to read or write “A normal human being can go through life without having learned to read or write. Millions of people in the world today prove this . but these same millions all speak and understand and can discuss complex and abstract ideas as well as literate speakers can.”(ibid:325)

In addition to that, Child's language Acquisition is affected by different factors. These factors are social, educational, environmental,etc. The role played by these factors, whether independently or collectively, is not the same among all children. Brown and Fisher state that “child's experiences and environmental factors play their role in the development of his language acquisition”.(Brown,1964:133) and(Fisher,1971:148).

Some people think that children act as if they were tape-recorders, when learning or acquiring a language. In fact, there are certain neurological and biological aspects which explain the child's ability to

acquire language. These human aspects are innate. Fromkin & Rodman state that "there are certain things which the child does and does not do when learning or acquiring a language" (1983:326). These things are:

1. Children do not learn a language by storing all the words and all the sentences in some giant mental dictionary . The list of words is finite , but no dictionary can hold all the sentences, which are infinite in number.
2. Children learn to construct sentences, most of which they have never produced before.
3. Children learn to understand sentences they have never heard before. They cannot do this by matching the "heard utterances" with some stored sentences .
4. Children must therefore learn "rules" that permit them to use language creatively .
5. No one teaches them these rules. Their parents are no more aware of the phonological, syntactic, and semantic rules than are the children. Children then, seem to act like very efficient linguists equipped with a perfect theory of language, who use this theory to construct the grammar of the language they hear.

Mass Media, on the other hand, especially TV. play their paramount role in the realm of language. TV. as an attractive and motivating means plays its special role since it combines sound with picture. Thus , children who watch TV. are better and faster learners of language. (Abdulrahim, 1979:2-15) .

Also, the role of Music in language is too impressive and effective to be neglected. In 1968 for example, Butterfield studied the impact of music on newborn babies. He noticed that music attracts their attention greatly.(AL-Hamdani,1982:140).

The impact of music on language extends to Singing, where it is considered one of the ten Theories of language origin . This Sing-Song Theory hypothesizes that the harmonious intuitive singing is the origin of words which resulted into language in the long run.(Hermiz,1989:26).

The discussion so far, paves the way to the emergence of the Linguistic Phenomenon in 3.1, since the bond between Music and Language is too strong to be disconnected. This bond discloses itself at the meeting point between Music and feelings. “We do know that language is a way of life, is at the foundation of our being, and interacts simultaneously with thoughts and feelings.”(Brown,1980:34) .

2. Some Basics on Foreign Language Learning:

It is thought advisable to know something about the systematic study of first language learning experience in order to make use of it in the learning of a foreign or second language . “The reasons for this are clear: we have all observed children acquiring their first language easily and well, yet the learning of a second language, particularly in an educational setting , often meets with great difficulty and sometimes failure ”.(ibid:41)

One of the similarities between languages in different areas of the world, is the stages through which children acquire them . Fromkin & Rodman, (1983:326) state that “observations of children in different language areas of the world reveal that the stages are very similar, possibly universal. Some of the stages last for a short time ; other remain longer. Some stages may overlap for a short period, though the transition between stages has often been observed to be quite sudden ”.

Despite the similarity between the stages mentioned above, learning a foreign language differs from that of the mother

tongue. "Acquiring a second or a foreign language is, to state the obvious, a very different thing from the acquisition of one's mother tongue." (Harrison, 1973:19). Harrison goes on saying: "this is so because, in the learning of his mother tongue, the infant is exposed to an unstructured mass of language, but is able, by processes which remain to a large extent mysterious, to work out the rules of his language, and to use these rules to produce utterances of his own."

On the other hand, a number of psychologists collected data from different areas of the world. They gathered their material from 2 years children who speak English, German, Russian, Finnish, Turkish,....etc. to find out the similar concepts among different languages. The following are the similar concepts which they found in children's language all over the world (Brown, 1975 & Slobin, 1972 & 1973).

1. Knowing things by referring to them and naming them.
2. Place reference by the hand usually using two-word sentences.
3. Repetitive naming of desired things.
4. Noticing the absence of things by asking about them.
5. Use of negation.
6. Use of possession.
7. Construction of SV, SO or VO sentences.
8. Use of verb with its adverb of place e. g "sit chair".
9. Naming the tool and the verb used with it e. g "knife-cut".
10. Use of Adjectives e. g "big ball or red car".
11. Asking by changing intonation.

Sometime later, similar research data has also been gathered on language acquisition in languages other than English : "Russian, Japanese, French, Spanish, German, to name a few. Some commonalities emerge. Pivot grammar, telegraphese , concepts of negation and interrogation are some examples, but not enough data has yet been

amassed to form a substantial, systematic set of linguistic universals.”(Brown, 1980:32).

Furthermore, (Stern,1970:57-58) summarized some common analogies between L1 learning and Second Language Teaching. These analogies are:

1. In language teaching, we must practice and practice , again and again. Just watch a small child learning his mother tongue. He repeats things over and over again. During the language-learning stage he practises all the time .This is what we must also do when we learn a foreign language.
2. Language Learning is mainly a matter of imitation. You must be a mimic. Just like a small child. He imitates everything.
3. First, we practise the separate sounds, then words, then sentences. That is the natural order and is therefore right for learning a foreign language.
4. Watch a small child's speech development. He listens first, then he speaks. Understanding always precedes speaking . Therefore, this must be right order of presenting the skills in a foreign language.
5. A small child listens and speaks and no one would dream of making him read or write. Reading and writing are advanced stages of language development. The natural order for first and second language learning is listening, speaking, reading and writing.
6. You did not have to translate when you were small. If you were able to learn your own language without translation, you should be able to learn a foreign language in the same way.
7. A small child simply uses language. He does not learn formal grammar. You do not tell him about verbs and nouns. Yet he learns the language perfectly. It is equally unnecessary to use grammatical conceptualization in teaching a foreign language.

Finally, Joseph Greenberg (1963,1966) and his associates made some particularly important advances in the study of linguistic universals. So the next few decades of research may just reveal some of those elusive linguistic universals.

3. The Problem Of Linguistic Phenomenon

3.1 The Linguistic Phenomenon of the study

“Children are excellent imitators. It is simply a matter of understanding exactly what it is that they are imitating.” These words of (Brown,1980:36) remind me of a linguistic phenomenon concerning my 3 children (two boys and a girl).It is a phenomenon in the real sense of the word, in that it was not planned for or organized previously. This phenomenon, which took place two years ago, is summarized as follows:

I used to sing to myself, with a low voice usually, some parts of different Arabic songs after interpreting them instantaneously into English, keeping the same Arabic Musical Tune. Once being sure of my interpretation (which was not lasting long usually), I used to repeat singing these interpreted songs from time to time when I share, changing my clothes, bathing myselfetc.

After being enchanted by a very interesting interpreted song, my three children (who were 4,7,and 10 years old) became engaged and taken unconsciously and involuntarily in some sort of learning by imitating (repeating) this song chorally and individually .Unlike memorization, this learning was extraordinary , because any learning situation used to be planned for beforehand and done in stages, besides time attotmentetc. Such a learning is extraordinary in that it came just like that and all of a sudden, besides it was done in a very short time. The learning of one song is then extended into two , three,.....etc. Whenever a new song is interpreted.

Later, they started asking me to interpret this song or that one according to their taste. They also started differentiating between the songs they already learnt, when asked for example, to sing this song or that one. Moreover, they started differentiating between the meaning of words and even sometimes parts of speech especially Nouns .(See Section4).

3.2 The Problem to be investigated

Being interested in Child Foreign Language Learning and Teaching, the live linguistic Phenomenon of my children encouraged me to try tracing the theoretical basis behind such a Linguistic Phenomenon.

Thus, the problem of the Present Study, is to find out a linguistic scientific and convincing explanation to such a Linguistic Phenomenon.

4. Investigation of the Linguistic Phenomenon

“Transformational grammar attempts to describe a speaker's competence.”(Kintgen & Thomas,1974:131)

Being part of the language knowledge of the child, an interpreted song becomes part of his grammar or his Universal Grammar (UG), since the framework of UG is considered to be valid for all languages. Quoting Chomsky (Aitchison, 1987:182) suggests that “the basic components of Universal Grammar (UG) are genetically inbuilt in humans, and that languages which are superficially quite unlike one another might be fairly similar at an underlying level.”

Becoming part of the child's UG means that the interpreted song can be applied to all the rules of language. “When children learn a language, they learn the grammar of that language-the phonological,

morphological, syntactic, and semantic rules – as well as the words or vocabulary.” (Fromkin & Rodman, 1983:343).

Once it becomes part of the child's UG, the interpreted song becomes in fact part of his deep structure. “The deep structure of language at its deepest level may be common to all languages.” (Brown, 1980 : 32). The deep structure, also constitutes the basis of meaning Kintgen & Thomas, (1974:155) state that “the deep structure is a representation of the meaning of the sentence, and the starting point for transformations.”

In addition to that , deep structures are generated by the base. The base, on the other hand, contains phrase – structure rules as well as a lexicon that incorporates word – forming transformations. Thus, being formed grammatically, the interpreted song is given part of its meaning by the lexicon whose interpretive role is limited to providing symbolic and logical meaning entries only. “In the Standard Theory, the base contained phrase structure (PS) rules for the formation of deep structures, and also a lexicon, from which words were slotted into the output of the PS rules.” (Aitchison, 1987:163).

Then comes the role of transformational component that relates deep structures to surface structures. According to the “Standard Theory” of Transformation. Grammar outlined in his book: Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (1965), Chomsky suggests that deep structures are related to surface structures by means of transformations. “A deep structure is transformed into its related surface structure by the application of one or more transformations.” (Aitchison, 1987:163).

As far as the present study is concerned, the role played by the transformational component is not only transforming the deep structure into its related surface structure, but also an additional means of interpretation that sparkles and discloses the meaning inherited in the

deep structure, since it represents the Arabic Musical Tune. Without the Arabic Musical Tune, no interpretation is done, because the three children mentioned above were almost not aware of what I was saying when I once interpreted (a well- known song to them) by simply changing its Musical Tune.(See 3.1).

Later on, the role of the semantic component comes. It relates both the deep structure and, when necessary, the surface structure to a semantic representation. "First the semantic component looks up each of the lexical items and grammatical formatives in its dictionary and assigns the meaning. Then it combines the meanings, drawing on the structural information contained in the deep structure and its own characterization of the meaning of the various structural relations. When it is finished, it has interpreted the meaning of the entire deep structure."(Kintgen & Thomas,1974:158).

Once the semantic interpretation is provided, the deep structure is then passed to the multi-functional transformational rule in order to be converted into the surface structure ."Here two different surface structures share a common deep structure."(Aitchison,1987:162) (See Fig. 1 Adapted).

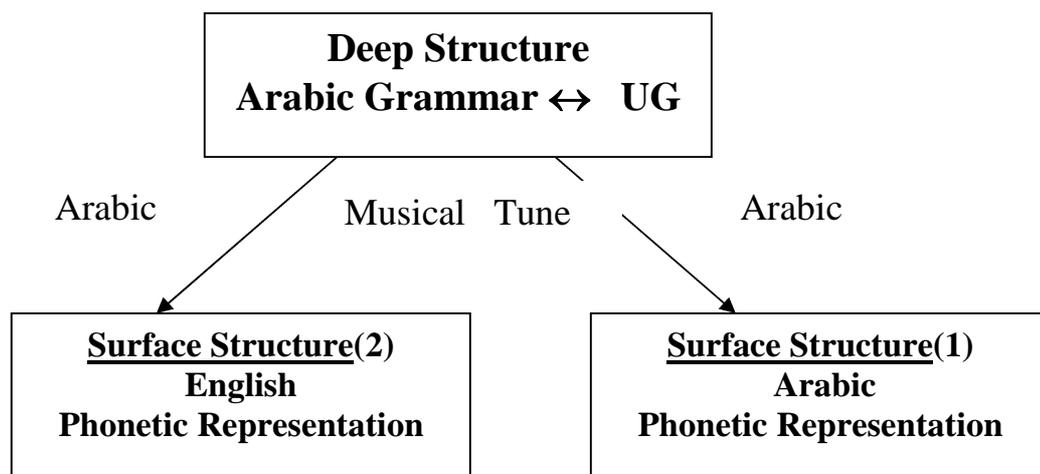


Fig.1

Now , the two surface structures of the song are abstract, since they do not yet have phonetic representations. Then, these two abstract surface structures are coped with their phonological components. " The function of the phonological component is to interpret the surface structure." (Kintgen & Thomas,1974:159). Then, the phonological components convert each of the two surface structures into its related phonetic representation. Thus, we have two surface structures with two phonetic representations, one in Arabic and the other in English. "Languages which are superficially quite unlike one another might be fairly similar at an underlying level."(Aitchison, 1987:182).

The situation of Fig.1 above, would be reversed when explaining briefly the way in which the interpreted song is learnt for the first time. (For more information, the reader is referred to the above mentioned information summarized in Fig.1).

As soon as the interpreted song is heard, through its second surface structure with its English phonetic representation, it is directly learnt through the backwards movement of the transformational rule (represented by the Arabic Musical Tune) to the deep structure where the entire interpretation is there after being sparkled and disclosed by the transformational rule. In such a case, the English phonetic representation directly dismantles or dissolves itself into the phonological component going backwards through the transformational rule to the deep structure, thus being within the UG framework. (See Fig.2 Adapted from (Aitchison,1987:162).

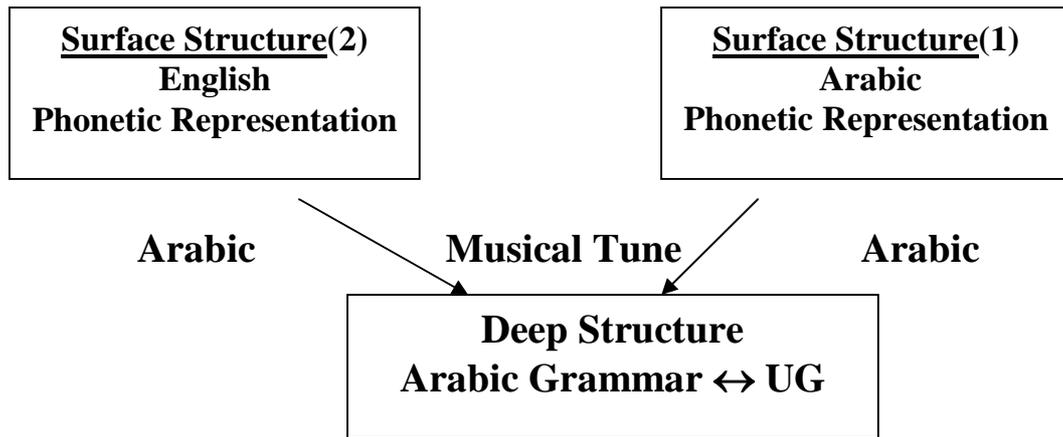


Fig.2

5. Conclusion

Quoting Roger Bacon ,(Fromkin and Rodman,1983:342) state that: "He that understands grammar in one language, understands it in another as far as the essential properties of Grammar are concerned. The fact that he cannot speak, nor comprehend , another language is due to the diversity of words and their various forms, but these are the accidental properties of grammar."

So far ,We have noticed that universality is almost a fact that we cannot blind our eyes on. But no one knows how much one can rely on this fact. "If so, then second language learning is merely the learning of a new surface structure, a new set of forms for the basic meanings already established."(Brown,1980: 60).

Similarly , if universality is a fact, then one can generalize the Linguistic Phenomenon mentioned in 3.1 above. Such a generalization will be valid because, one can suggest that once an interpreted song is loved and learnt, it becomes part of the language knowledge of the one who falls in its love. Accordingly , in whatever language a song is found to be, its interpretation into any other language is merely a matter of transforming its deep structure (which is usually in the mother tongue ↔UG) into its related surface structure (which can take the form of the

target language). Such transformation can be done by using the same Musical Tune (of the mother tongue) as a transformational rule when moving the song to the surface structure to take the form of the target language.

If Universality is a fact, then one can conclude that the Linguistic Phenomenon mentioned above is universal, since the interpretation of songs for example , results in the learning of perhaps another language. (See Section 4 above). Thus, "underlying the endless and fascinating idiosyncrasies of the world's languages, there are uniformities of universal scope."(Greenberg, Osgood and Jenkins, 1966:XV).

Finally, if universality is ever achieved , “then linguists will have gone a long way towards achieving their ultimate goal of specifying UG. So far, however, most of this is a hope for the future” (Aitchison, 1987:184)

6.Suggestions

The above generalization (See Section 5), can form the basis for many other suggestions. The following are some of them:

1. Teachers of English, in our schools, can make use of the school songs, rhymes, anthems...etc. by interpreting them into English by using their Arabic Musical Tune. The resultant material can be considered supplementary.
2. With relevance to No . I above , teachers of Arabic as a foreign language to English Speaking Learners of Arabic, can also make use of the School Songs, Rhymes, Anthems.....etc. by interpreting them into Arabic using their English Musical Tune. (AL-SSamadi &Abdul-Haq,1996:20).

3. The optimum age of Learning English in our schools can be reduced to the first Primary grade age, because the younger the children are exposed to additional languages the better. “Perhaps even more remarkable is the fact that children – before the age of 5-learn most of the intricate system we have been calling the grammar of a language.”(Fromkin & Rodman,1983:325).
4. With relevance to No.3 above, such an early exposure to Learning English as a foreign language, neither hinders the Learning of Arabic (as a mother tongue),nor the other basic subject matters.(Hatamlla &Graddat,1986:87).

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