BOOK REVIEW. ZhaoHong Han & Teresa Cadierno. Linguistic Relativity in SLA: Thinking for Speaking Bristol, Buffalo & Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2010 xvi + 214 pp.

Reviewed by Jacob L. Mey

The book under review happily combines two strands of contemporary research in SLA (Second Language Acquisition): a renewed interest in what might be called a 'modified Whorfism' (aka. linguistic relativity), and a heightened activity in the study of second language acquisition, both in its practice and its theoretical aspects.

The former tendency prides itself on a long tradition, all the way from the original Sapir-Whorf hypothesis about how the language we speak influences (or, in the stronger version of the hypothesis, determines) the cognitive operations of the brain, in particular our use of language. The authors of the present collection all subscribe to what the editors call a modified, 'weak', version of the linguistic relativity hypothesis (p. xii; more on this below), in particular as it is embodied in the Berkeley psycholinguist Dan Slobin's work on 'thinking for speaking' (Slobin 1996: 75-76; compare also Slobin's own footnote 3, p. 92, on the ''modified Whorfian hypothesis'', a formulation which he attributes to an early work by Charles Hockett, 1954). As to the latter trend, it is borne out by all of the eight articles making up the book itself, as well as by the numerous cross-references cited in the individual contributions. Both tendencies are richly represented in the work under review; as to their contemporary relevance, here is what the editors themselves say (back cover): ''Crosslinguistic influence is an established area of second language research''. The present collection bears ample testimony to this statement.

Linguistic relativity has not always had the healthiest of raps in linguistic circles, especially in those of the more theoretically oriented obedience. Thus, in my own early student years, I was heavily

indoctrinated against any kind of 'Whorfianism'. The venerable US anthropologist-cum-linguist Edward Sapir had simply been wrong, my teachers said, when in the early twenties of the past century, he encouraged the amateur linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf by adapting some of his ideas to his own theories. The resulting amalgam, known by the label of the 'Sapir-Whorf hypothesis', became only slightly more respectable in the eyes of the profession by invoking the name of one of North America's most famous practitioners of the anthropological and linguistic sciences.

Even so, the general tendency of the times (the late forties and early fifties of the past century) was that language, being a universal, globally similar (or even identical) characteristic of the human mind, should be studied in an equally 'global', abstracted universal manner. As a familiar Norwegian children's song had it, even though we may vary in color, clothing, food, language, or geographical distribution, we still are essentially the same: ''Much is different, but that's on the outside'' – lyrics sung and quoted with approval by my own kids and myself a the time (''*Meget er forskjellig, men det er utenpå*''; Tenfjord/Øian 1958).

The main tenet of linguistics as a 'universal science' was that one had to look for general, preferably universal systems that could (but didn't have to) be realized in (a) particular language(s). As my teacher, Louis Hjelmslev, the founder of the 'glossematic school' of linguistics, was wont to express it: ''Languages may be as different as Chinese and Eskimo, but if they have the same grammatical system, then they are the same language''. In Saussurean terms, this would imply that the use of language (*la parole*) presupposes the linguistic system (*la langue*), but not conversely: a language needs a system to be recognized as a proper language, whereas a system without, or with a defunct, no longer existing usage would be perfectly respectable (a constructed, artificial language which was never spoken could be an example). By contrast, a mode of expressing oneself that was not based on a proper (linguistic)

grammar would not be a language, but perhaps some kind of esoteric code.

This kind of vaguely circular thinking ran in parallel to the general mood of the times, according to which languages were expressions of a universally valid 'theory of mind' (as we would say nowadays); language had to be universal just like the human mind itself, a notion that also was not unfamiliar to Sapir, when he formulated his famous dictum about ''the Macedonian swineherd and Plato walking arm in arm when it comes to linguistic form'' (thereby implicit contradicting his on views of 'linguistic relativity'; Sapir 1921: 219). For a linguist like Hjelmslev, language had to be the expression of a universal human characteristic, *humanitas et universitas*, as the final words of his best-known work have it (Hjelmslev 1943: 123). Language being universal in essence, linguistic form should also be as close to a universal expression as possible: glossematics was conceived of as a 'linguistic algebra', a formalized linguistic system that could be applied to all languages, irrespective of their outward appearances – ''for within, they are the same'', to quote the Norwegian song once more.

Having framed the origins and development of the notion of linguistic relativity against the backdrop of, and as a reaction to, such universalizing tendencies, let us now consider how the collection under review makes good on our expectations of a 'new deal' with regard to some of the practical problems involved in SLA. The times when 'applied linguistics' was considered at best a poor step-half-sister of linguistics proper are long past; but I vividly remember from my own times as a linguistics teacher at the University of Texas how a particular candidate, whose prospects in the department of linguistics were deemed not too bright, was given the advice (or, an offer he couldn't refuse?) to try his luck elsewhere ('elsewhere' understood as the School of Education, where a doctorate in applied linguistics was judged to be more within his intellectual capacities). The fact that a degree of D.Ed. was a great deal less prestigious, and

not as useful in the job market, as the Ph.D. title, did not impress the committee who were issuing this 'non-refusable' piece of advice. A decade or so later, however, with the advent of globalization and the need for better instruction in so-called critical (or 'defense-related') languages, the whole philosophy and practice of L2 teaching underwent a thoroughgoing review. In the practice domain, drilling and other antiquated teaching techniques were relegated to the dusty corner of outmoded practices, while new approaches to L2 learning (such as 'immersion') saw the light of day. But note that the new approaches did not just propose new techniques to replace the old ones (like substituting immersion for drills): they also reconsidered the philosophical and pedagogic issues that were in need of a theoretical foundation. The question of 'how to teach a language' was linked with the emerging problem of 'how to acquire linguistic competence'; specifically, the question was how to put the findings from psychology and the communicative sciences to use in furthering the acquisition of L2. It is precisely in the crosshairs of this problematic that the collection under review places itself squarely and decisively.

First off, it behooves me to say that the collection is unique in that there are no dull moments: all the articles stand out as excellent contributions to a rapidly growing field of interest. Moreover, the contributions are remarkably consistent in that they all follow, or at least significantly refer to, the book's subtitle: 'thinking for speaking', and illustrate this general theme with carefully chosen examples from a number of different languages: English, Spanish, Danish, German, Russian, Polish, Turkish, Chinese (I hope I haven't omitted any). Thus, it seems appropriate to detail, in a short paragraph, what 'thinking for speaking' means, and how it is relevant in the present context of L2 acquisition.

Thinking for speaking, or the 'weak version' of linguistic relativity, as understood by Slobin and his school, refers to the fact that the idiom we have acquired as first (and sometime second) language

directs us in our 'thinking', and consequently our choice of words whenever we embark on a 'speaking' project in that other language. It is as if the prior language points us in a particular direction, steers us along a well-known and often-trod path, even before we start to open our mouths to utter 'second language' sentences. Slobin does not go so far as to maintain that the very categories of our thought are determined by our language (which would be the strong version of Whorf's hypothesis, the validity of which is still a moot point), but assumes that we in many, even rather mundane and unspecific ways, choose e.g. our prepositions in accordance what we are accustomed to (compare the case on 'on' vs. 'at', as discussed in the book's first chapter). Here, I was reminded of how one of my students, a young man who had spent a number of his formative years in a Dutch environment, used to refer to the object of his love as the girl he was in love 'on', rather than 'with', as in English, or 'in', as in Danish: respectively *verliefd **op***, *in love **with**, forelsket **i***.

Observations like these are important for our thinking about SLA, the practical applications of which form the mainstay of the present collection. They have to do with how we go about teaching languages: we need to respect, and take into account where our students 'come from', linguistically speaking; in particular, what kind of thinking precedes their speaking and how this thinking can, or cannot, be tweaked so as to conform with the 'speaking' that they have to acquire as students of their respective L2.

A related topic, not explicitly discussed in the book, is to what degree the very description of a language is subject to 'Whorfian' influences; compare what Jespersen used to condemn as 'squinting' grammar', i.e. a grammar that is predicated on the system of another given language, as it was the case for Danish and other European, and even Greenlandic grammars of past centuries, that were shaped in the image of Classical Latin and its grammatical categories, rather than on what the language under de- or prescription had to offer. It is my impression that 'lexical relativity' could have us take a more lenient

attitude toward this kind of behavior than was the case for diehard structuralists like Jespersen and the earlier mentioned Hjelmslev.

The study in Chapter 1 by volume co-editor Teresa Cadierno is entitled 'Motion in Danish as a second language: Does the learner's L1 make a difference?' (pp. 1-34); it studies the possible effect of the learner's native language (L1) on the learning of the target language. The L1 in question is typologically classified either as a V-language (a language (where motion is expressed in the verb) or as an S-language (where motion is expressed by means of a 'satellite' such as an adverbial or gerund). As an example, compare an S-language sentence like Spanish *entró a la casa corriendo* 'he ran into the house' (literally, 'he entered the house running') vs. a V-language's like English *he ran into the house*, or Danish *han løb ind i huset* (p. 10).

By showing learners pictures of the motions involved and their agents, the author elicited responses that seem to confirm the notion of 'thinking for speaking', when applied to these cases. Consequently, the teaching of languages needs to take heed of these typological differences as they come to light, using Slobin's hypotheses. In practice, this means that one should be attentive to a phenomenon interestingly described on p. 22: that L2 Danish learners of Spanish L1 extraction tend to focus on the path, rather than on the manner of motion, in that they prefer the non-specific verb for 'to go' (Danish *gå*) to more specific motion expressions (such as 'crawling), even when the picture in question clearly seems to indicate that the motion indeed is that of 'crawling'.

The chapter is well-argued and abundantly illustrated; still, the author should have been more careful in her proofreading, as many of the examples are marred by inconsistency and/or sloppy translation equivalents. A 'jar' is hardly the same as the Danish *dåse* ('box'); in addition, confusion reigns on p. 13, where 'out of the jar' is used as the translation for both *ud af dåsen* and *ud af sækken* (referring to pictures 2 and 11, respectively, on. pp. 30-32). On p. 22, reference is made to ''the English [sic!] verb *gå*'', while on the same page, the

Danish sentences *manden gå* [sic!] *ind i huset* and *manden går ud af dåse* [sic!] are both faulty, yet could have easily been corrected by a native user of Danish. One wishes that the author had taken care to weed out these and similar infelicities (such as the repeated typos in *kydse, følgje* on p.12).

Concluding, one can agree with Cadierno that "the learner's L1 does make a difference when learning" (p. 26). But we need more careful, practice-oriented studies like the present one to help us understand the pedagogical and practical implications of this fact. In this connection, the degree to which L1-ingrained ways of thinking can be changed in and through L2 teaching is another, fascinating question, aspects of which will be dealt with later (in the collection's chapter 3).

Chapter 2, by Victoria Hasko, deals with 'The role of Thinking for Speaking in adult L2 speech: the case of (non)unidirectionality encoding by American learners of Russian' (pp. 34-58). Similar to the approach taken in the previous chapter, the present author, too, focuses on the ways motion is encoded verbally; the languages she studies are English as L1 and Russian as L2. Both are S-languages (in the terminology due to Leonard Talmy and adopted also by Cadierno in chapter 1; Talmy 2000), but the way motion is envisioned conceptually in the two languages differs in many aspects, the most important of which is that of 'directionality'. As the author remarks, "successful L2 acquisition by adult learners is dependent … on the learners' ability to systematically adapt to new ways of attending to … conceptual domains that may be encoded differently" (p. 57).

Thinking for speaking, in this case, means that the adult learner must learn to perceive 'motion' in perhaps unfamiliar ways. Contrary to English, in Russian, when talking about motion, we need to specify its 'directionality': is the motion in question going in one particular direction (e.g. from goal to target) or does it not specify any such directionality? As examples, the author provides the contrasting Russian verbs for 'run': *bezhat'* (meaning: 'run to somewhere') vs.

begat' (meaning: 'run around with no specified direction'; p. 43; 54). The author's experiments show that the American learners, who do not have this kind of distinction expressed in the verb, but use a 'satellite', have great difficulty in finding the right equivalents in the L2 (Russian, although being an S-language like English, has these particular distinctions expressed in the verb stem itself).

The author's illustrative material is taken from the same source that was utilized by Slobin and his colleagues, Mayer's *Frog where are you?*, a popular (wordless) picture book for children. Here, the 'running' of a deer (with the frog on its head) toward a ravine, typically a directional affair, is mistranslated by the L1 learners, who use the non-directional variant: *begaet* rather than *bezhit* (p. 54). The difficulties of L2 acquisition in the case of these and similar Russian verbs are compounded by the presence of two factors: the Russian use of prefixes to 'modify' or 'shape' directionality, and the use of aspect/'Aktionsart' to characterize the motion in more detail in various ways, too complicated to discuss here.

All in all, the Russian verb presents a momentous challenge to the learners of other languages, whose 'thinking for speaking' proceeds along quite different paths. Hasko's study offers ample evidence that ''linguistically motivated categories *pervade, change,* and *facilitate* our thought'' (as Levinson et al. have observed earlier; 2002, quoted here on p. 57 with author Hasko's italics). The present reviewer wholeheartedly supports the author's conclusion that structurally driven teaching methods are not sufficient in the case of L2 acquisition, but need to be complemented by ''conceptually driven and immersive approaches and activities … through contextualized discourse-level production tasks'' (pp. 57-58).

One point on which one could disagree with the author is the rather confusing term '(non)unidirectionality'. When Hasko introduces the distinction on p. 43 between 'unidirectional' and 'non-unidirectional', she immediately adds: ''[hereafter, (non)unidirectional]'' – which I take to function as a 'cover term' for both uni- and

non-unidirectional, and not as a substitute for 'non-unidirectional', as the quote suggests. (Compare the title of the chapter, which clearly is intended to refer to the category of directionality as such). Yet, in the following, the terms are used more or less interchangeably (e.g. p. 44, top, there are three occurrences of 'non-unidirectional', which makes sense there, while '(non)unidirectional' would not. However, on mid-page we find "… a group of '(non)unidirectional' verbs …", where I think 'non-unidirectional' would fit the bill better. From what I gather, '(non)unidirectional' is introduced as a neutral, catch-all term: namely, when we do not want to specify whether we are dealing with either unidirectionality or non-unidirectionality. But in that case wouldn't it be more reasonable to just talk about 'directionality' and drop the confusing parentheses, when we really mean 'non-unidirectionality'? Just a thought.

Some typos occur also here: in example (3), p. 42, the English should read 'ran into the house'; in (6), p. 43, *Gor*'*kogo* is a genitive and should be marked as such in the translation. In (14), p. 52, a superfluous -*n*- occurs in *ogrnomnye*; in fn, 3, p. 58, read "Chinese is an S-framed language" (not -famed!). On p. 54, 'TSF' should of course be 'TFS'. But these very minor shortcomings do not detract from the value of this careful and extremely rich study of a much-maligned and much-cursed translators' and teachers' task: the correct rendition and teaching of the Russian verb's various vagaries.

In chapter 3, by Gale A. Stam, entitled 'Can an L2 speaker's patterns of Speaking for Thinking change?' (pp. 59-83), the focus is on gestures: "movements of the arms and hands that people make to accompany their speech" (pp. 60-83). As "external manifestations of a speaker's online thinking for speaking", gestures can provide us with information about Slobin's hypothesis that the study of speech alone cannot. As far as SLA is concerned, Slobin (1996) has singled out certain aspects of L2 acquisition that are particularly difficult for certain L1 speakers to master; one of them is the proper selection of gestures to accompany the L2 speech. I recall a

colleague from a major British university telling me how he had to order his Brazilian students to "keep their hands under the table" when arguing a point in seminar discussions; the British professor felt simply not up to the excess information that was conveyed by the Brazilians' language-specific hand movements that normally accompany their L1 speech, but were deemed superfluous to, or even interfering with, an acceptable L2 delivery.

In the present study, the author followed a bilingual Spanish-English speaker who lived and worked in an English-speaking business environment in the Greater Chicago area (Evanston, Ill.), while at the same time having most of her social relationships attended to in Spanish; the study covered a period of nine years, from 1997-2006.

A longitudinal comparison of the participant's way of narrating a visually represented story uncovered several interesting differences, indicating that the speaker indeed had internalized some of the English ways of thinking for speaking, but at the same time maintained a Spanish 'bias', when dealing with other speech-related phenomena. Similar to some of the other studies in the volume, Gale concentrated on verbs expressing motion, and here it turned out that while earlier, in 1997, the speaker was verbalizing the motion events in the same way as did native speakers, yet "her gestures indicated that she was not thinking about motion in the same way that native-English speakers do" (p. 76). In 2006, by contrast, her gestures were less segmented, and "covered more speech like native-English speakers do" (pp. 79, 81).

When it comes to the distinction between *path* (a motion verb always expresses something about the direction of the motion and its target: 'go' is always 'going somewhere'), as opposed to *manner* (the way the motion, say 'go', is characterized, e.g. by 'striding' vs. 'limping'), there is a clear difference in L2 acquisition: expressions of manner lag behind expressions of path. One reason might be that 'manner' is not thematized in the same way when it comes to producing L2 teaching materials; another is that (as Slobin has ob-

served) that manner may be ''a pattern acquired in childhood that is resistant to change'' (Slobin 1996: 89); ''it just does not change in L2 acquisition'', as the author concludes (p. 82).

Even though the study of necessity had to be limited to one speaker (only one of the original 1997 participants consented to participate in the 2006 follow-up study), the author's meticulous dissection of the participants' speaking habits as they developed over time shows, in a fairly consistent way, what happens longitudinally in L2 acquisition. It should also warn us not to expect too much in the line of 'native-like' behavior (especially where gestures are involved) in the case of adult L2 learners. In addition, the author draws our attention to an important, often overlooked factor in purely instrumental L2 education: the learners' ''L2 thinking-for-speaking patterns may reflect not only their interlanguage systems but also their intercultural identities'' (p. 82). Also, it behooves us to realize that there always is a potential trade-off in L2 acquisition, in this particular case illustrated by the fact that ''as the learner became more fluent in English she also became less fluent in Spanish, and in fact, the increase in gestures per clause i Spanish in 2006 was related to word retrieval problems she had in Spanish'' (p. 72) – a useful reminder to teachers that L2 instruction always should keep the whole person in focus.

Chapter 4, 'Thinking for Speaking and immediate memory for spatial relations' (pp. 84-101) represents a joint effort by three psychologists/psycholinguists: Kenny R. Coventry, Berenice Valdés, and Pedro Guijarro-Fuentes. The study is based on carefully designed and administered psychological experiments, intended to bring out possible differences in conceptualizations of spatial relations be-tween Spanish and English speakers; here, previous researchers had found that ''both space structures language and language structures space'' (p. 86, repeated p. 87). This may sound like an 'hen-and-egg' problematic; yet, as the authors remark, it may be of interest to experimentally test particular phenomena (e.g. spatial relations)

and see how diverse languages express these (e.g. in English by the prepositions *in* vs. *on*, whereas Spanish *en* serves both functions). The authors supplemented their experiments with an inquiry into the contrasting use of the verbs *ser* and *estar* (both meaning 'to be') and the connection of this distinction with the spatial relations of 'events' vs. 'objects'.

Based on the outcome of their experiments, the authors conclude that "[c]ontrary to the thinking-for-speaking hypothesis, implicit recognition of spatial relations seems to be not affected by the use of spatial prepositions in English or by the use of verbs *ser* vs. *estar* in Spanish" (p. 97). And they go on to conclude that "[t]he results of these experiments across two languages do not provide support for the view that there are conceptual differences … associated with differences in spatial language and verbs between languages" (ibid.)

The authors themselves point to several factors that may have influenced this negative and partly unexpected outcome; one of them is time. The experiments were strictly timed (Reaction Time, RT, always being a major distinctive property of psychological experiments); however, recognition of spatial relations may take time, so that given more time, the participants might have adjusted their recognition to the pictures they were presented with, thus being afforded more time to 'think before speaking'.

Apart from this, certainly plausible, time constraint, there are also problems from a cognitive-linguistic point of view with the design of such experimental-psychologically constructed tests. The very situation of the experiment is an unnatural one, not one in which participants use their language in a free and unrestricted manner. Moreover, they are presented with isolated sentences outside of any linguistic context of use, being given only a picture (e.g. of some dogs on a hand) and asked to answer 'Yes' or 'No' to questions about the spatial representations involved (alternatively, to grade their answers on a 5-point Likert scale). While such experiments may show something about how conceptualizations are formed in the brain and how

they relate to lexical items (such as 'dog' or 'hand', or prepositions like 'in' and 'on'), the psychology laboratory situation is not one of normal language use, but that of a controlled experiment.

The present reviewer agrees with the authors' final remark that ''the failure to find language effects does not discount thinking-for-speaking effects'' (p. 100), but would also venture to suggest that this 'failure' may have something to do with the experiments themselves and the way they were set up. In other words, one may question if experiments of this kind in general can be used to test a hypothesis like Slobin's, or if they only should serve to sharpen our understanding of the complexity of the psychological, cognitive, and linguistic mechanisms that are involved.

Chapter 5 is entitled 'The gloss trap', by David Stringer (pp. 102-124). For starters, the author remarks that we are prone to identify lexical analogies across languages by means of so-called 'glosses', i.e. rough-and-ready translations that presume the existence of semantic as well as syntactic equivalencies. By contrast, the principle of 'lexical relativity' (following Saussure in his *Cours*, as quoted by the author, p. 102) says that ''no two languages lexicalize concepts in the same way''; this should always be kept in mind when 'glossing' a text (whether as a help in understanding a foreign language's system and structure, or as a 'crutch' during the acquisition of an L2).

As a case in point, Stringer cites the distinction between 'verb-framed' and 'satellite-framed' languages (also earlier referred to; see chapter 1, above) when it comes to the concept of 'motion'. Here, equivalence is not so much (let alone uniquely) dependent on the verbs in question and their semantic realization in different languages as on the syntactic relations they do, or do not, contract. In other words, the search for universal semantic equivalents is bound to fail, because the individual lexical items combine syntactically in very diverse ways (which shows why enterprises such as Wierzbicka's ''attempt to provide complete semantic descriptions of common English words'' are ultimately ''quixotic'' (p. 104), and doomed to fail).

Contrary to this, the author thinks that ''lexical equivalence is virtually non-existent'' (p. 105). Instead, we should speak of 'lexical analogues', and it is in this sense that the author formulates his own (weak) version of the 'Lexical Relativity Hypothesis': ''When comparing lexical analogues, the meaning of any lexical item … is relative to its ambient lexicon'' (p. 106). Of course, as the author sagaciously adds, we have no ''articulate theory'' of what this ambient lexicon is supposed to be (ibid.); I assume that it is safe to say that that it somehow relates to what elsewhere is called 'context'.

When it comes to lexical relativity, Stringer distinguishes two kinds of conceptual variation: those where the conceptual elements play no role in syntax or grammar, as distinguished from those that have a syntactic determiner built into them. Again, such features are language-specific in the ways they combine with other features; for both cases it holds that how such features (semantic and/or syntactic) are 'bundled' is language-idiosyncratic. Sometimes this results in a 'lexical gap', as when *ashi* in Japanese or *fot* in Norwegian may refer to either the foot or the leg; or when speakers of Urdu 'drink' their hookah rather than smoke it (p. 108).

Lexical mismatches (due to lexical relativity) have been dealt with differently in theory and in practice. *Theoretically*, many linguists have felt that the phenomena in question are best explained by invoking general principles, such as the types of universal constraints that have gone by the name of 'parameters' in (post-)Chomskyan linguistics. On this view, what happens in *practice*, e.g. in L2 acquisition, is that the parameters of a particular language have to be 'reset' when one is acquiring an L2 (or L3, L4, etc).

This kind of thinking leads (according to the author) to a misconceived notion of language acquisition, one that is due to a faulty understanding of the role that the lexical items play in the process. Much of the reasoning surrounding the process of L2 acquisition, when conceived of in 'universal' or 'parameter' terms, overlooks the syntactic and other effects that are bound up with the initial

(L1) lexical item. What happens it that a particular L1 lexical item is posited as 'equivalent' to one in the other (L2) language, whereas their syntactic properties may widely differ (even if there is some semantic analogue; p. 109-11). Such syntactic mismatches in L2 learners can effortlessly be attributed to influence of the corresponding L1 lexical item. I recall how at one time, when doing research at Yale University, I was witness to how the principal investigator of the project we were working on blew up during a confrontation with a student from Colombia, who apparently did not live up to the PI's expectations. The student (whose pseudonym shall be Antonio) reported the incident to me as follows, pointing at a hole in the sheetrock behind his desk: ''Carl [also a pseudonym] just opened a hole in the wall'', meaning that in his ire, the PI had hit the drywall with his fist, actually pushing his whole forearm through it!

I was puzzled about Antonio's way of describing the incident, until it struck me that this Colombian speaker of English simply had transferred a syntactic procedure from Spanish to English: where we say 'make a hole (in the wall)', the 'analogous' Spanish expression is *abrir una brecha en la pared* ('open a hole in the wall'). This phenomenon is correctly described in terms of a Verb-framed language like English contrasting with a Satellite-framed one like Spanish (or some other Romance language); but is it really necessary to involve the 'reset parameter' machinery? Stringer thinks not, and I agree.

Here, as elsewhere in the chapter, the author's reasoning is documented by well-chosen examples from a number of languages. The tenor of the argument is always the same: much of what goes under the name of SLA theorizing represents a misunderstanding of the nature of these 'contrastive phenomena' (as was the current expression a few generations earlier). The fact that learners of L2 produce 'wrong' utterances ''is not due to transfer of a parameter setting'' (as maintained by a number of scholars), ''but the result of lexical transfer'' (p. 119). Hence, the (correct) conclusions concerning the

nature of learners' interlanguage that result from the comparison of learners' mismatching constructions ''may be straightforwardly restated in lexicalist terms'' (p. 120).

Overall, Stringer's chapter is well-argued and richly exemplified; it ranks among the best in the book. I have no problem subscribing to the author's conclusion: ''Lexical relativity is a fundamental organizing principle of the mental lexicon, implying that when we conceptualize events, states and things at the lexical level, such construals are to some degree language specific. It follows that we must tread carefully when making crosslinguistic syntactic generalizations on the basis of supposedly equivalent glosses'' (p. 123). And conversely, I would add, so-called (or assumed to be) equivalent glosses should be cross-examined in relation to their syntactic, not just their purely semantic features. On the contrary, as the author concludes, ''semantic decomposition is a prerequisite for comparative syntactic analysis'' (ibid.)

Some minor blemishes mar an otherwise near-perfect presentation: p. 110, ex. (5): the Turkish examples are garbled due to typographic incuria (the 'hooks' on the c, -s- are missing, the 'dotless -i-' (as in *batmis*, *batirmis* (this -i- is phonemic in Turkish!) is not respected; the same items go missing in the name of the author Özcaliskan in the bibliography through none of Stringer's fault, I presume). p. 119 in ex. (39) and (40): the square parentheses are not balanced. p. 120, l. 12 up: unexplained boldface in the phonological representation of Engl. 'pour'. ibid ex. (42), Yumi or Yuhi (Korean Juhi)? p. 121 'verbs classes' should be 'verb classes'. p. 124, n 6: Juff's, read Juffs'.

A final question to the author: given that there is such a thing as a 'gloss trap', would it be possible to circumvent it by providing better glosses? Again, just a thought!

Chapter 6, by Monika Ekiert, 'Linguistic effects on Thinking for Writing: The case of articles in L2 English' (pp. 125-153), applies Slobin's (1996) idea of 'thinking for speaking' to a particular subdomain of language use: the case of the article in L2 writing. As

the author says, "[t]he thinking-for-speaking hypothesis, despite its limiting label, embraces all forms of linguistic production (speaking, writing, signing) and reception (listening, reading, viewing) as well as a range of mental processes (understanding, imagining, remembering)" (p. 127). As far as L2 learning and acquisition is concerned, it is interesting to note that the absence vs. presence of a particular linguistic device or category (e.g. the article) seems to have influence also on native language acquisition after the first five years (compare the case of the Finnish L1 acquirers mentioned on pp. 127-128). But whereas in the case of the child, the construction of a semantic world goes hand-in-hand with the construction of a linguistic competence, the adult L2 learner may have to "*rethink* for L2 speaking", when redrawing the conceptual mappings of grammatical categories (p. 128).

The article's empirical part concerns the English L2 learning processes observed in three Polish speakers with regard to expressions of 'definiteness'. The author remarks, following Christopher Lyons in a number of studies, that "definiteness is a grammaticalized category on a par with tense, mood, number, gender, etc." (p. 129; Lyons 1999: 275). However, just as in the case of e.g. tense, 'reality time' never corresponds univocally with 'grammatical time' (tense), and vice versa.

In the case of the article, the situation becomes complicated by the fact that the category serves a double function: to denote definiteness, but also what is called 'specificity' of reference; this resides in the speaker's territory of information only, as opposed to 'definiteness', which belongs to the shared domain of speaker and hearer as 'shared knowledge' (129-130; cf. Fodor & Sag 1982). When it comes to definiteness, the author goes so far as to postulate two distinct subcategories of definiteness, collapsed in the English article *the*, which thus represents "two different morphemes" (one contextual, i.e. defined by the linguistic context; the other situational, i.e. referring to en extralinguistic context; p. 149).

The Polish learners were followed during a period of three months in a variety of tasks, in order to figure out how they applied articles in English, and how their choices of articles (or non-choices) were determined by the (ascribed) meanings of the chosen items (p. 132). The tasks included a narrative retelling of a sitcom clip; a task involving inserting missing articles in a short English text (one of Aesop's fables); and a recall task, in which the learners were asked to motivate their choices. Especially the latter task suffered from design problems: the learners were not always willing, or able, to express the reasoning involved in their choices; in general, as the author admits, the narrow scope of the research questions, the limited time frame, and the small number of participants (pp. 150-151) characterize the study as "exploratory" (p. 150).

Even so, what the protocols show is a pervasive influence of the L1 pattern on L2 acquisition. Polish has no articles, and must express definiteness in a variety of other ways: word order, nominal case, even gestures. What I found rather interesting was the extent to which the participants "heavily relied on possessive pronouns" for reference (p. 139): it is as if the absence of articles in Polish, when making reference to body parts, has been turned into a red flag, signaling the necessity of using a defining device in English – and the possessive seems to be the easiest available of such devices (demonstratives are also used).

However, one should be wary of hasty generalizations here; the classical case of 'I cut a finger' (Larry Horn's famous example, meaning: 'mine, not somebody else's') points up the importance of conventional implicature to guide one through the referential labyrinths of both Polish and (L2) English. Another valuable point made in the chapter is the need to pay attention to the 'pragmatic category' of 'identifiability' as the "true universal category", comprising also definiteness of reference (p. 131); however, this point was not belabored further in the chapter.

Co-editor of the volume, Zhaohong Han, has contributed a chapter (7) on ''Grammatical morpheme inadequacy as a function of linguistic relativity: A longitudinal case study'' (pp. 154-182). What is meant by this somewhat arcane title is that L2 learners, even after years of study and residence in L2 territory, persistently and inexplicably fail to internalize the proper use of certain common grammatical morphemes (such as those for correct number and the definite/indefinite distinction, expressed through the use of articles). This phenomenon is then related to the 'speaking for thinking' hypothesis, based on a longitudinal observation of an L2 English-proficient L1 speaker of Chinese, whose English competence turns out to be differentiated in relation to the various categories of morphemic 'inadequacies'.

The author correctly remarks that most studies of the phenomenon of 'fossilization' (as it is also called; cf. p. 179) have based themselves on ''grammatical morphemes as isolated purely formal entities'' (p. 154). Rather than attributing 'inadequacy' to the morphemes themselves (as in the title), the studies are 'inadequate' in that they are more interested in 'inter-learner' variations (i.e. variability related to learners' different L2) than (as is the present study) in ''intra-learner variability'', predicated on the individual learner's (lack of) progress (p. 154).

The seeming paradox: that L2 grammatical morphemes ''are a great obstacle in L2 acquisition'' (p. 155) despite the fact that they, content-wise, do not rank among the most important contributions to communication, has had researchers looking for 'extraneous' explications. One such possible explanation is the persistent influence of the 'L1 mindset', which first of all, though not always consciously, makes people concentrate on what is most important (viz., the content of the message) – which in turn results in their understandable desire to get their message across, as quickly as possible, by hook or by crook (after all, even L1 users drop articles and other 'superfluous' items, when it comes to issue commands or

warnings: we call out 'Fire!' rather than uttering: 'There seems to be a fire in your attic!'). Second, inter-learner variability is predicated on the assumption that certain L1 speakers are either better or less pre-disposed for acquiring a particular L2, and here Slobin's 'thinking for speaking' enters the picture.

A question such as the author's ''when did Geng fossilize, precisely?'' (Geng being a pseudonym for the L2 speaker whose progress is being studied) can therefore be considered a useful entrance portal to the more general problem of 'persistent variability', understood as: the failure to acquire a correct and stable command of grammatical morphemes – usually, as the author says, an area where even long-term users of L2, who otherwise are linguistically and metalinguistically capable speakers, fail to cover those slippery last few yards towards the desired finish line: complete, native mastery.

Before I say more about the actual experimental work done by the author and her co-editor (who, by the way, are among the foremost contributors to our practical and theoretical SLA-themed literature), let me ask a few naive questions regarding underlying conceptualizations such as 'native', 'mastery', and the 'finish line' itself as a metaphor for an obtainable, rather than an asymptotic goal.

As to the use of the term 'native' (as in 'native speaker', '(near-)native competence', and so on), a number of reservations need to be made (for more on this delicate subject, see Mey 1986). Most of the time, 'speaking like a native' has to do with pronunciation, and no wonder: this is the first thing one notices when meeting a stranger. It is as if the L2 speaker were presenting a linguistic calling-card, identifying him/herself as a speaker of some other language, and a priori defining him-/herself as 'non-native'. From then on, whatever the person says or writes is indelibly tainted with the non-nativeness mark, to the effect that even correct utterances are heard as faulty or hard to comprehend.

Some Finnish acquaintances of mine, whose native tongue is (Finland) Swedish, told me how on a visit to Stockholm, they had

to visit a pharmacy, where they were told by the person behind the counter that 'we don't understand Finnish'! My friends were native speakers of Swedish, but their Swedish was 'non-native', and hence incomprehensible, in a Sweden-Swedish context. Conversely, L1 speakers who have achieved a certain mastery of their new L2, tend to be over-severe in their 'correctness' judgments; a German colleague of mine once berated me for using a non-English expression (which she attributed to an 'L1 mindset' of mine: the word was 'betterment', corresponding to Danish *forbedring* or German *Verbesserung*).

When author Han, on pp. 176 and ff., provides examples demonstrating the Chinese L2 speaker's 'thinking for speaking', she involuntarily excises some sentences as showing wrong article use – sentences which, when uttered, would, in my opinion, be perfectly OK, and likewise would be perceived as correct when uttered by a native speaker (thus bypassing the bias alluded to above). Take ex. (29) ''I'm looking for the file you send [sent?] me'' (p. 176), or ex. (37) ''This will take care of this week'' (p. 180; both underlinings as in the original), whose relevance as cases showing the persistence of a Chinese pre-established pattern of (non)article use I fail to see.

Conversely, I would maintain that the omission of the obligatory article *the* before *data* in Han's sentence ''Similarity, … data gathered provide sufficient evidence …'' (p. 176) would simply pass as a typo or an unintentional omission under the pen of a native speaker/ writer; but knowing that the writer of this line in all probability is an L2 English user with a Chinese background makes me identify the omission as possibly showing the L2 writer's failure to take the final, difficult steps towards complete mastery.

While reflecting on the phenomenon of 'unavoidable non-nativeness', I'm not even taking into account such extraneous, but unavoidably 'non-native' features as color, body build, physiognomy, timbre of voice, gestures, family names, and so on, which all would present unconquerable barriers to ideal L2-perfection. During my

years in Japan, the one and only occasion on which I managed to conduct a conversation in Japanese and be taken for a native was when I was sitting in the back of a suburban Tokyo taxi at night, trying to explain to the driver that we had to find a public toilet in a hurry, as I couldn't wait for him to take me to my hotel in the center of town, 26 km of highway driving away. When he stopped the car in front of a bathhouse and turned on the dome light to let me out, his spontaneous reaction was *Aa, Nihon jin ja nain desu* 'But you are not Japanese!' – which, despite my imminent and urging bodily predicament, made my day (or night). (In Japan, one enters the taxi by clambering in the back door, which the driver opens and closes automatically without even looking at you; and all of the above happened in a darkened part of a remote suburb, where the last train to the city had long since departed the station.)

To return to Mr. Geng and his longitudinal progress: the author devised a battery of tasks aiming to uncover the influence of Geng's L1 on his command of English. The tests were intended to highlight such features as plural vs. singular, definiteness, and combinations of the two, in both Chinese-English and English-Chinese translations. In addition, other tasks involved topic-comment constructions and the different handling of count- vs. non-count nouns in both languages. Most interestingly, a final test showed the lack of sensitivity that L2 speakers routinely exhibit towards errors of the kind dealt with there; thus, in the error correction tasks Geng 'outperformed' the author's expectations, timewise: "Geng was given 10 minutes for the task but 'finished' it in five minutes, commenting that he did not see much wrong in the texts" (p. 174).

In addition to the elicitation tasks, the author also studied spontaneous, naturalistic production of English texts in the form of emails sent by Mr. Geng to his colleagues. These texts covered the same period that was assigned to the elicitation tasks, namely from 2003 to 2007. There was evidence of a slight improvement in plural marking, with quantified nouns doing better (96%, up from 92%

at the beginning) than non-quantified NPs (79%. resp. 76%). The same tendency was observed for the use of the article: *a* climbed from 82% to 86% correct use, *the* from 64% to 69% correct use between 2003 and 2007 (pp. 168-169). In other words, what these results (along with the results for the other tasks) show is that fossilization is indeed taking place, and that the lack of 'nativeness' (for whatever it's worth) is due to the persistent influence of Geng's Chinese L1 mindset: ''the evidence is overwhelmingly suggestive that the number and definiteness marking in Geng's L2 English do pattern after those in his L1 Chinese'' (p. 175). Similarly, as to Geng's definiteness marking, ''[the] data … indicate[ed] that Geng's L2 usage mirrors his L1 thinking for speaking'' (p. 176).

With the author, we may conclude that 'thinking for speaking' does not quite cover the entire phenomenon; to acquire a perfect L2 competence, one needs to do a complete ''conceptual restructuring'' which, the author says, is very unlikely ever to be achieved in L2 acquisition. What is needed is *re*-thinking for speaking and this is where fossilization makes itself most felt. Mindsets apparently are here to stay.

A few critical remarks are due on this otherwise well-studied and elegantly delivered work. I would prefer that the treatment of the naturalistic data (announced under 'Method', p. 164) were assigned a proper, clearly marked space; as it is now, the second source of data, the elicitation tasks, eclipses the earlier announced naturalistic date (which turn up again a few pages down, p. 164). Then, in most cases the 'translations' from the Chinese are no more than morpheme-by-morpheme transcriptions (e.g. 'Cat very lovely', p. 165). One would like to see how the subject, Mr. Geng, did *translate* this (and the other) Chinese sentence(s) (as e.g. shown later, on p. 171, where the example sentence is translated as: 'Cat is lovely'). Minor blemishes comprise the several misspellings of Roman Jakobson's name (p. 179 and Bibliography; with -c-), and the misnumbering of examples (Figure 7.1, on p. 178, line 3 down,

should be 7.2). The German philosopher [Wilhelm] von Humboldt lived mostly in the 19th, rather than the 18th century (p. 160). These minor shortcomings do not detract from the overall impression that this is a carefully researched and well-presented contribution, filling a rather glaring gap in our own 'thinking for speaking/writing' about L2 acquisition.

The final chapter 8 of the volume consists of a 'Conclusion' (pp. 182-194) to the whole volume, written by Terence Odlin: 'On the interdependence of conceptual transfer and relativity studies'. The article falls into two parts, not necessarily always sharply distinguished: on the one hand, the author offers his comments on, and extends the discussion of, the topics treated by the individual contributors, in this way providing a useful complement to the rather terse introduction to the entire collection by the editors in their 'Preface' (pp. xi-xvi). On the other hand, the chapter contains many relevant observations and pointers that often go beyond the analyses provided by the authors, and broadens the discussion to comprise aspects that have been, for one reason or another, been underexposed in the preceding chapters.

I found it very helpful to discover that Slobin's (1996) by now famous hypothesis of 'thinking for speaking' was not his only, or earliest, claim to fame. Odlin mentions an article from the early seventies of the last century, dealing with 'cognitive prerequisites' for grammatical development in children, a piece that was written during the heyday of the misguided attempts to enlist psycholinguistics in the service of then-triumphant generative-transformational grammar ('TG'; Slobin 1973). Actually, around that same time I lost one of my good graduate students, who 'defected' to Dan Slobin in Berkeley, leaving the rather sterile TG environment at UT Austin behind as not conducive to her professional development. I now better understand her decision, although at the time I was tempted to say something irreverent and, as it turned out, highly irrelevant [expletive deleted].

Another cluster of pertinent remarks groups around the author's treatment of the problems involved in 'fossilization' (or 'entrenchment', in Nick Ellis' terminology; 2008). What I liked best here were the observations that an 'end state' is not an absolute, and that 'fossilization' is not for life, as shown by the (however modest) progress that an advanced learner of L2 English was able to make, late in his development: the case of Mr. 'Geng', described by Zhao Han in chapter 7; as author Stam has it in chapter 3, "L2 thinking for speaking is not static" (quoted on p. 187). Definitely, the notion/prejudice of "insurmountable entrenchment" (p. 188) deserves to be critiqued and deconstructed, even though there seems to be a long and arduous journey ahead for those setting out to try and do so, as the author also remarks (somewhat euphemistically referring to "a very long research program"; ibid.)

There are a number of murky areas in SLA studies that need to be developed and (sometimes) cleared. One such area is that around the notion of 'conceptual transfer' as opposed to 'linguistic transfer'. I must confess to disagreeing with the author here. Odlin apparently feels that "the definition of conceptual transfer [is] straightforward"; p. 189); but his own definition, given earlier in the chapter, is anything but.

Consider the author's formulation on p. 183, where he says (after defining linguistic relativity and linguistic transfer in rather unequivocal terms): "Conceptual transfer is a more specific type of cross-linguistic influence where linguistic relativity is also involved". To me, this sounds like mere 'hand-waving'; not much additional clarification is provided later on, when the author discusses the difference between meanings and concepts (p. 191).

In this context, Odlin quotes an example due to Levinson (1997): 'Tomorrow I leave here', which is said to pose a "serious problem" for people who do not recognize the distinction "between the meaning of a sentence and the thought it expresses" (p. 191). And the author goes on to quote Levinson, where the latter specifies the 'problem' as

one of not having the correct 'references' to the thoughts expressed cognitively. In Roman Jakobson's classic terminology, morphemes like *tomorrow*, *I*, and *here* are 'shifters', depending for their interpretation on the point of view or 'stance' of the speaker. This is all very well, but it does not correctly identify the real problem with Levinson's example: it is a constructed *sentence*, not an *utterance* in actual speech. And as Bakhtin has taught us, sentences can be repeated, utterances cannot, as they are uniquely defined by the speaker in time and place. As soon as the utterance is spoken, identification poses no longer a difficulty, and the 'problem' vanishes.

The misconception demonstrated in this example and the subsequent discussion has to do with the fact that the author (as does Levinson) subscribes to a semantically-based definition of 'meaning' as residing in abstract linguistic entities, in the philosophical tradition familiar to us ever since the medieval scholastics and their 'judgments'. Consequently, I am doubtful about the author's final word in this matter: ''conceptual transfer should be seen as a subset of meaning transfer; I would turn this statement on its head and say: ''Meaning transfer always presupposes some transfer of a concept placed in its proper pragmatic surroundings of the utterance''.

I found only one, but rather unfortunate error in this otherwise carefully executed piece: on p. 188, Odlin quotes some examples provided by Hasko in her contribution. First off, a form like *begnet* (supposedly of the Russian verb *begat'* 'to run') does not exist; of course, it simply might be an overlooked typo for *begaet*. Worse, though, is the author's deceptive juxtaposition of two of Hasko's examples, where their context is truncated in relating to the original occurrences. In fact, outside of the context provided by Hasko on p. 54, an expression like *Olen' begaet* would be quite OK ('the deer is running', without further specification of the motion). Therefore, the ''erroneous use'' that Odlin ascribes to this utterance is only erroneous when the entire context is taken into account. Thus, the innocuous, seemingly contrastive 'minimal pair', juxtaposing the

unidirectional *bednaja sobaka bezhit* 'The poor dog is running' with the 'incorrect', bidirectional form *olen' begaet* 'The deer is running [around]' in reality shows no contrast at all. The implied contrast, mistakenly suggested by Odin as residing in the use of the verb forms, combined with different NPs, makes no sense once we refer to the original text – which showcases the difficulties involved in a correct use of examples borrowed from unfamiliar sources.

Concluding remarks

Overall, Han & Cadierno's book represents a very worthwhile contribution, both to the 'thinking for speaking' discussion and to various other matters in the theory and practice of L2 acquisition (such as the thorny problem of 'L2 fossilization' and issues surrounding 'native-like' L2 competence). The text examples are copious and mainly well-chosen; the experiments (where applicable) carefully executed, annotated, and analyzed. The literature quoted is representative of a wide range of views and the authors are clearly in command of their respective subjects. In addition, I enjoyed most of the chapters for their readability and clear, persuasive argumentation.

On a more negative tone, the Index (pp. 212-214) is seriously lopsided in that it contains references to only half of the book's chapters: only the contributions by Cadierno, Stam, Ekiert, Han, and Odlin are properly quoted and referenced, whereas the indexable material of the remaining chapters is conspicuously absent, both as far as names are concerned and with regard to content matter. Thus, not too many of the authors quoted in the 'absent' chapters are represented; a quick check revealed that oft-quoted authors such as Bley-Vroman, Ellis, Jackendoff, Juffs, Larsen-Freeman, Levin, – just to name a few – do not figure at all in the Index. And most amazingly, not even all of the contributors to the collection are represented; authors like Coventry et al., Ekiert, Hasko, and

Stringer are glorious by their absence, while multiply-quoted authors such as Pinker or VanPatten are under-represented. In other cases, only one author of a particular name is listed (the name of 'Ellis' has two mentions in the References, one as 'Ellis, N.C.' and one as 'Ellis, R.', but the Index gives only a single reference to 'Ellis, N.' [sic]. The same goes for the two authors by the name of Lyons ('J.' and 'C.'): only a single entry occurs in the index (the one for Christopher Lyons – obviously, for a person my age, the most salient 'Lyons' would be 'Sir John', the eminent British semanticist, but he isn't even mentioned). Michel Achard has lost his first name/initial; N.C. ('Nick') Ellis his second. Among the languages cited in the Index, one misses important references such as to Korean, Japanese, Russian, Turkish. A weighty concept like 'input' is not indexed. And so on and so forth. Whoever is responsible for this unforgivable sloppiness (name withheld) certainly does not deserve the honorable mention provided on p. xv (unless she or he has had a finger in the pie compiling the References, which are complete and near-flawless).

   All of this bears the imprint of a last-minute hastily done job; which is a pity in an otherwise carefully executed work. As already mentioned, in contrast to the Index, the Bibliography is exemplary in its completeness and near-perfection; the few exceptions consist in a couple-three typos, like Pàll for Páll etc.; the name of author Özcaliskan is misspelled, here as elsewhere (the 'dotless 'i', representing a mid-central vowel phoneme in Turkish, is consistently disregarded, i.a. in the chapter by Stringer, where example (5) on p. 110 in addition sports a missing letter: the 'hooked' -s- in *düsman* 'enemy' (I cannot reproduce the Turkish letter, which occurs correctly elsewhere in the book). On p. 148, all references to ''example (10)'' should read ''example (12)''; on p. 129, line 3 up, an important hyphen is missing after ''and'': read ''speaker-and-hearer-non-specific''.

   These minor quibbles aside, my overall evaluation of this collection is extremely positive. The editors have managed to create a

consistent and fascinating picture of the research conducted around one main idea: Slobin's 'neo-Whorfian' Thinking-for-Speaking hypothesis. Their work on this hypothesis embodies a long overdue re-evaluation of Whorf's work in terms of a currently highly actual, not to say explosive issue: how to handle L2 acquisition and -training in a multinational, multiethnic, and continuously more fragmented world, where individual L2 are fighting bravely against overwhelming tendencies towards a globalizing, reductionist uniformity (a contemporary eruption of the 'Basic English' virus of the 1950s?). For this (and also for producing an eminently well-edited work – bar the infelicitous Index), the contributors, along with the authors, should be commended, and their book re-commended as obligatory reading for anyone working with issues of language production and reproduction, not least including the correct management and positive steering of ongoing tendencies in SLA.

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