Acquisition of French (L3) Direct Object by Persian (L1) Speakers of English (L2) as EFL Learners

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Abstract : The present study assessed the acquisition of L3 French direct objects by Persian speakers who had already learned English as their L2. The ultimate goal of this paper is to extend the current knowledge about the CLI phenomenon in the realm of third language acquisition by examining the role of Persian and English as background languages and learners' English level of proficiency in their performance on French direct object. To fulfill this, the assumptions of three L3 hypotheses, namely L1 Transfer, L2 Status Factor, and Cumulative Enhancement Model, were examined. The research sample was comprised of 40 undergraduate students in the fields of English language and literature and translation studies at Birjand University in Iran. According to the English proficiency level of learners revealed by the Quick Oxford English Placement test, the participants were grouped as upper intermediate and lower intermediate. A grammaticality judgment and a translation test were administered to gather the required data on learners' comprehension and production of the desired structure in French. It was demonstrated that the rate of positive transfer from previously learned languages was more potent than the rate of negative transfer. A Comparison of groups' performances revealed a significant difference between upper and lower intermediate groups in positing French direct objects correctly. However, the upper intermediate group did not significantly differ from the lower intermediate group in negative transfer. It can be said that by increasing the L2 proficiency of the learners, they could use their previous linguistic knowledge more efficiently. Although further examinations are needed, the current study contributed to a better characterization of cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition. The findings help French teachers and learners to positively exploit the prior knowledge of Persian and English and apply it in in the multilingual context of French direct object's teaching and learning process.

Keywords : Cross-Linguistic Influence, Persian, French & English Direct Object, Third Language Acquisition, Language Transfer