

---

---

## Transfer of Japanese in Learning Chinese

---

---

PINGPING ZHU LINCOLN

*The process of learning a foreign language naturally involves information transfer from learner's native language. This research, however, focuses only on transfer of Japanese in learning Chinese. Japanese and Chinese share similarities in phonetics, lexicology, syntax, and other areas. However, there is not a linear relationship between positive transfer and similarities of the two languages, neither a linear relationship between negative transfer and differences of the two languages. Maximizing positive transfer and minimizing negative transfer of Japanese in students' Chinese learning depend on teachers' linguistic awareness of both Japanese and Chinese. Therefore, applying the methodology of comparative linguistics to foreign language teaching raises students' attention to the similarities and differences between their native language and the target language. Thus, it contributes to both positive transfer and efficient learning.*

### Introduction

One of the differences between learning a native language and a foreign language is that the first process is taken in a Tabula Rasa, and the second process is taken within the paradigm of the first language. Thus, teaching a second language is more complicated because of the native language transfer. Due to the similarities and dissimilarities of different languages in areas of phonetics, lexicology, syntax, and semantics, the chemistry between any two languages is unique. A second language teacher needs to be aware of the intersections between the native language (NL) and the target language (TL) in order to maximize the positive transfer and to minimize the negative transfer of students' NL in their TL learning.

### Literature Review

Transfer of learning is an important concept of educational psychology and teaching methodology. It happens in every learning activity when the background knowledge of learners inevitably affects them while they are learning new concepts or skills. There are two kinds of learning transfer, according to Vockell (2001): where learning from one situation assists learning in another situation referred to as positive transfer; and where learning from one situation interferes with learning in another situation referred to as negative transfer.

Language transfer is one type of learning transfer. It happens in a bilingual environment. It is understood as a phenomenon in learning a foreign language when learners cannot avoid the influence from their native language (Kang, 2008; Shi, 2005; Zhao, 2004; Zhang, 1989). It is also interpreted as effects on each other between two or more languages (Sun, 2007). Language transfer in foreign language learning

has been an important research topic in the fields of applied linguistics and second language teaching and learning for half a century (Shi, 2005; Zhao, 2004). According to Lado (1957; in Kang, 2008), individuals tend to transfer forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture. In addition to positive transfer and negative transfer, there is a third concept known as zero-transfer or neutral transfer, meaning that the native language has no influence on the target language learning (Sun, 2007; Zhang, 1989). However, most scholars only discuss positive and/or negative transfer of the native language (Kang, 2008; Wang, 2008; Zeng, 2006; Wang, 2005; Wang, 2002; Vockell, 2001). Language transfer happens in areas of phonetics, language structure, semantics, or culture (Zhang, 1989). Shi et al (2005) discuss the language transfer in five perspectives:

- 1) Phonetic transfer in phonemes, intonation, and word stress;
- 2) Grammatical categories, functions, and inflections;
- 3) Graphic components of a word or character, writing, and printing;
- 4) Lexical similarities and dissimilarities of the meaning; and
- 5) Thinking mode and habit as reflections of reality.

Much research has been done on language transfer of native Chinese in learning English. They focus more on the negative transfer for the purposes of analyzing students' mistakes and discussing the methodology of language teaching. Zeng (2006) discusses the negative transfer in phonetics, grammar, and pragmalinguistics. Wang (2005) explores the negative transfer at the grammatical level in areas of negative sentences, discontinuities, attributive clauses, prepositions, misusing of various words, and non-predicate verbs. Wang (2002), from the aspects of word, sentence, and discourse, analyzes negative transfer in English compositions due to the Chinese way of thinking in terms of semantics, culture, logic and rhetoric. However, positive transfer of Chinese language in English learning is also found in phonetic, lexical, and grammatical areas, especially in basic reading skills, for example, knowing the five "Ws" in reading narrative text, understanding object, order and method of description in descriptive text, and locating argument, factum and proof in argumentative text (Nankang, 2005). Research on language transfer of Chinese in learning Japanese covers both positive and negative aspects. Positive transfer of Chinese in learning Japanese (OPC, 2008) includes phonetic, lexical, grammatical, and cultural similarities between Japanese and Chinese. Based on a linguistic comparison of the two languages, Zeng (2007) analyzes the typical phonetic, syntactic, and lexical negative transfer of Chinese in learning Japanese.

Sun (2007) undertook research on the effect of language transfer among multi-language-learners. The study examines the transfer of Japanese as a third language of Chinese students in learning their second language of English. The longer Chinese students study Japanese, the stronger the negative transfer of Japanese on their English learning in phonetics, lexicology, and text. Japanese grammar and English grammar are very different in terms of sentence structure and type. Although the basic order of Japanese is "SOV" and English "SVO", Japanese grammar has a zero-transfer to English grammar. However, it is not the case the other way around. This is because that Japanese sentences are usually shorter than English sentences, and Japanese has only three basic sentence types whereas English has five. Sun indicates that language transfer does not simply depend on the level of the differences between the two languages. Learning a language with more complicated structure than learners' NL does not bring negative transfer even though the structures of the two languages are very different.

In "Research on How Japanese People Learn Chinese Language", Wang (2008) exhaustively explicates various aspects of Japanese learners studying Chinese in terms of history, characteristics

of learning Chinese, common mistakes, and methodology of teaching Japanese students the Chinese language. In learning Chinese, Japanese students have three characteristics due to the positive transfer of Japanese characters (Kanji): the closeness to the Chinese language and culture, strong ability of writing and memorizing Chinese characters, and quickness in reading and understanding Chinese materials. Japanese students also have three characteristics due to the negative transfer of Japanese Kanji: underestimation of difficulties in learning Chinese, unbalance between audio and oral ability and reading comprehension, and easiness to be interfered by native language.

Most studies of language transfer fall into the following categories:

- 1) Focusing on negative transfer caused by the differences of NL and TL;
- 2) Focusing on positive transfer due to the similarities of NL and TL;
- 3) Focusing on the linear relationship between language transfer either positive or negative and linguistic characteristics of the two languages;
- 4) Focusing on the role of teaching in avoiding negative transfer and encouraging positive transfer but not the transformation from negative transfer to positive transfer.

Not all the differences between NL and TL will cause negative transfer, and not every similarity ensures positive transfer. Turning negative transfer into positive transfer is one of the most important tasks in teaching a foreign language that requires teachers' linguistic awareness in both NL and TL. Beyond the issues listed above, this article also discusses the phenomena of language transfer including negative transfer caused by the similarities of NL and TL, positive transfer due to the differences of NL and TL, misalignment between language transfer and linguistic characteristics of NL and TL, and teaching strategies to transform negative language transfer into positive language transfer. This article will consider questions such as: Is there a causal relation between language transfer and students' awareness of differences between their NL and TL? How does this happen among Japanese students while they learn Chinese?

### **Phonetic Transfer**

A linguistic awareness is the key to promoting every possible positive transfer in teaching and learning a foreign language. Phonetic comparison of the related languages is the first step toward a linguistic awareness. The phonetic similarities between Japanese and Chinese are as follows:

- 1) Both languages have vowels, consonants, and open syllables (OPC, 2008);
- 2) Pairs of corresponding vowels have similar pronunciations such as “a - あ”, “o - お”, “e/ê - え”, “i - い”, “u - う” etc.;
- 3) Many consonants of the two languages are similar, for example, “b”, “p”, “m”, “d”, “t”, “n”, “l” etc.;
- 4) Have the same syllables such as V, VC, CV, CVC, CSV, CSVC (V: vowel; S: transitional sound; C: consonant);
- 5) Both Japanese and Chinese have high and low intonations (Xu, 2000); and
- 6) Japanese intonation is similar to the 4th tone of Chinese pronunciation (OPC, 2008).

The phonetic dissimilarities between Japanese and Chinese are as follows:

- 1) The tone of Chinese vowels is high with wide-open mouth, intensive movement of speech organs, and fricatives. The tone of Japanese vowels is low with narrow-open mouth, mild movement of speech organs, and without fricatives. For example, the mouth is open at two-finger wide to pronounce the Chinese vowel “a”, but only one-finger wide to read the Japanese “あ”.

- 2) Chinese consonants are divided into those with air and those without air; Japanese consonants are divided into voiced and voiceless ones.
- 3) “R”, “ch”, and “sh” are the same in handwriting but different in pronunciation between Japanese and Chinese.
- 4) Each Chinese character has one syllable whereas each Japanese “kana” (not Kanji) has one syllable.
- 5) Japanese has syllables of VV, CVV, and CSVV for its long tone; Chinese does not have these syllables.
- 6) Chinese tones are based on single syllables, but Japanese tones are based on compound syllables, and only appear within two or more connected syllables (Xu, 2000).

Phonetic similarities of Chinese and Japanese are interweaved with their differences. The phonetic transfer between the two languages does not occur in the form of linearity. Overly stressing on similarity or dissimilarity may bring more negative transfer of one language to the other. Attention to similarities brings the first positive transfer. But if students are not aware of the dissimilarities soon, positive transfer will turn negative. However, when dissimilarities are introduced in time, students are able not only to maintain positive transfer due to the similarities of the two phonetic systems, but also to bring positive transfer from the dissimilarities of the two languages. Here are some of the examples of interweaving of similarities and dissimilarities between Japanese and Chinese that contribute either positive or negative transfers.

- 1) As there are corresponding vowels with similar pronunciations between Japanese and Chinese, teachers often pair up “a - あ”, “o - お”, “e/ê - え”, “i - い”, “u - う” as an initiative positive transfer. It helps students to have an easy start, and brings their attention to the similarities of their NL and TL. However, this should be only used for the first lesson. Dissimilarities in the same area need to be introduced soon before positive transfer turns into a negative one. Pairs of “a - あ”, “e/ê - え” and “i - い” are all unrounded labials, and pairs of “o - お” round labials, but they do not have exactly the same sound. The position of tongue and the shape of mouth are slightly different. A Chinese “a” is a mid-vowel, and a Japanese “あ” a back vowel. The pronunciations of “u” and “う” sound similar, but they are different in vowel type, the position of tongue, and the shape of mouth (Xu, 2000). It is very common that Japanese learners pronounce Chinese vowels “a, o, e, i, u” as if they were “あ, い, う, え, お”. If the teacher does not correct this promptly, it would become a permanent negative transfer of NL for Japanese students in their Chinese learning, and affect their pronunciation in general.
- 2) Two distinctive features in reading consonants are with air and without air, or voiced and voiceless. Chinese has more consonants than Japanese. Among the consonants shared by both phonetic systems, most of them are different in pronunciation. For example, “b, d, g, j” in Chinese are read voiceless but voiced in Japanese. “P, t, k, q” in Chinese are pronounced with air, but without air in Japanese (Xu, 2000). Most Japanese students do not clearly distinguish these differences although it does not affect the communication that much. In order to realize positive phonetic transfer, the same strategy can be used as that of vowel teaching. The teacher can refer “b, d, g, j” to “ば, だ, が, じ” when they are first introduced to students. Then the discrimination of pronunciations between voiced and voiceless needs to be brought to students’ attention before a negative transfer of NL is cemented. In terms of “p, t, k, q”, since there is no distinction between consonants with and without air in Japanese, this uniqueness of Chinese pronunciation should be emphasized when students first learn these consonants to avoid the formation of negative phonetic transfer from their NL.
- 3) Each Chinese character has one syllable with its own tone. But each Japanese Kanji can have more than one syllable, and Japanese tones only appear with compound syllables. Both Japanese and Chinese have high and low intonations. Japanese students are trained to read in different intonations.

But Japanese pronunciation does not have four tones as in Chinese pronunciation. Some Chinese characters are toneless, and some of them are read toneless in a special combination of words. Japanese tones are simpler, and closer to toneless, 1st and 4th tones of Chinese. So when Japanese students read a Chinese character, they intend to read either the 1st tone or the 4th tone including Chinese characters with the 2nd or the 3rd tones. In other words, they read Chinese characters in Japanese tones. The 2nd and the 3rd tones of Chinese are difficult to Japanese learners, especially the tone change of the 3rd tone including being read as the 2nd tone or the half 3rd tone. There are more patterns or different combinations of tones in reading Chinese vocabulary and sentences. In some cases, a word with four characters can be all in the same tone. At least, a word with two same tones is not unusual. Whereas in Japanese, the tone patterns of any compound syllables have only four types:

- i) Flat type with the same tone for more than two syllables;
- ii) High-ending type;
- iii) High-beginning type; and
- iv) High-middle type (Chen, 1995).

Except for the first type, the other three are read in the pattern of alternation between high and low intonations. That Japanese high intonation is similar to the 4th tone of Chinese pronunciation is probably the phonetic root that Japanese students often read the second character of a Chinese word in 4th tone, which falls into the tone pattern of reading Japanese in high and low alternation.

- 4) There are many Chinese characters and Japanese Kanji with exactly the same shapes and meanings, but their pronunciations are different. Most Japanese Kanji have at least two different pronunciations. One is Kunyomi for Japanese originated Kanji; the other is Onyomi for Chinese originated Kanji. Although Onyomi was first introduced from China when Chinese characters were brought to Japan, it was based on ancient Chinese pronunciations such as Wu, Han, and Tang pronunciations, and Wu, Han, and Tang represent different periods in Chinese history. For example, the Kanji “人” has exactly the same shape and meaning as the character “人”, while the character “人” is only read as “ren” with the second tone, the Kanji “人” is read as “hito” (Kunyomi), “jin” (Wu pronunciation), and “nin” (Tang pronunciation). That most Kanji have more than two pronunciations is one of the main resources of negative phonetic transfer of NL for Japanese students in learning Chinese phonetics.

From a study on Japanese students' learning of Chinese vowels, Wen (2009) discovered an interesting case. At an early stage, the easiest Chinese vowels for Japanese students to master are those with similar pronunciations of their Japanese pairs due to the positive transfer of NL. However, at a later stage, it is easier for Japanese students to get into the Chinese vowel system for those vowels with different pronunciation than those with similar pronunciation. To explain this with the theory of language transfer, it is because the original positive transfer only helps individual pronunciation within the phonetic system of Japanese. It becomes negative transfer to establish or immerge into Chinese phonetic system. In order to manipulate phonetic transfer, the following steps are suggested:

- 1) To let Japanese students know the similarities in high and low intonations between Japanese and Chinese phonetics, and the similarities between Japanese intonation and Chinese 1st, 4th, and toneless.
- 2) To let students be aware of differences between Japanese intonation and Chinese tones, and differences between Japanese and Chinese tone distribution and patterns.
- 3) More phonetic practices are needed for Japanese students in three areas:
  - i) Various combinations of Chinese tones especially those that are different from four Japanese tone

- patterns;
- ii) Words formed by characters with the same tones, which is very different from Japanese high-low alternation;
  - iii) Massive and various drills in tone-change of the 3rd tone of Chinese, which is the most difficult to read for Japanese learners; and
  - iv) Emphasis on pronunciation of every character other than its writing and meaning.

The best way to avoid the negative phonetic transfer becoming a permanent element of TL phonetics is enough practice until students can read them accurately. Considering the situations that Japanese students can instantly understand or guess the meaning by looking at a Chinese character, and that Japanese students are usually quiet in class, we need to create opportunities for them to read aloud as many times as possible to cement the pronunciation of each Chinese character, especially in words and sentences.

### Lexical Transfer

Chinese characters have been part of the Japanese language since one and a half centuries ago. The “Great Chinese-Japanese Dictionary” by Shiyobashi compiles about 50,000 Kanji. In history there was a movement to abolish Chinese characters and to Romanize Japanese. In 1946, 1850 Kanji were chosen as the only ones to be used in Japan. However, in 1981, this number was increased to 1945 (Cui, 2009). On January 27, 2009 (News Xinhua), Japan passed a new list of commonly used Kanji; starting from 2010 the number of Kanji in use will be raised to 2131. According to Japanese elementary curriculum, every student has to master 1006 Kanji in six years. Based on Shibata’s statistics (1987; 996 elementary Kanji then), 53.91% of these Kanji (538 out of 996) are exactly the same as their matching Chinese characters. Among the other 458, 147 are only different in their writing techniques which do not affect students’ recognition of them, and the other 104 Kanji are with traditional Chinese radicals that are not difficult to remember. These two categories of Kanji account for 25.2%. Most of the remaining 207 Kanji are traditional Chinese characters, with only few of them being Japanese created Kanji. This means that upon finishing elementary education every Japanese student can already recognize most of the first one third of 3000 commonly used Chinese characters. Zheng (2002; 2003) produced some statistics on the distribution of Japanese Kanji on HSK (Chinese Proficiency Test) character list. Among 2905 basic HSK characters, 1125 of them have the same writing and the same or similar meaning as corresponding Japanese Kanji, and 792 of them are different in writing but similar in meaning. These two categories account for 66% of 2905 commonly used Chinese characters. Only 34% of HSK characters are unknown to Japanese students. Among 988 unknown characters, only 10% belongs to level one of HSK characters, 21% belongs to level two, 26% belongs to level three, and 43% belongs to level 4 (Zheng, 2002). Most characters that appear in our 1st and 2nd year textbooks are from level one or two. Some of them belong to level three, and only few belong to the highest level. Based on the above statistics, before learning Chinese, Japanese students have already known or were familiar with 81% of HSK level one and two characters, or 74% of the first three levels of HSK characters.

However, these isomorphic Kanji of characters are not ready for positive transfer of Japanese students’ NL to their TL. First, about one third of them fall into different lexical categories (Pan, in He, 2003), such as:

- 1) Noun in Chinese, verb in Japanese: for example, “用意” is a noun in Chinese, but in Japanese it is used as a verb “用意する”. “婚约” and “故障” are only used as nouns in Chinese, but are used as both nouns “婚约、故障” and verbs “婚约する、故障する” in Japanese.

- 2) Adjective in Chinese, verb in Japanese: for example, “安心” and “紧张” are adjectives in Chinese, but are verbs “安心する” and “緊張する” in Japanese.
- 3) Adjective in Chinese, noun in Japanese: for example, “成功” is either a verb or an adjective in Chinese but either a verb or a noun in Japanese.

Second, some of those isomorphic Kanji do not have exact semantic matches with their corresponding Chinese characters:

- 1) Some only share the similar meaning of action, for example, Japanese word “寄付” means “donation”, but Chinese characters “寄” and “付” mean sending out money through post office. “寄付” in both Japanese and Chinese means an action of giving out money, but Chinese word does not have the meaning of “donation” .
- 2) Some isomorphic Kanji only share similar meanings of objects with Chinese matching words, but not the verb itself, such as the Japanese word “通勤”, meaning “going to work”. It shares the meaning of the object “勤” with Chinese, meaning “work”, but in Chinese, the verb “通” means “going through” or “understand” .
- 3) Some share the general meaning of matching Kanji and characters but not their connotation. For example, the Chinese word “好物” has two lexical structures:
  - i) When “好物” in the structure of “adjective + noun” , it shares the meaning of the adjective (good) but only part of the meaning of the noun (thing) in the Japanese corresponding word “好物” . In Chinese, the character “物” in the word “好物” means “thing” or “things” . However, Kanji “物” can also mean “food” in the Japanese word “好物” . ii) When “好物” in the structure of “verb + noun” in Chinese, it does not have a matching Japanese word of “好物” with the same meaning.
- 4) Some isomorphic Kanji have totally different meanings from their corresponding Chinese vocabulary. For example: in Japanese “勉強” (verb) means “study”, but in Chinese it means “does not want, but have no choice” ; “優しい” (adjective) means “gentle” in Japanese, but “very good” in Chinese; and “手紙” (noun) is a Japanese word for “a letter to someone”, yet a Chinese word meaning “toilet paper” .
- 5) Some of them even have opposite meanings. For example, “娘” means “daughter” in Japanese, but “mother” in Chinese; also “留守” in Japanese means “being not at home” but “not going out” in Chinese.

Third, some grammatical elements of isomorphic Kanji and characters can be very different.

- 1) “VO” structured Chinese verbs (离合词) cannot have another objective after it. But Japanese students often use them as regular transitive verbs such as “见面他” (“彼と面会する”) and “摄影电影” (“映画を作る”).
- 2) Different usage of transitive and intransitive verbs in two languages, for example, “休息” in Chinese can be only used as an intransitive verb as in “公司休息”, meaning “company is closed”. But “休む” in Japanese can be used as either an intransitive or a transitive verb as in “よく休む”, meaning “have a good rest”, and in “会社を休む”, meaning “take a day off” .
- 3) Some matching Japanese and Chinese isomorphic words share related meaning but not the same meaning. This is a common resource of negative lexical transfer. For example, one of the often-used words among Japanese juniors and seniors is “就職”, meaning “looking for jobs” in English. Its matching Chinese word is “就职”, meaning “starting a new position”. The Chinese word “就职演讲” means “inauguration speech”, but we cannot find “就職講演” in a Japanese dictionary.

Fourth, heteromorphic words between Japanese and Chinese can be a challenge to Chinese teachers

of Japanese learners. As the above mentioned, there are two thirds of 2905 HSK common characters being either the same as or similar to Japanese Kanji. According to Lu's statistics (1999), among 3051 HSK level 1 and 2 most commonly used Chinese vocabulary, 529 of them do not have their matching Kanji words for the same meaning. They fall into three different categories:

- i) Using a different Kanji or a Kanji and its kana suffix to indicate the meaning of a Chinese character when the Kanji has the same meaning of the character. For example, the Kanji “目” indicates the character “眼” (noun), and both Kanji and character mean “eye” in Chinese. The combination of a Kanji and a kana “速い” indicates the character “快” (adjective), both of them mean “quick” or “fast” in Chinese. The Kanji “立” and kana “つ” put together as “立つ” indicates character “站” (verb), both meaning “to stand” in Chinese.
- ii) Using a different Kanji and its kana suffix to indicate the meaning of a Chinese character when the Kanji has a different meaning from the character. For example, the Kanji “木” indicates the character “树” (noun), but while the Kanji means “wood in Chinese”, the character means “tree”; using a Kanji and its suffix such as “太い” to indicate character “粗” (adjective) while the character means “thick”, the Kanji means “too ...”, and it is not an adjective in Chinese; or using a Kanji and its suffix as “写す” to indicate the character “抄” (verb) while the former means “to write” and the latter means “to copy”.
- iii) Using two Kanji that are the same as two matching Chinese characters but in different order to indicate the meaning of the Chinese word of two matching characters. For example, “语言” (Chinese) and “言語” (Japanese) (noun), meaning “language”; “痛苦” (Chinese) and “苦痛” (Japanese) (adjective), meaning “painful”; and “介绍” (Chinese) and “紹介” (Japanese) (verb), meaning “introduce” .

Understanding the lexical similarities and differences of NL and TL requires instructors' linguistic knowledge of both languages. If teachers bring students' attention to those lexical elements when words are first introduced, it will help students to take advantage of knowing those Kanji and to avoid possible negative transfer due to either isomorphic or heteromorphic characteristics between Japanese and Chinese. Some differences in shape and meaning of Japanese words from their matching Chinese words can be traced back to classic Chinese characters before the simplification of Chinese characters. When students know the origin and meaning of these words, it is easier for them to understand and remember. Otherwise, these words will fall into the category of unknown or unrelated words, thus creating a more negative transfer in the process of learning the TL.

### **Syntactic Transfer**

Japanese students are well trained in writing Kanji. Knowing Kanji also helps them to learn Chinese vocabulary, which saves them time in spelling or memorizing words. However, for those Kanji that are not exactly the same as matching Chinese characters, negative transfer happens when students start writing them in TL. Chen (2001) lists three types of errors committed by Japanese learners of Chinese in their writing of Chinese characters:

- 1) Substituting Japanese Kanji of the same meaning for Chinese characters;
- 2) Misusing Kanji with similar or related meanings; and
- 3) Incorrectly writing Chinese characters.

Among the Japanese students at NUCB, the 1<sup>st</sup> type errors account for more than 90%. There are two



groups of 1<sup>st</sup> type error: in the first group, Kanji are almost ready for transferring to Chinese characters, because the differences of their written forms are usually only in one stroke, such as “步” for “步”, “对” for “对”, “决” for “决”, “浅” for “浅” etc. The second group of 1<sup>st</sup> type error includes those matching Kanji and characters with very different strokes, such as “鷄” for “鸡”, “従” for “从”, “奪” for “夺”, “潔” for “洁” etc. The 2<sup>nd</sup> type of error occurs when students are confused with the meaning of the Chinese character, thus they use a Kanji with different meaning, such as “絵” (Kanji; noun; meaning “a drawing”) for “画” (character; verb; meaning “to draw”). A good example of the 3<sup>rd</sup> type error is using “恐怕” (character; verb; meaning “a little worried”) to mean “恐い” (Kanji; adjective; meaning “terrible”) due to the same shape and meaning between the first character and the Kanji.

To avoid the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> types of errors, Japanese students need to understand the differences between the usage of Japanese Kanji and Chinese characters, and the principles of word-formation of Chinese characters. Chen (2001) suggests that teachers:

- 1) Explain the relationship between the shape and the meaning of a character, for example, the meaning of radicals, parts and pronunciation of each character etc.;
- 2) Teach characters within words. But whether the transfer is positive or negative depends on whether their differences are emphasized the first time students learn these Chinese characters. It also depends on whether students remember these differences when they write these Chinese characters. To give students a list of corresponding Kanji and characters of this type and to bring up students’ attention whenever each character is introduced are the most practical ways to avoid negative transfer and to bring positive transfer at the first step of their Chinese writing.

To be able to choose the right Kanji and to write them correctly are only preliminaries to writing sentences and paragraphs. Syntactic transfer depends on being able to distinguish grammatical rules and sentence structures of NL and TL. First, the main linguistic characteristics and the fundamental syntactic rules are different between Japanese and Chinese. Based on the first-hand data, Lincoln (2004) finds that one of the most common grammatical problems of Japanese students in writing Chinese is word order confusion, which includes the misplacement of verbs, modal verbs, adverbs, complements, and prepositional phrases. The syntactical and morphological roots are:

- 1) The basic word order of Chinese is Subject-Verb-Object whereas the order of Japanese is Subject-Object-Verb;
- 2) Chinese is an isolating language with no verb conjugation, and the meaning of a sentence depends on the order of all morphemes, whereas Japanese is an agglutinative language that relies on bound morphemes to express the meaning of a sentence. As long as the verb is at the end of a sentence, it is grammatically acceptable for sentences in different orders, for example:
  - 1) 母が 私に 贈り物を くれた。
  - 2) 母が 贈り物を 私に くれた。
  - 3) 私に 母が 贈り物を くれた。
  - 4) 私に 贈り物を 母が くれた。
  - 5) 贈り物を 母が 私に くれた。
  - 6) 贈り物を 私に 母が くれた。

But in Chinese, there is only one order: “妈妈给我一件礼物” (Lincoln, 2004). The only way to avoid negative transfer before Japanese students produce sentences in wrong orders is to tell students the strict syntactic order of grammatical ingredients in Chinese syntax: “(定语)－主语－状语－谓语－补语－(定语)－宾语”, meaning “(attribute) – subject – adverb – predicate – complement – (attribute) – object”.

Knowing this order by heart should prevent word order confusion or negative syntactic transfer.

Second, the passive voice in Japanese is much simpler than in Chinese. Japanese has only two forms of passive sentences: formed by adding either “れる” or “られる” as a suffix to a verb. Chinese passive sentences are either indicated by various prepositions or with no indication at all. These prepositions include “被”, “让”, “叫”, “给”, and “为……所……” structure (Kang, 1985). In addition, some morphemes have to be used to indicate the tense of a passive sentence. Many Chinese passive sentences use the initiative sentence format, which is difficult for Japanese learners to identify. In Chinese, only transitive verbs have a passive voice whereas in Japanese both transitive and intransitive verbs have a passive voice. So in translation, two common confusions or negative transfers occur:

- 1) When translating a sentence from Chinese to Japanese. For example, “雨把衬衫淋湿了” does not include any of these prepositions for passive sentences. But it is a passive sentence, and should be translated into “雨に降られてシャツが濡れた”.
- 2) When translating from Japanese to Chinese. For example, although “私は小さいとき母に死なれました” (Kang, 1985) is in passive voice in Japanese, it cannot be translated into a Chinese passive sentence but an initiative sentence instead as “我小时候就死了母亲”. In this area, even when Japanese students knew all the correspondent elements and rules, it does not guarantee positive transfer. Flexible translation is a result of deep understanding of semantic and pragmatic aspects of both NL and TL. It does not usually happen among beginners.

Third, Japanese and Chinese share some measure words such as “个(Chinese)／個(Japanese)” and “册(Chinese)／冊(Japanese)”. The former one is commonly used in both languages but in different writing. The latter is used more often in Japanese than in Chinese because Chinese usually use “本” instead of “册” as the measure word for books or magazines. Among some common measure words, there are a few of them being frequently borrowed from the NL by Japanese students in their Chinese writing.

- 1) “本” in Chinese is a measure word for books or magazine as mentioned above, but in Japanese it is used as the measure word for long and thin items such as pencils and cigarettes. While “支” or “枝” should be used as the measure word for pencil, it is very common for Japanese students to use “本” instead.
- 2) In Chinese, the measure word “匹” only indicates big farm animals such as horses and cows. But in Japanese, it can also be used for cats and dogs. Therefore, it often becomes a negative transfer in terms of measure word usage.
- 3) In both Japanese and Chinese, “枚” can be used as the measure word for flat things. However, the difference is that in Japanese it can be used for both big and small things such as doors and tickets. But in Chinese it is only used for small things such as stamps and coins.
- 4) Japanese and Chinese share the measure word “台” and part of its usage for electrical appliances. However, while Japanese uses the same “台” to indicate car Chinese uses “辆” instead.

In conclusion, since Chinese has many measure words, and measure words are one of the most difficult parts of Chinese language, most beginners are not able to process all the Chinese measure words in the early stage of their Chinese learning. Due to the identical shapes and related meanings between Japanese measure words and Chinese measure words, Japanese students often choose a Japanese measure word in their Chinese writing, and in most occasions, it is used incorrectly. In this area, if we do not explain the differences well in advance, negative transfer is almost certain to occur besides few exceptions.

In addition to word order, passive sentences, and measure words, syntactic transfer between

Japanese and Chinese happens in many other areas such as comparative sentences, concessive sentences, demonstrative pronouns etc. More relevant data and further linguistic understanding can lead to researches to all these areas, and thus a thorough analysis of language transfer between Japanese and Chinese.

### Conclusion

Language transfer happens between two languages that share some similarities. However, as two different languages, the transfer between them is not always positive. In fact, negative transfer occurs more frequently than positive transfer. Similarities between NL and TL are within two phonetic, lexical, and syntactic systems. There is not a linear relationship between such a similarity of two languages and a definite positive transfer of one language to another. It is not difficult for students to see the similarities between their NL and TL. However, teachers should bring students' attention to the differences of the two languages to raise students' comparative ability. Linguistic comparison of NL and TL is a process of bidirectional language transfer including both the same and opposite directions. To utilize the similarities and differences of the two languages at the right stage of TL learning is an important teaching strategy to maximize the positive transfer and minimize the negative transfer of NL, thus contributing to the efficiency of teaching and the success of learning. Here a teacher's linguistic awareness of both NL and TL is the key.

### References

- Chen, F. (2001) *Errors and their causes of Japanese students in writing Chinese characters*, World Chinese Teaching. 2001, No4.
- Chen, W. (1995). Comparison between the tones of Japanese and Chinese interrogative sentences, Symposium of Teaching Chinese. Beijing: Beijing Language University Press.
- Cui, J. (2009). Influence of Chinese characters on Japanese culture. Retrieved on April 23, 2009 from <http://www.govyi.com/lunwen/2009/200901/291131.shtml>.
- He, Y. (2003). *On lexical mistakes of Japanese students in learning Chinese vocabulary*, Symposium of Sino-Japanese Linguistic Research, Vol. 6. Beijing: Beijing Press and Wenjin Press.
- Kang, P. & Cheng, N. (2008). *Influence of native language on foreign language learning*, Gui Gu. 2008, No. 1. Retrieved on April 23, 2009 from <http://qkzz.net/magazine/1671-7597/2008/01/2316216.htm>.
- Kang, Y. (1985). *Differences and similarities between Chinese and Japanese passive sentences*, Language Teaching and Research, 1985, No. 3.
- Lincoln, Z. P. (2004). *Syntactical and morphological roots of Japanese students' common grammatical mistakes in writing Chinese*, NUCB Journal Language, Culture and Communication. Vol. 6 No. 1.
- Lu, B. (1999). A comparative study on Sino-Japanese synonyms with different shapes and TCFL, Symposium of Sino-Japanese Linguistic Research, Vol. 2. Beijing: Beijing Press.
- Nankang Education Bureau (2005). Display the positive transfer of Chinese to improve student's capability of English reading. Retrieved on May 2, 2009 from <http://www.910cn.cn/teacher/news/216/342/345/46088.shtml>.
- News Xinhua. (Jan. 29, 2009). Japan is going to add 191 commonly used Kanji. Retrieved On April 23, 2009 from <http://msn.huanqiu.com/world/roll/2009-01/357432.html>.
- Online Paper Center (OPC) (2008). Positive transfer of native Chinese in learning Japanese. Retrieved on April 19, 2009 from <http://www.studa.net/xueke/081230/16024536.html>.
- Shi, R., Sun, Y., & Cong, Y. (2005). *The positive transfer of native language in foreign language learning*, Sino-US English Teaching, USA, Volume 2, No. 12. Retrieved on April 29, 2009 from <http://linguist.org.cn/doc/su200512/su20051218.pdf>.
- Shibata, N., & Xun C. (trans.) (1987). *Similarities and differences of Japanese and Chinese characters, and their*

- simplification*, Language Teaching and Research, 1987, No. 1.
- Sun, X. (2007). *Influence of language transfer on multilingual learners' English studies*, US-China Foreign Language, USA, Volume 5, No.6. Retrieved on April 30, 2009 from <http://5doc.com/738078>.
- Vockell, E. (Online Ed.) (2001) Educational psychology: A practical approach. Retrieved on April 29, 2009 from <http://education.calumet.purdue.edu/vockell/edpsybook/>.
- Wang, D. (2002). Negative transfer of the Chinese way of thinking in English compositions, Journal of Shanghai Teachers University, Volume 31, No. 2.
- Wang, S. (2008). Research on how Japanese people learn Chinese language. Beijing: Beijing University Press.
- Wang, S. (2005). *Negative transfer of L1 at the grammatical level and its implications for EFL teaching*, Journal of Lanzhou Commercial College, Vol. 21, No. 6.
- Wen, B. (2009). Research on how Japanese students learn Chinese vowel. Retrieved on May 1, 2009 from <http://www.studa.net/language/090205/1137572.html>.
- Xu, S. (2000). Chinese pronunciation lessons for Japanese learners, Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University.
- Zeng, Q. (2007). *Negative transfer of native Chinese in learning Japanese*, Kejiao Wenhui, 2007, No. 10 (1).
- Zeng, Y. (2006). *Negative transfer of native language and its implication for English teaching*, Zhongxiaoxue Jiaocai Jiaoxue, 2006, No. 3. Beijing: People's Education Press.
- Zhang, H., & Xu, Y. (1989). *Language transfer and second language teaching*, Journal of Shanghai Foreign Language University. 1989, No. 4.
- Zhao, M. (2004). *Language transfer and second language learning*, Journal of International Relations Institute, 2004, No. 4.
- Zheng, J. (2002). *A statistical analysis of new Chinese vocabulary in TCFL teaching to Japanese students*, Symposium of Sino-Japanese Linguistic Research, Vol. 5. Beijing: Beijing Press and Wenjin Press. (2003). *Chinese reading course for Japanese students*, Symposium of Sino-Japanese Linguistic Research, Vol. 6. Beijing: Beijing Press and Wenjin Press.