

## Explicit or Implicit Instruction of Difficult Structures Due to Cross-linguistic Influence of L1 in L2?

Farid Ghaemi<sup>1</sup>

Assistant Professor in TEFL,

Department of English, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

Atefeh Ghaedsharafi<sup>2</sup>

Ph.D. candidate at Qeshm Islamic Azad University, Iran

**Abstract:** *This study dealt with the problem of teaching difficult structures of the second language due to cross-linguistic influence of L1 in L2 (i.e. Persian & English respectively). This study conducted with 90 female students at a language institute in Shiraz. The participants were Persian native speakers and studying English as a foreign language. To investigate the effect of explicit and implicit instruction. The students were divided in 3 groups. The first group of the participants received implicit instruction of problematic materials, due to cross linguistic influence of L1 in L2, The second group received explicit instruction and control group did not receive any instruction. The results of this study revealed that explicit instruction of difficult parts of the target language, due to the interference of their first language, and clearly contrasting two languages, explaining the reason of confusion in producing those structures the learners learn more efficiently in comparison with instruction through implicit instruction and providing the learners many examples and much repetition of those structures.*

**Key words:** *Explicit instruction, Implicit Instruction, Contrastive analysis*

### Introduction

#### Explicit and Implicit instruction

Explicit teaching is an approach in which information about a language is given to the learners directly by the textbook or teacher (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Reber (1967) declared that implicit learning is eliciting information from environment without conscious operations. Ellis (2008) drew a distinction between implicit and explicit instruction. He declared that implicit instruction is 'enabling learners to infer rules without awareness' that is in contrast with explicit instruction in which there is 'externally-prompted awareness of what is being learnt' (p.879).

#### Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis to Interlanguage

In the middle of twentieth century applied linguistics were interested in the study of two languages in contrast to identify their similarities and differences yielded what is known as Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH). It is 'rooted in the behavioristic and structuralist

approaches that principle barriers to second language acquisition is the interference of the first language system with the second language system' (Brown, 2000, pp. 207-208). CAH is stated in two versions of strong version and weak version. Strong version of CAH is asserted by Lado (1957, as cited in Wardhaugh, 1970) that it is possible to predict the patterns that cause difficulty in learning by systematically comparing native and target language. Wardhaugh (1970) claimed that:

An evaluation of this strong version of the contrastive analysis hypothesis suggests that it makes demands of linguistic theory, and, therefore, of linguists, that they are in no position to meet. At the very least this version demands of linguists that they have available a set of linguistics theory which deals adequately with syntax, semantics, and phonology. (p.4)

So Wardhaugh (1970) believed that strong version sounds quite unrealistic, impractical and demanding. On the other hand he believed that the weak version requires the linguist just to use the available linguistic knowledge to account for difficulties in language learning; it starts with actual evidence from such phenomena as learning difficulty, Faulty translation and so on. Wardhaugh declared that the study of most of the contrastive analysis which are available shows that they conform the demands made by weak version of CAH not the demands of Strong version (1970, p.8).

The goals of Contrastive Analysis is to find out the differences between the first language and the target language problems and the problematic parts to be considered in the curriculum. There were some criticism to CAH: not all problems predicted by contrastive analysis always appear to be difficult for the students, and not all the errors committed by learners are due to differences between languages. Contrastive Analysis could not predict learning difficulties. Schackne (2002, as cited in Rustipa, 2011) states "research shows that contrastive analysis may be most predictive at the level of phonology and least predictive at the syntactic level."

To overcome the shortcoming of contrastive analysis, error analysis was suggested by Stephen Pit Corder and colleagues in the 1960s. Corder (1967, as cited in Ellis, 2008, p. 45) noted: 'ERRORS provided the researcher with evidence of how language was learnt, and also that they served as devices by which the learner discovered the rules of the target language.' But there are some shortcomings in error analysis: many studies have shown that error analysis do not deal with the strategy of avoidance carried out by learners and much attention is placed on errors and lose the value of positive reinforcement of clear communication, while the ultimate goal of second language learning is communicative fluency (Brown, 2000, p. 219).

In the mid-1970s, Corder and others moved on to a wide-ranging approach to learner language, known as interlanguage. It is a continuum between the first language and the target

language along which all learners traverse (Larsen, et. al., 1992: 60 as cited in Rustipa, 2011). Learning a foreign language learners is independent of either L1 or L2, but influenced by both.

But Fisiak (1981 as cited in Wardhaugh, 1970) claims that not all Contrastive Analysis hypotheses are wrong. It has a helpful explanatory role. It can still explain certain errors and mistakes. He further explains that error analysis cannot replace Contrastive Analysis but only complete it.

Although all errors committed by second language learners cannot be attributed to the interference of first language, the impact of L1 on L2 learning is an inevitable phenomenon and CAH cannot be ignored. Wardhaugh (1970) believed that experienced teachers do not reject CAH. Their experience tell them what parts of second language are easier and what parts are difficult according to contrastive analysis of two languages but he emphasized that teachers use available linguistic knowledge to make such decisions and again this claim high lights his idea about practicality of weak version of CAH.

Yarmohammadi (1996) introduced some systematic or predictable errors as the result of the interference of first language in learning the second language. Some of them which are used in this study are introduced:

1-Confusion between gerunds and infinitives: it includes using *for plus gerund construction* instead of infinitives; using *to* with *gerunds* instead of *to* with the basic form of the verbs or using propositions instead of infinitives (Yarmohamadi, 1996, p.11).

2-Problems with prepositions and particles: it includes omission, insertion and use of the wrong position (Yarmohamadi, 1996, p.11).

3- Misuse of the words. For example using verbs as adjectives.

### **Objective and research Question**

The primary purpose of this paper is to examine explicit or implicit instruction of the difficult structures in second language due to cross-linguistic influence of L1 in L2. In this paper by explicit instruction we mean making the students aware of the interference of their L1 in a specific L2 structure and clearly explain the differences in two languages. By Implicit teaching we mean just repeating the difficult structures many times without comparing the structures of two languages and not explaining the reasons of confusion.

The main question of this paper is:

1- Is there any differential effect for explicit and implicit instruction of difficult structures due to cross-linguistic influence of L1 in L2?

### **Literature Review**

### **Studies on Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis**

Bada (2001) studied the influence of the native language in learning a foreign language. To observe the circumstances under which this influence is positive and/or negative, the study was conducted in English phonology. It describes the phonological analysis of Japanese speakers learning English as a foreign language. It reflects learners' performance in the target language at a specific stage of interlanguage. A non-comprehensive comparison between the English and the Japanese sound systems was made and the "so-called" problem causing sounds were diagnosed, and were employed in texts and presented to learners for reading. Results obtained from this study showed that while some sounds were found to pose some difficulty of production, and that the difficulty is attributable to NL, others were produced with much less difficulty due to the already-present NL system of phonology. Other non- interlingual learning strategies were also observed to be employed by the learners in producing English sounds.

Mahmoodzadeh. S. (2012) conducted a contrastive study to investigate the errors made by Iranian EFL learners due to the cross-linguistic influence between their L1/SL and L2/TL language (i.e. Persian & English respectively). To meet the goals of the study, an error analysis was conducted to examine the status of different types of errors of prepositions made due to the transitional constraints between Persian and English languages. To this end, a translation task was developed by the present researcher. The translation task aimed at identifying the interlingual preposition errors caused by the process of transfer between the target language (English) and the source language (Persian). The translation task was given to 53 adult EFL learners at intermediate level to translate the sentences from Persian into English. After collecting and analyzing the data, the results of the study indicated that the Iranian EFL learners under investigation were faced with the errors related to the wrong and redundant use of prepositions more frequently as compared with the errors related to the omission of prepositions in L2 while translating from Persian into English.

### **Studies on Explicit and Implicit Instruction**

Nezakat, Youhanaee & Moinzadeh (2014) sought to investigate the effect of explicit instruction (direct proactive explicit instruction) on the acquisition of English passive objective relative clauses. Two groups of participants were involved in the study; a group of advanced EFL learners (n = 16) and a group of intermediate EFL learners (n = 37) who were randomly divided to two groups of experimental (n = 22) and control (n = 15). The experimental group received 4 sessions of explicit instruction on the target structure. There were a pre-, post-, and post-tests. Two separate measures of explicit and implicit knowledge were applied; an offline test of metalinguistic knowledge and two online speeded tests of implicit knowledge (a self-paced-reading task and a stop-making sense task). The findings revealed a positive effect of explicit instruction for both implicit and explicit knowledge for the treatment group. Durable effects of explicit instruction were found according to the results obtained from the delayed post-test. The

advanced group performed very closely to the treatment group, indicating the effect of explicit instruction in accelerating language learning, as well as the necessity of explicit instruction for some language forms to be acquired in EFL contexts.

Marzban and Kamalian (2013) conducted a study to investigate whether implicit instruction of vocabulary is more effective than explicit instruction. Thirty five Iranian EFL learners participated in the three treatment sessions -implicit instruction, explicit instruction through giving marginal glossary and explicit instruction by checking words in dictionaries. The results showed that the difference among the mean scores of the three groups were statistically meaningful. The subjects with explicit instruction 1 and explicit instruction 2 performed better as compared with subjects who received implicit instruction.

Yeganeh, Ghoreyshi & Darabi (2013) conducted a study to investigate the role of implicit and explicit instructions on acquisition of two grammatical structures (negative and placement adverb) and also the effect of monolingualism and bilingualism on learning grammar. 28 bilingual and 10 monolingual, participated in the study. A general English proficiency test, pre-test, post-test and delayed post- test were administered. Then the scores on the pre-test and post-tests were compared. The findings revealed that: 1) there wasn't a significant difference between implicit and explicit instructions 2) for complex structure, implicit instruction was recommended and 3) monolingual and bilingual learners did not differ in learning the grammar.

There are many researches on explicit and implicit instruction and also on the contrastive analysis but explicit or implicit instruction of difficult structures due to cross-linguistic influence was not conducted, so in this study effect for explicit and implicit instruction of difficult structures due to cross-linguistic influence is investigated. The findings of the study can be helpful to teachers to decide to teach explicitly or implicitly when they can predict difficult parts of second language according to contrastive analysis of two languages based on their available linguistic knowledge.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

This study conducted with 90 female students at a language institute in Shiraz. The participants were Persian native speakers and studying English as a foreign language. The students ranged in age from 15-29. The sample was homogenous according to their English level. The participants were all at pre-intermediate level and studying the same book. The students were divided in 3 groups and the participants were randomly assigned to each group. The first group is the control group, the second group received inductive teaching, and the third group received deductive instruction.

### Instructional materials

To investigate the effect of explicit and implicit instruction of the difficult structures, due to interference of Persian language in learning English language, three types of problematic structures were chosen. They were from three categories of

1-Confusion between gerunds and infinitives: He went shopping to **buy** oranges. (\* He went shopping for buying oranges.)

2- Problems with prepositions: He discussed the problem. (\*He discussed about the problem)

3- Misuse of the words: I **agree** with you. (\* I am agree with you)

### Instruments

For each category of ‘confusion between gerunds and infinitives,’ ‘Problems with prepositions’ and ‘Misuse of the words.’ 4 questions in the forms of multiple choice questions were added to a proficiency test which was designed for intermediate students at the language institute. The questions were from the examples which were taught in the class or from sentences which were similar to the ones taught. The researcher decided to add the questions to a proficiency test, so the students were not aware of being tested for specific structures. To estimate the reliability of the new test a pilot study was conducted. 30 students were selected from the target population randomly. These students did not take part in the actual study. They were asked to answer the questionnaire items. The Statistical Package for the Social Science Program (SPSS) version 16.0 was used. The value of Cronbach Alpha was 0.89 which showed acceptable consistency of reliability.

### Procedure

To investigate the effect of explicit and implicit instruction. The first group of the participants received implicit instruction of materials related to three mentioned categories. Through one session of English language class at language institute the instructor just wrote many sentences of three mentioned categories on the board and made students repeat them many times and provided the learners with many examples without contrasting the structures in two languages and talking about the reason of confusion in producing those structures. The second group received explicit instruction of those sentences. The instructor wrote limited examples on the board and contrasted the structures in two languages and explained why Persian speakers make mistakes in producing the structures and repeated sentences but not many times. The control group did not receive any instruction.

After two weeks, to gather data the proficiency test was distributed by the researcher among three groups of the participants. The instruction was read to students and they had 60 minutes to answer the questions.

### Data Analysis and results

To analyze the data, the participants' answers to the 12 questions which were added to proficiency test was separated from the whole answers to be analyzed. One point was given to each correct answer and the results of each group were counted. The spss program was used to analyze the data.

**Table 1. ANOVA Result**

VAR00001					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	266.422	2	133.211	53.317	.000
Within Groups	217.367	87	2.498		
Total	483.789	89			

As the table1 shows, the significance is 0.00. This is smaller than .05 and 0.01, so the difference between groups are significant. We ran Pot hoc analysis to know exactly which groups are different from each other (table 2).The difference between implicit instruction and explicit instruction is significant (sig = 0.00). The mean difference is negative, so we can conclude that the mean in explicit instruction was greater. The difference between implicit instruction and control group is not significant. It shows that the mean in implicit instruction was not significantly different from control group. The mean difference between explicit instruction and control group is significant (sig = 0.00). The mean difference is positive, so we can conclude that the mean in explicit instruction was greater.

**Table 2. Post Hoc analysis. Multiple Comparisons**

	(I) VAR0000 2	(J) VAR0000 2	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Scheffe	implicit	explicit	-3.33333	.40812	.000	-4.3498	-2.3169
		control	.56667	.40812	.385	-.4498	1.5831
	explicit	implicit	3.33333	.40812	.000	2.3169	4.3498
		control	3.90000	.40812	.000	2.8836	4.9164
	control	implicit	-.56667	.40812	.385	-1.5831	.4498
		explicit	-3.90000	.40812	.000	-4.9164	-2.8836

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.



## Discussion

This study dealt with the problem of teaching difficult structures of the second language due to cross-linguistic influence (Persian & English respectively). According to Barzegar (2013) majority of errors produced by language learners involve syntactico- morphological errors , substitution , and Intralingual errors. It shows that one of the major sources of errors is the interference of mother tongue in learning a foreign language , therefore language teachers should take account this fact in their curriculum design and teaching approaches. Although the practicality of CAH has been under question for many years but the experienced teachers can predict the problematic parts of the target language due to the available linguistic knowledge (Wardhaugh, 1970). The results of this study indicated that when the learners confront difficult parts of the target language due to the interference of their first language, they can learn more efficiently if they receive clear contrasting of those structures in two languages. Although inductive learning has been proved to be more suitable approach to provoke fluency, interference of first language in target language may be so problematic for learners that just repeating the difficult structures, due to cross-linguistic influence, many times and providing the learners with many examples do not provoke learning.

## Conclusion

Since one of the major sources of errors is the interference of mother tongue in learning a foreign language, language teachers should take account of this fact in their curriculum design and teaching approaches. The results of this study revealed that explicit instruction of difficult parts of the target language, due to the interference of their first language, clearly contrasting two languages and explain the reason of confusion in producing those structures accelerate learning in comparison with just instruction through many examples and much repetition of those structures.

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