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The Effect of Dominant Language of Communication on L3 Learning of Present Tense by Mazandarani-Persian Bilinguals

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate Mazandarani-Persian Bilinguals' L3 learning of simple present tense to see whether their L1, L2, or dominant language of communication affect their L3 learning. To this end, 90 male and female students, with the mean age of 14.5 were selected from among the elementary L3 learners of English. The participants were assigned into three groups of L1 Mazandarani/L2 Persian/ L3 learners of English. The first group had Mazandarani as the dominant language of communication while the second and the third group had Persian as the dominant language of communication. The Grammaticality Judgment Task and Oral Translation Task were used to check the participants' production and comprehension of the target structure. The results of the Kruskal Wallis and the Mann Whitney U tests showed that the dominant language of communication, irrespective of its status as the first or second language, was the primary source of cross-linguistic influence in learning simple present tense at the initial stages of learning this tense.

Keywords: Cross-linguistic Influence, Cumulative Enhancement Model, Dominant language of communication, Simple Present Tense, Typological Proximity Model

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Introduction

Second language learning is undoubtedly a well-explored territory and has a solidly documented history. However, research on third language (L3) learning is almost a relatively new field of study and is expanding substantially in the multilingual world we are living in now. Nevertheless, it is not clear the extent to which current bilingualism models, in general, can account for multilingualism. During the last decades, there have been a vast number of research studies on the learning of a third language. A great number of these studies have mainly focused on how L3 is learned in relation to the first language (L1) and second language (L2) and possible differences between L2 and L3 learning. Investigating the roles played by the previously learned language in the learning of a target language, one should definitely consider the critical notion of transfer or cross-linguistic influence. There are a variety of factors influencing whether the transfer takes place in language learning and what is actually transferred. In studies on L3 learning, the issue is more complex because there are multiple languages that can be transferred (Falk, 2010). As a matter of fact, some studies conducted in the last three decades indicate that the learning of a non-native

language is qualitatively different from the first language learning and that the learning of an L2 is also different from subsequent non-native language (L3) learning. Since the L3 learners have already learned (at least) one second language up to some level, the prior language learning experience is a good reason to believe that the process of learning an L3 might differ in some respects from that of learning an L2 (e.g., Cenoz 2001, 2003; Cenoz & Jessner 2000; Hufeisen 1998).

In other words, a number of factors (e.g. typology, proficiency) that are absent in monolinguals may affect the L3 and the status of the second language. The most developed part of a number of generative studies on L3 learning in the latter part of the century is the proposals regarding the influence of the previously learned languages in third language learning. Schwartz and Sprouse (1994,1996) have, among others, argued about the privileged role played by L1 in determining the learning of the subsequent second languages. The L1 Factor (Hermas, 2010, 2014a, 2014b), which could be considered as the Failed Functional Feature Hypothesis (Hawkins & Chan, 1997), stated that the first language properties are prioritized over the second language properties in the transfer process, at least at the initial stages of third language learning. However, Hermas (2014a, 2014b) claimed that L1 is influential in the initial stages of L3 learning while in later levels, L3 learners would eventually succeed in learning target structures, regardless of whether the structures are kept in the L1 or not.

On the other hand, Williams and Hammarberg (1998) maintained that the L2 status factor has a stronger role in learning a third language. The L2 Status Factor (Bardel & Falk, 2007; Falk & Bardel, 2011) anticipates that the second language plays a strong role in L3 acquisition because of cognitive and situational aspects that a formally learned L2 and a formally learned L3 have in common. According to Falk and Bardel (2011), the learner's tendency to activate the L2, rather than the L1, in L3 learning process is because of the higher degree of similarity between the L2 and the L3 than between the L1 and the L3 with respect to the learning situation, degree of metalinguistic knowledge, age of onset, and outcome. Bardel and Falk (2012) claimed that there should be a privileged role for the L2 at the initial stages of L3 learning because the L2 and the L3, as non-native languages, are stored in declarative memory while L1 is stored in procedural memory.

Also, it might be the case that neither L1 nor any other language known has an outstanding role (Flynn et. al., 2004). As a matter of fact, it is always argued that interpreting the role of the transfer becomes really complicated when several languages are involved since the scenario is extended to include not only the role of L1 but L2, L3, …, LNa Flynn et al. (2004) proposed a very influential explanatory model for learning more than one language, which claims that all subsequent language learning fundamentally derives from the learner's first language. In his research study conducted on the Cumulative Enhancement Model (CEM) for language learning, it is suggested that a comparison of first and second language learning alone is not sufficient for our understanding of both multiple language learning processes and variation in human languages. The result of the study revealed that other languages known could enhance subsequent language learning. The CEM posits that previously learned languages have a cumulative and non-redundant influence on the learning of an L3 (i. e. both the L1 and L2 could be the positive transfer source, regardless of the order of learning). Consequently, the CEM neglects the possibility of the negative transfer (Rothman, 2013). It also claims that "transfer in L3/LN learning is not done holistically, but rather on a property-by-property basis" (Rothman & Halloran, 2013, p. 57).

Likewise, other models are adopted that explain subsequent language learning fundamentally in terms of deficit model or typological variations, such as Typological Primacy Model, which gives a selective position to third language transfer based on its typological proximity compared to other previously learned language systems (Rothman, 2011). The TPM (Rothman, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015) is similar to the CEM in that both models maintain that both the L1 and L2 structures are possible sources of transfer at the initial stages of L3 learning; however, the TPM acknowledges the possibility of non-facilitative transfer. TPM maintains that the selection of a language for transfer is conditioned by structural/typological similarity among the languages at learners' disposall Most recently, Rothman (2015) claims that multilingual transfer is selective and delimited by linguistic cues interpreted by the parser and obtains as a strict reflex of cognitive economy.

Despite the fact that these kinds of research studies contribute to our understanding of subsequent language learning, the effects of the previously known weak languages are disregarded specifically at the syntactic level and with the language pairings involved in the present study.

The present study is thus an endeavor to investigate the true nature of third language learning using unique language pairing and scenarios considered to test the existing multilingualism models in learning tenses in English by Mazandarani learners and to examine the role of communication in learning the third language.

Mazandarani is the local language of Mazandaran state, a province along the north of Iran. This language has one of the longest written traditions (from the 10th

to 15th centuries), roughly matching New Persian (Borjian, 2001, 2004; Windfuhr, 1989). However, the usage of Mazandarani has been in decline, and its academic and administrative rank was lost to Persian perhaps long before the ultimate integration of Mazandaran into the national administration in the 17th century. The migration of the people from the foothills into the coastal plains and the cities of the state, along with the use of Persian, is gradually limiting the use of Mazandarani among people, including the students. The majority of the population of the state is now bilingual.

Syntax of Simple present tense verbs in Mazandarani, Persian, and English

Simple present tense in Mazandarani is created by addingetheaappropriateopersonalt endinghtoetheeverb's present stem. (-me, -ni, -ne, -mi, -neni, -nene):

(1) Ali har rooz gheza khey**ne**.
(2) Ali everyday food eat**s.**

Like Mazandarani language, in which the suitable endings are attached to the verbs, English also attaches the appropriate endings to the verbs (in case of third-person singular):

(3) Ali eat**s** food every day.

Unlike Mazandarani and English, in Persian, both verbal prefix(mi) and appropriate endings are attached to the verbs in simple present tense:

(4) Ali har rooz ghaza **mi**khor**ad** (Persian)
(5) Ali everyday food eat**s (**English)

Table 1
Simple Present Tense in Mazandarani, Persian, and English

Mazandarani	Persian	English
ø -khey-mə	**Mi**-khor-**am**	I ø –eat- ø
ø -khey –ni	**Mi**-khor-**i**	You (sg.) ø –eat- ø
ø -khey -nə	**Mi**-khor-**ad**	She/He/It ø –eat-**s**
ø -khey –mi	**Mi**-khor-**im**	We ø –eat- ø
ø -khey -nəni	**Mi**-khor-**id**	You (pl.) ø –eat- ø
ø -khey -nənə	**Mi**-khor-**and**	They ø –eat- ø

In summary, as it is shown in Table 1, in Mazandarani, different endings are attached to the verbs based on the clitic subject, and so is in English, which either has –s ending to the third person singular or nothing without any prefix. In contrast, in Persian, both fixed verbal prefix(-mi) and appropriate endings are needed.

In the light of the above-mentioned language pairings, the following questions are addressed in this study:

1. Are the properties of the first language the facilitative source of CLI in learning simple present tense in the initial stages of L3 learning?
2. Are the properties of the second language the facilitative source of CLI in learning simple present tense in the initial stages of L3 learning?
3. Do the participants transfer simple present tense properties from Mazandarani (whether it's L1 or L2) to English facilitatively?
4. Do the participants transfer simple present tense properties from Mazandarani, which is typologically/structurally more similar to English facilitatively?

Method

The research method of the present study was non-experimental as the subjects were not randomly assigned. To identify the relationship between variables of the study and to draw plausible conclusions from the statistical analyses, an ex post facto non-experimental design was used to investigate the performance differences between three groups of bilingual L3 learners of English.

Participants

105 male and female participants took part in this study, 90 of whom were junior high school students (grades 8 and 9) in Amol and Isfahan, and 15 were native English speakers as the control group. Amol is a city in Mazandaran where people often learn Mazandarani and Persian in a natural setting in their childhood. Mazandarani is the language used in villages, but Persian is almost the dominant language in cities in this state. While Persian is the official language of Iran and is taught in school from age 7, Mazandarani is learned naturally in daily conversations without any formal instruction. It is learned through extensive exposure to Mazandarani speakers as well as a channel on the TV in the Mazandarani language. Besides, English is taught to

students all over Iran in the 7th grade (age 13). The students generally had English classes twice a week, about two hours per class. All participants used the same textbook, which was designed by the ministry of education of Iran. They had not already studied English in any language institute and had not received any instruction about tenses in English.

The 90 students were assigned into three groups based on their language backgrounds and their language of communication. Mazandarani A group consisted of 27 native Mazandarani speakers (mean age 14.10 years) born in villages located far from Amol. Then, they moved to Amol and began learning Persian as a second language at a mean age of 6.57 (SD = 0.6).

The participants of the first group used L1 Mazandarani as the most widely used language for everyday communication at home, in social contexts, and at school since they lived in villages (see Table 3).

The Mazandarani B group consisted of 29 native Mazandarani speakers (mean age 14.09 years) born in villages. Then, they moved to Isfahan, a city in the center of Iran where Persian is the language of communication, and began learning L2 Persian at a mean age of 6.30 (SD = 0.47). They were living in Isfahan at the time of conducting research, and they mostly used Persian in social contexts and at school.

The Persian Group consisted of 34 native Persian speakers (mean age 14 years, SD = 0.01) who were born in Isfahan. Then, they moved to Amol and began learning Mazandarani as the second language at a mean age of 6.50 (SD = 0.6). These people used Persian as the dominant language of communication.

In addition, the control group consisted of 15 native speakers of American English, with the mean age of 29. Information about the participants' characteristics is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Characteristics of the Participants

Group	Mazandarani A	Mazandarani B	Persian Group
L1	Mazandarani	Mazandarani	Persian
L2	Persian	Persian	Mazandarani
L3	English	English	English
Language of communication	Mazandarani	Persian	Persian
Number	27	29	34
Current mean age	14.10	14.09	14
Mean age of L2 learning	14.57	14.30	14.50
Self-rated proficiency of L2	9	9	9.5
Years of formal instruction in Persian	8.5	9.01	9.5
Hours of formal instruction in English	5.86	5.13	5.70
Manner of Mazandarani learning	N	N	N
Manner of Persian learning	N+F	N+F	N+F

N = naturalistic; F = formal instruction from age 7 onwards

Only near-native speakers of their L2 were selected to control any possible confounds of L2 proficiency. We asked the participants to self-rate their proficiency in the L2 based on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "beginner", and 10 "near-native" speakers since we did not have a standardized measure. All three groups self-rated their proficiency in the L2 between 9 and 10, with means of 9, 9, and 9.5 for Mazandarani A, Mazandarani B, and Persian groups, respectively.

The results of a Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no statistically significant difference in the three groups' proficiency self-ratings. It showed that all three groups were homogeneous regarding their L2 proficiency. Besides, the participants did the Persian and Mazandarani versions of the grammaticality judgment task to ensure that they have target-like knowledge of tenses in these two languages. The results of these tests showed that the participants obtained 100% accuracy on the target structure in the GJT, indicating that they had native-like knowledge of tenses in both Persian and Mazandarani.

The participants consisted of three groups: the first two groups had Mazandarani as the first language (L1) and Persian as the second language (L2) but differed from each other with respect to the language of communication, Mazandarani and Persian, respectively. The third group had Persian as the L1 and Mazandarani as the L2, with Persian as the language of communication:

1. Mazandarani A group: L1 Mazandarani/L2 advanced Persian speakers with Mazandarani as the language of communication,

2. Mazandarani B group: L1 Mazandarani/L2 advanced Persian speakers with Persian as the language of communication and
3. Persian group: L1 Persian/L2 advanced Mazandarani speakers with Persian as the language of communication.

Table 4
Participants' Dominant Language of Communication

Group	Mazandarani A		Mazandarani B		Persian Group		Control Group
	Mazandarani	Persian	Mazandarani	Persian	Mazandarani	Persian	English
Home	95.3%	4.7%	6.4%	83.6%	0%	100%	100%
School	84.7%	15.3%	11%	89%	7.5%	92.5%	100%
Social context	92.4%	7.6%	92.5%	7.5%	9%	91%	100%

Instruments

Grammaticality judgment task (hereafter GJT)

The grammaticality judgment task has been widely used in third language learning research to investigate specific grammatical structures, especially those structures occurring less frequently in learners' spontaneous language production. For the purpose of this study, the task consisted of 40 items, 20 of which contained simple present (ten grammatical and ten ungrammatical exemplars) and 20 as distracters which tested various structures to divert the participants' attention from the target structure. The sentences were presented in the written form (English) (see Appendix A). Sample tokens are:

(1) Ali cooks it very well.

(2) * He like pizza very much.

The participants were asked to read the sentences and rate them on a three-point scale: grammatical, ungrammatical, and "I do not know." A correct answer was given three points and a wrong one zero. Therefore, the maximum score for this task was 40. The Cronbach's alpha calculated for the 40 item GJ/CT reached 0.84.

Oral translation task (hereafter OTT)

This task consisted of 20 sentences containing 10 sentences in the target structure and 10 distracters for all three groups. All three groups were asked to translate the sentences from Mazandarani into English. Each correct translation was given a score of 1 and the incorrect translation 0. Therefore, the maximum score for each group in this task is 20. All translations were audio-recorded by the first researcher, and there was no time limitation in this task (see appendix B). A token is given below:

(3) me khakher football doost dayne (my sister likes football).

The Cronbach's alpha calculated for the 20 items reached 0.78.

Both tasks were sent to 4 experts in the field to ensure the content validity of the them. The experts were Ph.D. holders in Applied Linguistics and had demonstrated significant expertise in second language research in general and contrastive analysis in particular. The tasks were confirmed by all four experts.

Procedure

After being assigned into three groups, the participants did the grammaticality judgment task (GJT) to be checked in terms of comprehension.

After a one-week interval, in order to check their production of simple present tense in English, the participants were provided with the oral translation task

The correct answers in both tasks were coded as 1 and the others as 0 in SPSS. The details of data analysis and the results are reported in the next section.

Findings

The results of the participants' performance on the GJT (grammatical and ungrammatical tokens), and the OTT, are shown in Table 5. As the means of the four groups showed, regarding GJT, the control group judged all grammatical sentences as grammatical (mean of 30) and all ungrammatical sentences as ungrammatical (mean of 30), thus attesting to the validity of the tasks. As the results of the three experimental groups' performance showed, Mazandarani A group judged the grammatical sentences as grammatical (mean of 26 out of 30) and ungrammatical sentences as ungrammatical (mean of 27 out of 30). In contrast, Mazandarani B and Persian groups got the mean of 16 in the grammatical part of the GJT and the means of 18 in the ungrammatical part of the GJT in simple present.

In the case of the OTT, the Mazandarani A had the highest means (4 out of 5), and Mazandarani B and Persian groups performed poorly in the task and got the mean of 1. The control group did not do this task since they did not know any Mazandarani or Persian.

Table 5
Mean Accuracy of Four Groups on the OTT and the GJT for Simple Present Tense

Groups	N	OTT		GJT (G)		GJT(U)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Mazandarani A	27	4	0.23	26	1.52	27	1.74
Mazandarani B	29	1	0.54	16	0.48	18	1.54
Persian group	34	1	0.71	16	1.36	18	1.32
Control group	15	-	-	15	0.00	15	0.00

G = grammatical sentences; U = ungrammatical sentences; SD = standard deviation

In summary, the Mazandarani B group and Persian group comprehended (in the case of the GJT) and produced (in the case of the OTT) simple present in English based on the order allowed in Persian. In contrast, the Mazandarani A group comprehended and generated the target structure based on the order allowed in Mazandarani. Therefore, Mazandarani A group performed well in using and comprehending the target structure, whereas Mazandarani B and Persian performed poorly.

The results of a Kruskal-Wallis test showed a statistically big difference among the four groups' scores on the GJT, $\chi2(3, N = 105) = 71.37$, $p < .001$, and the OTT, $\chi2(3, N = 9) = 73.26$, $p < .001$. A follow-up Mann-Whitney U test was done between pairs of groups to know which of the groups are significantly different from one another. In order to avoid possible Type 1 errors, we applied a Bonferroni adjustment to the alpha values, and a stricter alpha level of .04/6=.007 was set.

The results of a series of Mann-Whitney U tests showed a significant difference between the Mazandarani A and Mazandarani B groups on the GJT ($z = -4.69$, $p < .001$) and the OTT ($z = -4.71$, $p < .001$), with a large effect size of $r = .61$. There was also a significant difference between the Mazandarani A and Persian groups on the GJT ($z = -4.50$, $p < .001$) and the OTT ($z = -4.52$, $p < .001$), with a large effect size of $r = .58$. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the Mazandarani B and Persian groups on the GJT ($z = -1.16$, $p = .23$, $r = .11$) and the OTT ($z = -1.51$, $p = .12$, $r = .15$). There was a significant difference between the performance of the control group and Mazandarani A group on the GJT ($z = -5.93$, $p < .001$, $r = .63$, between the control group and Mazandarani B group on the GJT ($z = -6.01$, $p < .001$, $r = .64$) and between the control group and Persian groups on the GJT ($z = -5.91$, $p < .001$, $r = .63$).

The results of the within-group comparisons using Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests showed no significant difference for each group's performance on the grammatical and ungrammatical part of the GJT in the case of the Mazandarani A group ($z = -0.28$, $p = .76$, $r = .03$), the Mazandarani B group ($z = -0.66$, $p = .48$, $r = .11$), the Persian group ($z = -0.01$, $p = .96$, $r = .002$) and the control group ($z = -0.00$, $p = 1.00$), indicating that each group performed similarly on the ungrammatical condition as compared to the grammatical condition.

Discussion

The statistical analyses presented in the previous section showed that the Mazandarani A group's performance differed significantly from both the Mazandarani B and Persian groups on both tasks (GJT and OTT) used in this study. However, there were no statistically significant differences between the means of the Mazandarani B and Persian groups in the participants' performance on the tasks. Therefore, the results revealed that Persian was the deterministic source of CLI in the initial stages of L3 English learning for the Mazandarani B and Persian group, bringing about detrimental effects. In contrast, the Mazandarani A group tended to favor Mazandarani as the principal source of CLI at the initial stages of L3 learning of simple present, resulting in facilitative effects.

Accordingly, we return to the four major L3 acquisition hypotheses in this section to see which, if any, of the previously learned linguistic systems best give an explanation and predict the transfer patterns at the initial stages of third language simple present tense learning for the three bilingual groups that participated in this study.

The L1 Factor (Hermas, 2010, 2014a, 2014b) predicts that the L1 properties are the main source of CLI at the initial stages of L3 learning, anticipating that Mazandarani A and Mazandarani B groups, with L1 Mazandarani, will correctly use simple present in English; however, the Persian group should use simple present tense incorrectly. Given that the Mazandarani B group showed transfer from L2 Persian (using and comprehending simple present tense incorrectly), the prediction of the L1 Factor is not supported.

The L2 Status Factors states that it is the L2 which is the deterministic factor of the transfer to L3(Falk and Bardel, 2011). Back to the data gathered from GJT and OTT, and analyzing the data, Mazandarani A and B groups were predicted to use and comprehend this tense incorrectly and Persian group was predicted to use this tense correctly. The data analysis revealed that Mazandarani B group, like Persian group used this tense incorrectly, which again rejects L2 Status Factor.

The CEM anticipates that both the first and the second language of the learners play roles in the L3 learning process. However, it rejects the non-facilitative role of transfer. Hence, the CEM predicts that none of the three groups should transfer from Persian since such transfer brings about detrimental effects for the present tense. Since the Mazandarani B and Persian groups showed non-facilitative transfer from Persian, the predictions of the CEM are not realized.

The TPM (Rothman, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015) considers a deterministic role for the underlying structural similarity to the L3 in L3 transfer process. Such similarity is understood subconsciously by the linguistic parser which is after a short transitory initial state of access to both the first and the second systems, and then, as Rothman (2015, p. 2), stated: "one of these systems is completely transferred as the system from which all initial hypotheses about the L3 grammar are made." If the TPM is on the right path, only one of the previously learned linguistic systems in its entirety (i.e., Mazandarani) should be the main source of transfer. The results obtained from the data analysis in this study are not in line with the prediction of the TPM, since sometimes, Mazandarani B group comprehended and produced simple present in a Mazandarani-like manner and sometimes in a Persian-like manner. Given that both Mazandarani, in the case of the Mazandarani A group, and Persian in the case of Mazandarani B and Persian groups, determine transfer patterns at the initials stages of L3 learning, the results challenge the prediction of the TPM. One possible explanation for this could be the status of L1 and L2 in L3 learning.

In other words, most studies that support the TPM (e.g., Rothman, 2010, 2011) tested L3 learners who learned the L2 after adolescence, but this study recruited successive child L2 learners. The results of this study are not in line with the results of studies conducted by Giancaspro et al. (2015) and Iverson and Evans (2009), although the participants of these studies were also child bilinguals. One possible explanation for this may be the nature of the participants' background linguistic systems employed in these studies. Typological proximity is unambiguously clear by any measure in the language pairings (i.e., Spanish and Portuguese) in these two studies. In contrast, neither of the two previously learned languages recruited in the present study is so obviously structurally/ typologically similar to the L3. As it was mentioned earlier, Mazandarani and Persian languages have a lot in common in the lexicon, phonological and morphological cues; however, they do not share such obvious similarities with English. As mentioned before, the participants of the present study were at the initial stages of third language learning, and they were learning L3 (English) in the classroom setting without having any exposure to it outside the classroom. Therefore, the linguistic parser might need much more time and exposure to the L3 to evaluate the structural similarity and provided a "best guess" decision to choose a language to transfer from. So the results of the present study raise two questions regarding the tenability of the TPM. The first is that whether the TPM predicts the transfer patterns for these types of language pairings. The second is whether the TPM would expect differences in cases where both the first and the second language are learned in childhood as compared to when an L3 acquirer is an adult that has not learned the second language in childhood. Further research is needed to address these two questions regarding the tenability of the TPM.

We should expect that Mazandarani A group, with Mazandarani as the dominant language of communication, to comprehend and produce present tense in English without difficulty if there is an exclusive transfer from the dominant language of communication. We also expect the Mazandarani B group and Persian group, with Persian as the dominant language of communication, to produce this tense incorrectly. The results show that Mazandarani B group and Persian groups used the tense incorrectly because both communicated in Persian and Mazandarani A group used the tense correctly in English because they communicated in Mazandarani, not Persian. It might seem reasonable to conclude that it is the dominant language of communication which is the most prominent factor in syntactic CLI in the initial stages of L3 acquisition of English.

The results of the present study are in line with the results of the study conducted by Fallah et al. (2016) in that it provides evidence to support the idea that the dominant language of communication is the primary source of syntactic CLI at the initial stages of L3 acquisition. One possible explanation could be Activation Threshold Hypothesis (Paradis,2004, 2007), anticipating that any memory trace, such as a word, a morpheme, or a structure, has a certain activation threshold associated with it. As this threshold is higher, it takes more effort to recall the item from memory. Language items or rules which are more frequently used will be more easily activated. The use of a language will

lower its activation threshold. So that language is more accessible for transfer. Besides, every time a multilingual speaker selects a language, its competitors (i.e., other languages at the speaker's disposal) must be inhibited (Bialystok, 2005). The more a language is inhibited, the higher its activation threshold is, and this makes the inhibited language harder to access subsequently (Green, 1998). Similarly, Kellerman (1983) states that while the linguistic items used more frequently are more likely to be more transferable, rare linguistic items will be "psychologically marked" and therefore less transferable. The results of this study are in line with his prediction.

Conclusion

This study considered the learning of simple present tense by the Mazandarani A (L1=Mazandarani, L2=Persian, communicating in Mazandarani), Mazandarani B (L1=Mazandarani, L2=Persian, communicating in Persian), and Persian groups (L1=Persian, L2=Mazandarani, communicating in Persian). The results of a grammaticality judgment task and an oral translation task showed that the predictions of the L1 Factor, the L2 Status Factor, the CEM, and the TPM were not realized. Instead, it was the dominant language of communication which was the main source of syntactic CLI at the initial stages of L3 learning. The results obtained here highlight the importance of the dominant language of communication in L3 acquisition. However, we do not claim that structural/typological similarity does not have a role in L3 learning. What we conclude from the results of this study is that structural/ typological proximity could not account for the performance of the participants in the case of this study, since the nature of the participants and the languages they know are different from the studies which support the TPM. Therefore, further research is needed to test the TPM by recruiting child bilinguals and less related language pairings.

Some pedagogical implications can be suggested based on the results of this study. The findings got in this study support the idea that teachers ought to get familiar with the differences and discrepancies that may exist between Mazandarani, Persian, and English, which can cause learning L3 problems. By identifying these problems and their sources, L3 teachers can offer remedial materials and tasks to rectify these errors. Moreover, it would be reasonable to allocate some time training teachers and educators on learning simple present by Persian and Mazandarani speakers.

Due to propagation of present tense and limitations in time and budget, it was almost impossible for the researcher to work on all kinds of present tense in English and he just worked on simple present. Moreover, both male and female students participated in the study, but the number of L1 Persian/L2 Mazandarani could be extended.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest declared.

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Appendix A. Grammaticality judgment task

لطفاً جملات زیر را بخوانید و در صورت درست بودن grammatical، در صورت نادرست بودن ungrammatical و در صورتی که نمی دانید I don’t know را علامت بزنید.

No.	Sentence	Grammatical	Ungrammatical	I Don’t Know
1	My sister study her lesson yesterday.			
2	drive she very fast.			
3	I have two brothers.			
4	She washed her hands last night.			
5	Ali cooks it very well.			
6	She can plays the piano			
7	My father was driving very fast.			
8	clean she her room every day.			
9	Those cars is fast.			
10	Ali washed his car.			
11	I eat bread and cheese every day.			
12	She watches TV every night.			
13	Nazanin was cook lunch.			
14	Reza studied for the test.			
15	was doing he his homework.			
16	I will do change my mobile soon.			
17	He is a boy thin.			
18	He did clean the room.			
19	She is a nurse.			
20	Majid was clean the room when I came.			
21	Fateme cook dinner every night.			
22	The book is on the table.			
23	Was going I home.			
24	She will do cook lunch.			
25	David repair his car.			
26	opened he the door.			
27	I will go to Tehran next week.			
28	Fateme does cook dinner every day.			
29	You is young			
30	We go to work every day.			
31	I go to Mashad next week.			
32	There are two pens on the table.			
33	I cooked lunch last night.			
34	It is a hen.			
35	I was cleaning the house when you came.			
36	You watch TV last night.			
37	Mahboobe like pizza very much.			
38	sleep they at 11 every night.			
39	We will wash our car on Friday.			
40	watched he TV.			

Appendix B. oral translation task (Mazandarani into English)

لطفا جملات مازندرانی زیر را که می شنوید به انگلیسی ترجمه کنید:

Translated
1. من اشون ساندویچ بخردمه
2. من ده تا کتاب دایمه
3. من هر روز غذا خیمه
4. علی بلندقد هسه
5. رضا بتونه انگلیسی حرف بزنه
6. مه مار آشپز خوبی هسه
7. ته هفته قبل ماشین ره بشستی
8. مه مار پیتزا دوست داینه
9. اما دایمی درس خومی
00. مجید محسن توم بلندقدتره
11. ته هر شو تلویزیون وینی
22. شاید بورم مهمونی
33. مجبورمی ویزا بیریم
44. وه پارسال شه می ره بزوئه
55. اما هر هفته شومی پارک
66. اگه تلفن هاکرده وره گمه
17. اما پارسال اتا گو بکوشتمی
88. وشون هر سال شوننه مشهد
99. مصطفی ده تا خواخر داینه
00. مه پر هفته قبل اتا نامه بنویشته