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A CROSS-LINGUISTICS VIEW OF HOW FIRST LANGUAGE AFFECTS
LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

In the journey of mastering a second language, it is highly challenging, if not almost unfeasible, to completely detach from the first language. For that reason, the present paper examines into the dynamics of using vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and other linguistic elements from the native language, revealing both positive and negative effects. One notable advantage lies in the ease of grasping grammatical structures, thanks to the shared patterns between the learner's native tongue and the target language. Moreover, the presence of cognates can significantly aid in broadening vocabulary in the target language. In contrast, learners may encounter instances of language avoidance, particularly when it comes to situations where the learners' linguistic proficiency is lacking. Furthermore, there is a possibility for both over and underutilization of linguistic rules, such as grammatical structures, which can hinder language acquisition progress. This kind of situations are common to happen especially when both, the target, and the native language, belong to the same family of language. In this case, the learners frequently identify specific grammatical rules that are repeated in the target language and link it with existing rules in the native language with the intention of facilitating the understanding of the target language rules.

Keywords: Cross-linguistics, First language, Language transfer, Linguistics, Second language

Introduction

Learning a second language (L2) is indeed an important part of life nowadays (Kaur, 2017). It helps people to communicate with others, to share different ideas, points of view, opinions, among other elements. When learning a second language or a foreign language it is almost impossible to not be influenced by one's first language (L1). It is a fact that even when a person already reached certain level of mastery in a target language, there are cases where L1 still have an important role in the

linguistic context. Considering the importance first language have in the learning and acquisition of a second language, it can be said that it is significant to understand how the overall influence of L1 in L2 is. From an overview, cross-linguistics benefits come from opposing and comparing many languages, which in turn helps people learn more about each one on its own (Treider, 2017). Cross-linguistics mainly focuses on the differences and similarities between different languages, the emphasis is found in the discovery of patterns, inclinations and specificities of a particular language and then compare it with other languages. A great part of the function of cross-linguistics is the analysis of grammatical aspects such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, among other parts of grammar. In some cases, learners of a second language stated that they learn faster a L2 compared to L1 and also said that they use the same learning approaches the used to learn their first language. Also, it can be said that according to some authors the acquisition of a second language is not that different from acquiring a first language (Sokolova & Plisov, 2019). From these statements it can be understood that the process of learning L1 and L2 is somehow similar and therefore the role of cross-linguistics lies in determining how the already existing expertise in learning a first language can benefit the learning a second language. When analyzing how cross-linguistics is actually used in the classrooms, it can be found that learners can actually benefit of the teacher's knowledge of more than one language, for example in the case the teacher and the students share the same first language, the teacher is more likely to be able to explain the students the similarities or differences between the target language and the L1 facilitating the understanding of the target language (Otwindowska, 2017). On the other hand, for instance when it is applied policies like "English only" this kind of interactions between languages do not occur, which for students might negatively affect the motivation to learn or even make the student think that the class is too advanced for them due to the strictness of the lecturer. In order to comprehend more deeply the relation between cross-linguistics and its potential usage, some authors like Strickland, B. (2017), focus their studies in the "core cognition" where it is stated that the knowledge humans have at this time came from a reduce quantity of basic cognitive processes, in here it is included the language learning process. Additionally, it is mentioned how the similarities among languages are easier to understand when comprehending the different family of languages. This is since there are many languages that have the same origin but have been evolving as time passes by. Going deeper into the roots of languages can be a way to see the inflexion point from one language to another. Considering that in the actual age people are living in, speaking more than one language is not uncommon, and one reason behind it is the rapid expansion that technology is having. The influence of technology in the language learning context is undeniable (Ahmadi, 2018). There are multiple tools that are being use by learners and teachers, especially in comparing two languages, by using different visual tool it is easier for learners to identify the similarities or differences between languages, making the learning process more effective, efficient, and even more dynamic. The present paper aims to discuss how understanding the influence of cross-linguistics can potentially influence the learning of a second language. Additionally, it analyses the relationship between cross-linguistic and grammatic, along with the influence of the use technology in the language learning process. The combination of all these previous factors affects how people learn a second language and it is expected that by comprehending it, the learners may have a smoother learning experience.

Method

The present study employed a library study where it is intended to answer how the impact of the first language is in the learning process of a second language. Firstly, this article analyzes the difference between first language (L1) and second language (L2), then it explains how the terms of cross-linguistics, interlanguage and translanguaging are related one to another and how it is important to differentiate them especially when it comes to academic matters. After that it is explained the developmental paths of L2, highlighting common behaviors L2 learners have in their first stages of language learning. Lastly it can be found the influence of L1 and cross-linguistics in L2 learning process which is the main point of this paper.

Findings

First language (L1) and second language (L2)

In order to understand what the influence of cross-linguistics in the language learning process is, it is fundamental to identify the similarities and differences between a first and a second language. A first language, also known as native language or mother tongue, is the language a person has been exposed to since birth (Limacher, 2021). This language is in most of the cases the same language the parents of a person have been using since birth as well and therefore transmitted to their next generation. The first language then can be defined as the language a person learns since childhood and consequently the one a person has more linguistic proficiency.

Different from L1, on the other hand, there is the second language, which refers to the language a person learns or acquires after their native language. When it comes to the second language, it can be gotten in two ways, one is acquiring it and the other is learning it. Acquiring usually refers to the process that occurs naturally, like happens with the first language, people get it just by being exposed to it and not necessarily having a conscious process. Acquiring a language relies greatly on the implicit knowledge where an extent amount of information is in the environment and then the person “pick up” some parts of it without noticing (Yusuf, 2009). On the contrary, according to Castello (2015). Medgyes (1990) and Hayes (2009) mentioned that learning a language is more related to a guided process, a more formal manner. Learning therefore is more focused on the setting of the process such as the language classroom, who the teacher is, what content is taught and so on.

Learning L2 can include multiple elements that in the acquisition process are not considered. For instance, Schütz (2017) consider that learning have priority for written language and theory. Also, the importance of the order of material content is higher, putting special attention to the following of syllabus and curriculums, and also giving more significance to having activities about the language rather than in the language. Overall, it is right to state that the learning process focus on the production of knowledge instead of the production of abilities. It can be said that according to Zaščerinska (2010) the biggest difference between language acquisition and learning is that acquiring a language is freer and more spontaneous, while learning a language is more about a conscious realization of a language, followed by a command and then in a free speech.

Cross-linguistics, interlanguage and translanguaging

Taking into consideration the previously mentioned characteristics of L1 and L2, then how one can affect the other, or specifically, what is the role of L1 in L2? It is a fact that without L1 there is not L2, but apart from it there is a relation between these two types of languages. One way to explain that relation is through the concept of cross-linguistics, but when talking about it, it is common to fall into confusion with the concepts of interlanguage and translanguaging, it is true that they are related but each one has its own individualities.

To start, cross-linguistics can be considered the biggest circle including translanguaging and interlanguage, as it has the function to analyze the relation between different families of languages, language types. By doing this analysis it is possible to unveil the universalities of the language or the characteristics that are shared by all languages, along with its specificities. On the other hand, there is translanguaging, which focuses on the practices of bilinguals and multilinguals. These users choose and utilize specific linguistics elements from a particular set of linguistic elements in order to reach a meaning, as well as to negotiate a specific communicative circumstance (Vogel & García, 2017).

Translanguaging challenges the notion of rigid linguistic bounds, therefore the idea is that language is not limited to the use of one language but benefits from the multiple languages existing. From a general point of view, translanguaging acknowledges that language is a flexible resource that may be blended and used in numerous combinations rather than being restricted to particular codes or

structures. The interconnectivity of languages is emphasized, and it exhorts multilingual language learners to use their skills to communicate effectively.

Lastly, when talking about interlanguage, according to Shiddiq & Oktaviani (2022), Fauziati (2011) considered it as the result of students' attempts to come up with target language rules. Additionally, according to Selinker (1972) interlanguage is mainly defined by three qualities, first, it is permeable, which means that the rules the learner creates are flexible and subject to change it is always changing. Then the second characteristic is that interlanguage is Dynamic, which refers to the fact that interlanguage is always evolving. In order to accommodate and adapt to the new rules in the target language system, learners gradually go from one interlanguage stage to the next. And finally, the last characteristic is systematic, suggesting that even while interlanguage is unpredictable, it is still possible to identify the learner's interlanguage as being rule-based. The interlanguage rules are always chosen in predictable ways, meaning they are never picked up accidentally from the learner's storage of interlanguage rules.

In a nutshell, the main difference between cross-linguistics, translanguaging and interlanguage lies in that cross-linguistics concentrates on the study of language across different languages, while translanguaging emphasizes the fluid use of multiple languages in communication and then interlanguage refers to the evolving language system developed by second language learners as they develop proficiency in the target language.

Developmental paths of second language

When a person is acquiring a second language it is expected to pay special attention to some elemental components in the first stages of acquisition. Among those elements it can be found, negation, questioning and the influence of the first language (Ortega, 2014. P.35). Firstly, negation is short words is the grammatical expression of denial. There are numerous ways to convey negation in various languages. For instance, in some languages such as Spanish, French, and Portuguese the negation is located before the verb, whereas some other languages like English, German, and Swedish utilize a negation word after the verb. While others may use affixes, particles, or a certain word order. The use of negation in most cases follows a similar pattern, facilitating the understanding of its use, but when the pattern is not followed there are more chances that the comprehension of this linguistic element may be delayed.

Referring to the element of questioning, it can be said that it follows a set of four stages to master it. The first stage is when the learner only produce fragments of the whole text they want to communicate (e.g., A pencil?), then it is the stage of statements, where a more complete text is produced (e.g., you are tired?), then followed to the stage of adding question markers in front of the statements, such as what, do, is., therefore creating text like what you like? Is he your son? Finally, in the fourth main stage is where the inversion occurs in questions such as where is your pet? Are you listening to me? In other more advanced stages happens the inversion in wh-questions in different contexts, then in the last stage it is used the target-like questions, and the negation is included in the questions (e.g., you are excited, aren't you? don't you watch it?).

Lastly, the last component in acquisition that deserves special attention is the influence of the first language of the learner. For instance, in some languages such as Spanish, it is necessary an artículo definido 'definite article' such as "el," "la," "los," and "las" and adjetivos determinativos 'determinative adjectives' or determinantes 'determiners' such as "el", "un", "este", "aquel", "mi", which are used to give further details and explanations about the noun they are modifying. They match the noun they are attached to in terms of gender and number. These adjectives and articles have the job of defining and distinguishing the specific traits or identity of the noun. They may denote location, possession, quality, or number (Fábregas, 2018). Whereas in English language those articles, adjectives and determiners are reduced to the use of "the", "this/that", "these/those" to refer to a specific matter.

In the case of learners of Spanish language, it is common to find that they have the tendency in the first stages of learning, to omit the determiners, gender classification, among other linguistic elements required to understand the whole meaning of what is tried to be conveyed (Cabrera & Gómez, 2017). One reason behind it, is the fact that in many cases such as the English language, these kinds of specificities does not exist, hindering the Spanish language learning process. In the same way but vice versa, it is common that native Spanish speakers face some difficulties trying to display the particular characteristic of what is trying to be described.

As another exemplification of the influence of first language, is the Indonesian and English case, in here there are some general similarities that make easier the English language learning process for Indonesian language speakers. For instance, in Indonesian language adjective are as well utilized as predicates (e.g., *bagian Utara ini cukup ramai* 'the northern part is quite crowded', *Beliau masih begitu muda* 'he/she is still very young') (Gulö, 2019). Even when the overall idea is understood, when it comes to English language, adjectives cannot be used alone as predicates, so in order to have a coherent sentence it is necessary to add the verb to be (e.g., *the food is expensive, you are so intelligent*).

On the other hand, when a language is widely spread all over, in some circumstances happens that the widely known language is modified to fit into the particularities of other languages, such case occur in Indonesian language, where some words of English language are lent and therefore it is added the prefix 'ng/nge' (Azizah, 2018). One reason to explain this kind of phenomenon is that by modifying or customizing some words it would be easier to understand its context, especially since that by this alteration it would fit better into the grammatical structure of the lender language making it easier to assimilate.

In general, it can be said that the role of first language does weight in the learning of a second language, going from the basic point of denying something, where linguistic patterns are common to find in the different family of languages, making it easier to the learner to understand the idea that is being tried to be transmitted. On the other hand, the way people put into doubt something is also similar in many different languages, but what happens while questioning is that the structure of it changes greatly depending on the level of mastery the learner has. The more a person knows about their target language, the more chances they have to create a much more complex text.

L1 influence

The influence of the first language can be divided into four main categories, which are markedness and L1 transfer, then there is transferability, followed by avoidance and finally the last one is the under or overuse of the first language. In first instance, when referring to markedness which had been applied to a limited number of choices inside a linguistic system, where the choices ranged from the most straightforward and widespread across all languages, or unmarked, to the most intricate and uncommon, or marked, options (Ortega, 2014. P.37).

A marked form diverges from the default or add extra characteristics or complications, whereas an unmarked form is regarded as the default or more natural form in linguistics. For instance, in English, the addition of "-s" or "-es" designates the plural while the plural form of nouns is typically unmarked. Because it is the more typical or default form, the plural is regarded as unmarked. According to the markedness theory of second language acquisition, learners are more likely to pick up unmarked structures or elements before marked ones. As a result, according to Zeybek, G (2018) learning unmarked forms is typically simpler and happens earlier in the learning process than learning marked forms, which can be more challenging and need more time.

For instance, the object-verb-subject (OVS) word order is marked and less prevalent in English syntax than the subject-verb-object (SVO) word order. As a result, English language learners have a higher chance of picking up SVO word order sooner in their language development. Additionally, it is

right to say that other language elements including verb tenses, grammatical constructions, phonological patterns, and lexical choices can also be marked. Depending on the learner's mother tongue and the target language, the particular markedness patterns may change.

Another way to observe the influence of first language in L2 is through transferability, which is the degree to which knowledge, abilities, or linguistic peculiarities from the native language can be transmitted to the target language. According to Liu, (2001) the idea of transferability came from the fact that when learning a new language, learners frequently rely on their pre-existing linguistic knowledge and abilities. This can take on both positive and negative forms.

Positive transfer happens when learning is facilitated by similarities between the L1 and L2. If the L1 and L2 have similar grammatical, phonological, or structural features, the learner can transfer that information and use it correctly. For instance, it might be simpler for a student to pick up and compose sentences with the right word order if their L1 and L2 have similar word orders. On the other hand, negative transfer also known as interference, cross-linguistic interference, or L1 interference, happens when elements of the L1 prevent the acquisition or use of the L2. Difficulties in the L2 result when the structures, vocabulary, pronunciation, or other linguistic features of the L1 are different from those of the L2. For example, if the first language of a learner is deficient in a certain sound found in the L2, they may find it difficult to speak words that contain that sound correctly.

Avoidance, as other element of L1 influence can be understood according to Brown (2000) as the situation in which language learners purposefully or unintentionally refrain from employing specific grammatical constructions, vocabulary, or communication techniques in the second language. One reason behind this kind of occurrence is that learners find difficult, strange, or unsuitable socially the use of specific L2 features in their speech or writing compared to how they use it in their first language. Among the most common types of avoidance, it can be found the lexical, grammatical, pronunciation and communicational.

In lexical avoidance, learners Avoid using particular L2 phrases or idioms that are unusual or challenging to remember. In grammatical avoidance learners may refrain from employing verb tenses or sophisticated grammar that they find difficult. To communicate, they might shorten their phrases or make use of linguistic constructions that are more common and straightforward. On the other hand, in pronunciation avoidance if there are specific sounds or intonation patterns, learners may choose to avoid utilizing them in the L2. A solution for it is the replacement L2 sounds with corresponding ones from their native tongue or alter their pronunciation to match L1 patterns. Finally, in communication avoidance some situations or topics that requires more advanced language abilities are evaded, such situations may be about scientific or academic matter due to its complex nature.

The fourth category in the influence of L1 in L2 that should be studied is the under and overuse of certain oral or written productions in L2 (Ortega, 2014. P.41). This category is highly related to the avoidance category previously explained in the present paper. Underuse happens when learners do not use particular linguistic elements, structures, vocabulary, or communication techniques with the same or similar frequency as native speakers in the target language. Several factors, including minimal exposure to the L2, a lack of confidence, an incomplete acquisition of the characteristic, or the impact of the learner's original language, can cause this. For instance, a student might underuse particular verb tenses, intricate sentence constructions, or niche vocabulary that is utilized by native speakers.

Overuse, also referred to as overgeneralization, occurs when learners significantly rely on specific linguistic characteristics or structures, employing them more often or in unsuitable settings. This sometimes happens when students apply a rule or pattern from their native language or a condensed form of their second language too liberally. A student might, for instance, overuse the present progressive tense (e.g., "I am walking") rather than the proper simple present tense (e.g., "I walk"). Overgeneralization can be observed as well when learners learn certain rules in the L2 and try

to apply it widely regardless of the context, which may lead to the wrongly use of that rule throughout the utilization of the L2.

Discussion

In order to understand how the first language of a person can affect the learning of a second language it is necessary to revise some previous studies, for instance in the study conducted by Moreno-Duron, I. (2019) it is displayed how the similarities between Spanish and English language may lead learners to use wrong cognates, for example, there are words that are write in the same way and even have the same meaning, but its pronunciation varies depending on the language, some words can be comfortable, animal, bar, drama, motor, among others. The previous example are cognates that may hinder the speaking skill of the learner, but when it comes to writing there are more chances that the message is transmitted successfully. On the other hand, there are words such as pretensión 'pretension', melón 'melon', menú 'menu' that even when they are spelled in the same way there are still grammatical aspects that have to be adjusted, for instance the use of accent mark.

Another exemplification of language transfer, or L1 influence, can be observed when comparing Haitian creole, Spanish and Vietnamese language where possessive nouns are formed with an 'of' phrase (e.g., this is the phone of Juan) which in English it is expected to be 'This is Juan's phone'. Also, in Korean and Vietnamese language there are no relative pronouns but them does exist in English language (e.g., look at the bag is on the floor) which should be 'Look at the bag that is on the floor' (Dudley-Charlton. ND)

As shown in the examples, there are both positive and negative ways to perceive the cross-linguistic influence. Then for the purpose of teaching second languages, it is crucial to comprehend the impact of cross-linguistics. Based on the learners' L1, teachers can foresee probable problems or mistakes and give specific teaching to deal with those issues. By highlighting both the advantages and disadvantages of cross-linguistics, educators can assist students in making the most of their existing language skills while also assisting them in overcoming challenges and achieving correct proficiency in the L2.

Conclusions

By analyzing how cross-linguistics can affect the language learning process, it can be said that the implementation of the first language to get a second language can bring both positive and negative outcomes. In the positive side it can be found that regarding vocabulary, there may be some similarities in L1 and L2 that facilitates the acquisition of new words. In grammar, some structures may apply in both the native and target language. In phonetics, it is possible that some L2 sounds, or pronunciation patterns may also exist in the L1, which helps learners produce those sounds correctly.

On the contrary, when it comes to vocabulary, incorrect word usage or misconceptions can result from false cognates. These are words that sound similar across languages yet mean something entirely different. In grammar, some errors may happen due to the differences between the L1 and L2 grammatical structures. For instance, learners may find it difficult to master the relevant structures in the L2 if the L1 lacks a particular tense or has a different word order. In pronunciation, there is the chance that some issues might result from phonological discrepancies between the L1 and L2 languages. There may be concerns with accent due to learners transferring phonetic patterns from their L1.

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