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## INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF L1 GRAMMAR NEGATIVE TRANSFER OF EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON L2 WRITING SKILL – REVISITED

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### Abstract:

*This study was re-conducted after 2 years to a larger population to confirm the previous research findings and also to discover why some Persian learners (EFL) have still problems in learning certain structures of English language even in an academic level. To answer, a general proficiency test was administered to a total of 426 female and male university students of Payame-noor and Azad Universities in three different departments (Humanities, Basic Sciences and Technical Engineering) through homogenization. Out of which 220 participants whose scores ranged from 55-75 out of 100 were chosen as the upper-intermediate level and 46 participants were crossed out during the TOEFL test due to frustration and lack of self-confidence. The same instruments re-applied consisted of an edited researcher-made Opinionaire (RMO) with new obtained reliability of 0.89 administered to 46 L2 teachers and edited Translation-Recognition test (TRT) with new obtained reliability of 0.95 administered to respective university instructors and L2 teachers and finally the respective participants' TOEFL scores. To this end, the TRT administered to the participants contained one aspect of grammatical errors which were predicted to be problematic parts of learning. That is, the participants were required to translate 27 Persian sentences into English and in recognition test, the participants were asked to read 27 English sentences and recognize the erroneous part. To determine the level of difficulty of using English 11 grammatical items for Iranian upper-Intermediate participants, a hierarchy of difficulty was developed. In doing so, the number of errors was counted. On the contrary, in this study the outnumbered issue was just highlighted. Then descriptive and inferential statistics (Independent Samples Ttest, Pearson correlation and Friedman test) were applied to analyze. The results also showed that L1 grammar negative transfer dose affect on L2 writing skill on Iranian EFL learners even in the academic level. Consequently, as mentioned before and the same result was extracted in this study, by applying CA in EFL classes, of course from guidance schools, drawing the EFL learner's attention to those problematic areas of L2, increasing the time of teaching hour, assigning a trained teacher for the respective classes and above all, to make these steps more practical. We would probably be able to have more informed and less frustrated university EFL learners owing to negative transfer.*

### KEY WORDS:

Edited Researcher-made Opinionaire, Edited Translation-recognition test, C A, Negative transfer, Trained teacher, TOEFL test, 11 Grammatical items

## INTRODUCTION

As a matter of fact, learning a foreign language (namely, English) is a life-time procedure which needs years of constant attempt and especially interest. It is by no means a straightforward process which can be mastered quickly, because there are always new areas, aspects, and registers and so forth in target language (TL) for the EFL learner to master in it. Among these numerous areas some are prioritized that the learner should take them due to the differences between linguistic/grammar systems of two languages into account. Namely, verbs (trans-intrans), linking verb, subject-verb agreement, (relative) pronouns, preposition, adjectives, tenses, word order, articles, etc which may cause problems owing to interference. Different reasons have been put forward for the considerable emphasis on this issue: the importance of the copula or LV, word order, subject-verb agreement and etc, and the difficulty of mastering this kind of item.

To diagnose such problems, in spite of many criticisms, contrastive analysis as a branch of linguistics was and still is a relatively sound basis. A brief description (see also Devos, 1995; Mukattash, 2001) of the field is given by Schackne (2002).

Contrastive Analysis, a comparative analysis of two languages, their similarities and their differences, was thought by many in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s to be a useful predictor of where EFL learners would likely encounter problems in learning a foreign language. It stood to reason that if certain elements of a target language differed greatly from the student's native language (mother tongue), that student would likely encounter difficulties.

In the words of Lado, (1961): "The view of grammar as grammatical structure opens the way to a comparison of grammatical structure of the foreign language with that of the native language to discover the problems of the students in learning the foreign language. The result of such comparison tells us what we should test and what we should not test. It helps us devise test items and techniques that also look quite acceptable from a common sense point of view, and this is the important consideration- we can test the control of language on the part of student."

Contrastive Analysis, popularly, is a method of analyzing the structure of any two languages with a view to estimate the differential aspects of their systems, irrespective of their genetic affinity or level of development. Contrastive analysis of two languages becomes useful, when it, for instance, adequately describes the sound structure and grammatical structure of two languages, with comparative statements, giving due emphasis to the compatible items in the two systems.

As an immediate offshoot of contrastive studies, a learner's first language was considered to be a hindrance to acquisition of a foreign language (Hayati, 1997; Keshavarz, 2003). More importantly, the committed errors may block the communicative purposes. Such problems may arise from L1 grammar negative transfer such as the categorization of LVs, subject-verb agreement, preposition, word order, adjective collocation, relative pronouns and etc., and misuse of which may cause serious misunderstanding on the part of native listeners and readers of the foreign language. Moreover, it is clear that the grammatical system in general and these categorizations in particular, are not totally similar in any two languages, especially when they come to be affected by cultural issues.

In helping facilitating Iranian EFL learners to have better performance in speaking and especially in L2 writing, many teachers prioritize students' writing problems in syntax, lexis and discourse aspects. However, some teachers neglect the problem of students' native language and culture interfering in written English. Even though, L1 interference is not a new trend in studies on foreign language learning. As indicated in the researcher's pilot study, it is undoubtedly an important factor to be considered in EFL writing instruction in the pedagogical system of Iran. L1 interference with regard to the terms 'cross-linguistic and language transfer' refers to the influence of native language structures on students' performance (spoken and written) and development in the target language (Hashim, 1999). When EFL students are writing in the target language, some of their L1 characteristics show up in their writing. This issue should be considered in teaching of EFL writing.

### 1.1 The statement of problem

This study is an attempt to provide insights into the extents of why some Persian learners have problems in learning certain structures of English language. The question this study tries to answer is whether there is a relationship between learning a foreign language (English) and Persian by using contrastive analysis or not. Due to the existence of L1 grammar negative transfer, EFL learners will make mistake in producing L2 sentences / will have problem with learning L2 and this is because of L1 grammar negative transfer. That is, they will use structures of their L1 in the structure of L2 unconsciously during

learning foreign/ second language. So, the utterance will gradually be fossilized in learners' mind, but it seems that it is possible to solve this problem by using contrastive analysis. It has been assumed that the structure of L1 will cause interference in the structure of L2 during learning and most importantly, this negative transfer (interference) will lead learners to learn ungrammatical structure and the learners will consider them as correct structures. Generally speaking, L1 learners' writing skill (translation) is weak due to having probably little knowledge about TL (target language). From the point of the researcher's view they are not good at converting the sentences into L2 and producing TL structures properly. The researcher believes that this can be due to the impact of L1 grammar negative transfer (interference) on the L2 writing skill, which is resulted from different factors that the researcher found out about according to the ex-researcher's findings (Yarmohammadi 2002, Keshavarz 2003, Mirhassani 2004 and Ziahosieni 1985 ) and some grammarians and also based on a pilot study (using a researcher-made Opinionnaire administered on 45 English teachers ' female and male' of ministry of education of Iran in Gilan province. The finding of this research indicated that more than 42 out of 45 teachers agreed on the negative transfer that the researcher has done during his teaching and research and also other factors involved are as follows: 1) the amount of learners' L2 knowledge base is not adequate. 2) The differences between L1 writing systems (SOV) with L2 writing system (SVO). 3) L1 learners translate for example the preposition of some verbs based on their L1 knowledge/language structure. 4) They don't know how to use the correct form of collocation of words, verbs, etc. 5) while translating; L1 learners make mistakes between formal and informal sentences because they are not aware of the concept of the sentences or utterances owing to having little information. 6) Their knowledge of idioms, expressions, proverbs, etc. is not rich, so they don't know how to use the correct equivalent. More explanations will be presented in this field. Finally, the aforementioned items will probably lead to negative transfer. In order to solve the problem, the researcher will develop two tests (translation and recognition tests) which can probably be applicable. That is, according to the ex-researcher's findings and also the researcher's pilot study and educational experiences, a set of certain structures and words (utterances) predicted to be problematic parts of learning are selected based on the subtle differences between two languages and administered. It must be mentioned that those kind of subtle and invisible problems cause such mistakes and learners internalize the ungrammatical learned utterances which are wrong because they have learned them unconsciously and little by little, these ungrammatical structures become fossilized. So, in order to prevent such a problem, we can use CA.

Another problem can be "lack of competence". That is, the learners' linguistic competence and language knowledge about the TL is not enough to adapt themselves to L2 and because of inadequate knowledge towards L2 they will probably have problems with translation (L1 into L2) and also with recognition of ungrammatical structure. Of course, it is possible that participants may recognize or translate the sentences incorrectly. This cannot be only due to interference of mother tongue but it has also got other reasons like:

- a) The rate of education which they had seen.
- b) The sex (male and female) and a set of emotional attitude of the students/learners towards the language (foreign language).
- c) Tiredness during examination, and
- d) Also considering the test as an unimportant matter by participants during answering, so the researcher can take into account the above items as the restrictions of this study.

The test will be administered to (the 2nd year of university) students who have fully developed their mother tongue (L1) . So, the result of this experiment is only related to this groups which the members have good competence and performance in L1. This leads to negative transfer which will certainly have negative effects on learning L2. Moreover, they are living in the society of their L1 (that is, in their mother language environment) and deal with English only when they are in educational settings. In the sense they learn English in the limited educational hours. As a result, the interference of L1 in learning L2 is inevitable. The result of this study is related to these kinds of groups not the other groups like learners who are learning L2 or those who are living in the society of TL and learning the language (L2).

## 2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

In spite of the many theoretical and methodological problems and the criticism expressed against contrastive analysis, many classroom teachers still claim that CA has been useful to them for instructional purposes, Aid (1974). Based on the ex-researchers' studies and findings and also the researcher's pilot study (Opinionnaire) and teaching experience, there are some Persian structures (grammatical structures), words and etc, which are different from English ones, which make it more difficult for EFL learners to learn

English. If a teacher can predict those areas of target language which will cause most difficulty for the learners, then by focusing the learners' attention on those conflicting points, the learning process will be facilitated.

The predictability of CA has been discussed by Ferguson (1965), Rivers (1970), and Dipietro (1971). They all reached surprising similar conclusion: CA can predict certain errors and points of difficulty applicable for foreign language instruction. This predictability of CA is convincingly supported by certain experimental studies undertaken by Nickel and Wagner (1968) and Moody (1971). The researcher also came to this conclusion by this experimental study. These linguists found that by means of systematic comparison of two languages we can predict the potential sources of errors or the areas that are going to cause most difficulty for the learners, they examined the potentials and limitations of contrastive analysis and found that it can predict the conflicting points between two languages and can give us insights into the nature of the conflict.

Oller (1972) reviewed a large body of psycholinguistic research which suggested that factor of predictability has the effect of accelerating the learning process. In a report presented to the "Pacific Conference on Contrastive Linguistics and Language Universal" he showed that the importance of predictability of CA had been well established in the literature. Although, he viewed CA as a research technique rather than a basis for the development of materials for teaching languages; he maintained that at present CA does not have validity as a device for predicting some of the errors that a second language learner will make.

Brown (1967), Dahlstedt (1972) and et al. believe that teachers of English can improve their teaching strategies through the implications of CA for their foreign language programs. Krzeszouski (1967) is of the opinion that surface features seem much more important to the language learner than any possible similarities and differences in deep structure. Following this view, purposeful contrastive investigations can only be carried out on the basis of a structural approach.

The examination of the potentials and limitations of pedagogical use of error and contrastive analysis indicated in this investigation will demonstrate that while error analysis can, to some extent, be applicable in an ESL course. Contrastive Analysis, if designed with the pedagogical intent, can more appropriately meet the needs of EFL programs. Error Analysis in such curricula can only overcome the limitations of contrastive investigations and extend their power of prediction and pedagogical applications.

According to the ex-researchers' studies and findings and also the researcher's pilot study and educational experience, a set of grammatical errors (ungrammatical structures) have always occurred which is likely to be due to negative transfer of the learners' first language structural elements; therefore, in order to show the importance of this matter the researcher will take two tests ( translation and recognition tests ) into account which include a number of Persian sentences which were thought ( and has previously been observed ) to be in conflict with their English equivalents were chosen will be given to a group of 220 students to answer the questions.

Accordingly, in this study, the researcher attempted to investigate the impact of L1 Grammar Negative Transfer on L2 Writing Skill in Iranian EFL university Students in Gilan. To this end, the following research question and hypotheses were proposed:

Does learner's L1 (grammar) have any effect on L2 writing skill?

- 1) L1 grammar negative transfer does not affect L2 writing skill in Iranian male learners of English.
- 2) L1 grammar negative transfer does not affect L2 writing skill in Iranian female learners of English.

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1 Participants of the study

In order to provide the required empirical data for this present study, a General English Proficiency Test was administered to a group of 426 female and male (sophomore) university students as EFL learners with the same background knowledge for homogeneity, though the participants use Persian and English interchangeably every now and then, Persian, being the mother tongue dominates their daily communication, both at home and at school. Most of the participants have good proficiency in their mother tongue Selected randomly from Payame-noor and Azad Universities in three different departments (Humanities, Basic Sciences and Technical Engineering) from Gilan province in Iran. After administering the proficiency test 'TOEFL', and correcting the whole participants' answer sheets, the participants' scores were ranked and from among them, 220 students whose scores were ranged between 55-75 out of 100 were

chosen as the main participants namely, 'Upper-intermediate level', and 46 participants were crossed out during the TOEFL test due to frustration and lack of self-confidence, for the present study. That is, 50% of the participants are female and 50% are males. (Table 3. 1)

**Table 3.1 Distribution of Participants According to Gender**

		Number	Percent
<b>Valid</b>	male	110	50%
	female	110	50%
	total	220	100%

**3.2 Instrument of the study**

In the present study, the researcher utilized three main instruments which are as follow:

- a) Participants' Proficiency test scores (TOEFL)
- b) The analysis of participants' papers as Translation and Recognition test scores
- c) An Opinionaire (the researcher-made opinionaire of the pilot study)

The second one related to their production and reception skill. That is, writing skill.

**3.3 Procedure and the Reliability of the study**

In this present study, the researcher divided the procedure into three phases. In the first phase, the researcher administered a proficiency test and in order to tap and measure the participants' general proficiency in English and to insure that they all belonged to the same population. The proficiency test 'TOEFL', the first instrument utilized in this study, consisting of two parts was administered. The first part contained 70 items on Reading and Writing Test and the second part consisted of 30 items on Listening Test done by the researcher as an upper- intermediate level for the present study. (Table 3.2)

**Table 3.2 Distribution of items According to proficiency test (TOEFL)**

	Section	Items
<b>Part 1</b>	Reading and Writing Test	70
<b>Part 2</b>	Listening Test	30
<b>total</b>		100

Then, in the second phase, in order to check the participants' performance on English grammatical structures, the researcher used another test consisted of two parts, "translation (Production) and recognition (Reception) tests 'as writing'". One of these tests, the Production (translation) part, consisted of 27 Persian sentences in each of which there was one error". That is, all tests consisted of one aspect of ungrammatical structure, which were predicted to be problematic parts of learning, and it was also assumed that the EFL learner would have problem with the translation of L2 due to L1 grammar negative transfer, which had previously been observed, administered to the selected participants. Then, the participants were asked to translate all of the items into English. Putting the finger on the validity and reliability of a test, it is worth mentioning that the translation test sentences, thought to be the problematic sentences for the respective Iranian EFL learners, were chosen based on the researcher's intuition and years of teaching experience and due to the content validity first, the sentences of the translation test were evaluated by some respective university instructors and L2 teachers and based on their comments, few of them revised by virtue of being relevant to the context of the present research and due to the reliability of the test, the obtained answers were calculated and then plugged into spss (version 16) and a Cronbach alpha (

**Table 3.3 Distribution of items According to Production & Reception test**

Part	Item	Percent
Translation	27	50%
Recognition	27	50%
total	54	100%

As far as the third phase is concerned, another data was also collected from the researcher's pilot study 'a researcher-made Opinionaire in Likert scale format with 15 items'. After piloting the respective questions of researcher-made opinionaire akin to the present research question, hypotheses and the context of the present study from 46 (male and female) English teachers of ministry of education of Iran in Guilan province (Table 3.4), first the content validity of the Opinionaire was evaluated by some respective university instructors and based on their comments, 5 items were omitted for being ,to some extent, irrelevant to the context of the present research and due to the reliability of the items, the obtained answers were calculated and then plugged into spss (version 16) and a Cronbach alpha (

**Table 3.4 Distribution of L2 respective teachers According to Gender**

	Number		Percent
Valid	Male	23	50%
	female	23	50%
	total	46	100%

**3.4 Statistical collection**

The participants' writings and responses 'translation and recognition test respectively, were carefully and thoroughly analyzed to detect the errors made and were tabulated accordingly to form a corpus. The researcher read meticulously and underlined the errors (negative transfer) and tabulated them according to their linguistic/grammatical categories and showed the percentage.

**3.5 Statistical procedure**

The statistical procedure is based on computer-assisted programs spss (version 16). The Data analysis is a process of gathering, modeling, and transforming data with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision making. Having administered the instruments for this research, the responses were collected and interpreted. The data gathered in this study was analyzed through T-Test 'Independent Samples T test, Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) and Friedman Test using the spss analysis method.

**3.6 The design of the study**

The design of the study is based on pre-test and post-test design and the schematic representation is as follows:

Group 1    T1    T2  
 Group 2    T1    T2

**4. RESULTS**

**4.1 Data description**

Prioritizing the importance of the answer of the research question, the researcher intent to draw the reader's attention to the edited researcher-made Opinionaire done in the pilot study which related to the answers of the Opinionaire consisting 10 questions was administered to 46 (male and female) English teachers of ministry of education of Iran in Guilan province. This was to know and assess their idea about

the impact of L1 grammar negative transfer on L2 writing on Iranian EFL learners. The answers to the questions clearly showed that the L2 teachers agreed on the existence of negative influence of mother tongue in the writing of L2 because the performance of the respective participants showed that the participants thought and visualized things in their mother tongue before they started writing in L2. This can probably be due to their L1 grammatical features and syntactical structures or above all their L1 knowledge and also were not aware of the linguistic differences between their L1 and the target language (English) and those problems which elaborated in chapter one caused this. This kind of perception and thinking contributed to grammatical/syntactical disorder in L2 writing as there were significant differences between the Persian language syntactical order and the English language syntactical order as elaborated earlier in the first chapter. By and large, there was a unanimity among the L2 teachers who believed the participants first think in Persian and then e.g. for every English word translate in Persian and vice versa. The respective teachers agreed on the use of CA in their teaching and believed that predicting and comparing L1 and L2 linguistic systems and knowing those problematic areas which impede learning before teaching facilitated teaching and learning and generally speaking, both the teacher and the students would get the beneficial use of CA. And as can be seen in the teachers scored the questions based on the Likert Scale Format from strongly agree to strongly disagree levels, and as also shown in table 4.1 and 4.2, the results of final analysis showed the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the Translation-Recognition questions and the Opinionaire were  $\alpha = 0.95$  and  $\alpha = 0.89$  respectively, which are very close to number 1. That is, whatever the number is too close to number 1, it would be better and this indicates that the content validity of the questions of these two research instruments is at high level that leading to apply CA in teaching.

#### 4.2 Reliability

**Table 4.1 The Reliability Statistics of The Translation-Recognition Test**

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.957	54

**Table 4.2 The Reliability Statistics of The teacher-made Opinionaire**

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.892	10

Therefore, from the edited Opinionaire answers given it can be concluded that the learning of L2 in Persian schools/university is seriously influenced and affected by the students' mother tongue. By and large, most of the L2 teachers gave the same answers and there was also unanimity among the L2 teachers to use CA in their teaching. In addition, the L2 teachers reached to this agreement that a teacher would not be disappointed if applying the principles and techniques included in CA e.g. prediction, selection, comparing and description in class, both teaching and learning would probably be facilitated and also both the teacher and the students would enjoy being together. Doing this, students would probably be motivated and interested in learning a new language and the L1 grammar negative transfer in particular and mother tongue interference in general would probably lose the impeding effectiveness step by step. Finally, the respective L2 teachers believed that 'the better the learner is at overcoming language interference, the more diluted that blend will be.

#### 4.3 Descriptive

**Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics of both genders' test scores**

	N	Minimum	Maximm	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
<b>Males'</b> translation	110	7	18	9.07	5.186	.472	.466	-.856	.889
<b>Males'</b> recognition	110	10	18	9.48	5.408	.510	.466	-.839	.889
<b>Females'</b> translation	110	10	18	9.46	5.354	.757	.466	-.329	.889
<b>Females'</b> recognition	110	8	19	9.27	5.904	.414	.466	-.952	.889
<b>Males'</b> Toefl	110	10.0	18.5	13.731	3.7721	.323	.466	-.948	.889
<b>Females'</b> Toefl	110	10.0	18.5	14.404	3.9224	-.092	.466	-1.682	.889
<b>Valid N</b> (listwise)	110								

Table (4.3) shows the descriptive statistics of the aforementioned tests' scores based on the participants' answers to the respective tests. As for the data analysis stage, the Translation, Recognition and TOEFL tests were scored and the results for the 220 participants of the two groups (female and male group EFL learners) were tabulated.

Since the Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) of males' T= 9.07, SD=5.18, R= 9.48, SD=5.40 and P=13.73, SD=3.77 and the Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) of females' T=8.46, SD=4.25, R=9.26 SD, 5.90 and P=14.40, SD=3.92 of learners were not that different, the two groups were regarded as homogenous groups. Table (4.3) indicates that the differences between the two groups on the tests are not significant. That is, the Std. Errors of Skewness (0.46) and Kurtosis (0.88) of the two EFL learners groups' test scores are the same and also clearly shows that the female EFL learners did a little bit better and the Means of female EFL learners' test scores had relatively minor increase which could probably be due to the effect of motivation or their attitudes towards L2. Generally speaking, both genders had inevitable problem/s in producing L2 correct sentences and recognizing L2 erroneous structures due to the L1 grammar negative transfer.

**4.4 Data analysis**

**T-Test**

Inferential statistics is concerned with the relationships between the analyses and changes in variables. In order to examine the hypotheses of the present research and to administrate the four aforementioned administrating methods, Independent Sample Ttest and Pearson Correlation test have been used. To reject or accept the hypotheses of the present research, the obtained information from statistical Ttest table have been used.

Do the scores of translation and recognition tests of male EFL learners prove the hypothesis of the present study or not?

**Table 4.4 Group Statistics of the first hypothesis related to the Males' Translation-Recognition Test**

	Males' group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	1	110	9.07	5.186	.890
	2	110	9.48	5.408	.875

**Table 4.5 Independent Samples Test of Male EFL learners**

Male	t-test for Equality of Means					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
Equal variances not assumed	.655	49.985	.516	.808	1.233	3.285 1.670

The first Ttest table 4.4 is Group Statistic and it includes descriptive information of the two tests that is, number 1, 2=110, 110, mean 1, 2= 9.07, 9.48, standard deviation 1, 2= 5.18, 5.40 and standard error mean 1, 2=0.89, 0.87 respectively.

The second table 4.5 is Independent Sample Ttest, the information of this table which is related to male's group using the significance (sig) statistics. That is, 'the level of significant'. (t= 0.65, df= 50 and sig. (2 tailed)= 0.51. As we observed:

Sig (2-tailed)= 0.51 > 0.05 accept Ho

So, the hypothesis of L1 grammar negative transfer on L2 writing skill in Iranian male EFL learners is accepted. That is, there is a negative transfer in Male EFL learners which affected L2 writing skill.

**Do the scores of translation and recognition tests of female EFL learners prove the hypothesis of the present study or not?**

**Table 4.6 Group Statistics of the second hypothesis related to the Females' Translation-Recognition Test**

	Females' group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Female	1	110	9.46	5.354	.844
	2	110	9.27	5.904	.982

**Table 4.7 Independent Samples Test of Female EFL learners**

Female	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Equal variances not assumed	.634	49.024	.529	.808	1.273	3.365	1.751

As can be seen in table 4.6, it includes descriptive information of the two tests that is, number 1, 2=110, 110, mean 1, 2= 9.46, 9.27, standard deviation 1,2= 5.35, 5.90 and standard error mean 1, 2=0.84, 0.98 respectively. And also table 4.7 shows the obtained information related to the females' translation-recognition test scores, that is, (t= 0.63, df= 50 and sig. (2 tailed)= 0.52. We also observed:

Sig (2-tailed)= 0.52 > 0.05 accept Ho

So, the hypothesis of L1 grammar negative transfer on L2 writing skill in Iranian female EFL learners is accepted. That is, there is a negative transfer in Female EFL learners which affected L2 writing skill.

Evaluating the relationship between translation test scores with recognition test scores (correlation) in male and female groups separately.

**Correlations**

**Table 4.8 The Correlations of Male EFL Learners' Translation and Recognition tests**

		Translation	Recognition
Male's translation	Pearson Correlation	1	.949**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	110	100
Male's recognition	Pearson Correlation	.949**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	110	110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4.9 The Correlations of Female EFL Learners' Translation and Recognition tests**

		Translation	Recognition
Female's translation	Pearson Correlation	1	.987**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	110	110
Female's recognition	Pearson Correlation	.987**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	110	110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Now, In order to evaluate the relationship between translation test scores and recognition test scores in male group, we can see the first Correlation table 4.7. The Pearson Correlation between these two variables is 0.94 and this is too close to number 1 and it indicates that there is a very high relationship between them.

So, there is a positive, direct and strong relationship between these two variables. Moreover, the hypothesis of the lack of existence relationship between these variables ( $H_0: \rho=0$ ) using the correlation Sig (significance level) is rejected.

Sig (2-tailed) = 0.00 < 0.05 reject  $H_0$

So, we can see a strong relationship between these two variables (that is, the translation-recognition test scores) and are at the very high level.

The subsequent Correlation table 4.8 is related to the relationship between translation and recognition test scores in female group. Again we can observe that the Pearson Correlation between these two variables is 0.98 which is too close to number 1 and this indicates a very strong correlation/relationship between these two variables. So, there is a positive, direct and strong relationship between these two variables. Moreover, the hypothesis of the lack of existence relationship between these variables ( $H_0: \rho=0$ ) using the correlation Sig (significance level) is rejected.

Sig (2-tailed) = 0.00 < 0.05 reject  $H_0$

So, we can see a strong relationship between these two variables (that is, the translation-recognition test scores) and are at the very high level. The next correlation tables indicate the strong relationship between TOEFL scores with the average of translation-recognition test scores of both groups.

**Evaluating the relationship between TOEFL test scores with translation-recognition test scores (correlation) in male and female separately.**

**Table 4.10 The Correlations of Male EFL Learners' TOEFL score**

		Male's pet	Male's mean
Male's pet	Pearson Correlation	1	.985**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	110	110
Male's mean	Pearson Correlation	.985**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	110	110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4.11 The Correlations of Female EFL Learners' TOEFL score**

		Females' pet	Females' mean
Females' pet	Pearson Correlation	1	.973**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	110	110
Females' mean	Pearson Correlation	.973**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	110	110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table 4.9 indicates the strong relationship between TOEFL scores with the average of translation-recognition test scores of male's group. The Pearson correlation coefficient between these two variables is Mean= 0.98 which is very close to number 1 and this indicates a very strong relationship. So, there is a positive, direct and strong relationship between these two variables. Moreover, the hypothesis of the lack of existence relationship between TOEFL test scores and the average of translation-recognition test scores ( $H_0: \rho=0$ ) using the correlation Sig (significance level) is rejected in male's group.

Sig (2-tailed) = 0.00 < 0.05 reject  $H_0$

The next correlation table 4.10 indicates the strong relationship between TOEFL scores with the average of translation-recognition test scores of female's group. We can also observe that the Pearson correlation coefficient between these two variables is Mean=0.97 which is very close to number 1 and this indicates a very strong relationship. So, there is a positive, direct and strong relationship between these two variables. Moreover, the hypothesis of the lack of existence relationship between TOEFL test scores and the average of translation-recognition test scores (Ho:  $\rho=0$ ) using the correlation Sig (significance level) is rejected in female's group.

Sig (2-tailed) = 0.00 < 0.05 reject Ho

#### 4.5 The Analysis of Linguistic Items

The grammatical errors gradation

Friedman Test was administered to grade the number of errors of the 11 linguistic items of each group 'female and male EFL learners' (refer to appendix E).

#### Friedman Test

**Table 4.12 The grammatical errors gradation of both genders**

English grammatical items	Mean
1. Misuse of verbs (trans/intrans)	7.77
2. Misuse of tenses	7.35
3. Misuse of linking verbs	6.90
4. Misuse of article	6.77
5. Misuse of auxiliary	6.63
6. Misuse of preposition	6.35
7. Misuse of (relative) pronoun	5.79
8. Misuse of adjective	5.56
9. Misuse of sub- verb agreement	5.19
10. Misuse of singular/plural noun	4.58
11. Misuse of word order	3.12

**Table 4. 13 Friedman Statistical Test of grammatical errors gradation of both genders**

no	110
Chi square	46.555
df	10
sig	.000

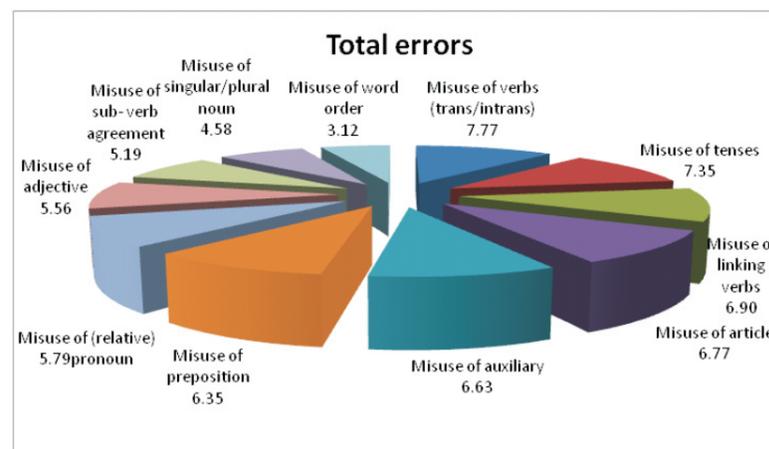
As can be seen in table 4.12, the errors related to verbs 'trans and intrans' (Mean= 7.77) and word order (Mean= 3.12) in column 1 and 11 had the most and the least grammatical errors gradation respectively, and as table 4.12 shows, the hypothesis of equality of the means of the 11 grammatical errors is also rejected and these grammatical items do not have the same Mean. (df=10 and sig=.000) So,

Sig=0.00 < 0.05 Reject H0

It is quite obvious from the data collected and from the statistic findings that L1 grammar negative transfer (mother tongue) did take place in the translation - recognition test of the Iranian EFL learners. Different linguistic items were transferred negatively as evident from the participants' performance. From the above chart, it can be observed that the eleven linguistic items were mainly transferred negatively, (arranged according to the mean obtained).

According to the respective L2 teachers, the students are already having linguistic problems with their L1 especially university. Therefore, learning L2 with limited teaching hours is sure to limit their learning. Hence, from the obtained data, it can be concluded that the learning of L2 in Persian schools/universities is seriously influenced and affected by the students' mother tongue. By and large, most of the participants gave the wrong answers.

**Breakdown of the Linguistic Items-Interference in L2 writing**



The total number and percentage of errors committed by both genders of Iranian EFL learners in translation - recognition tests, indicated the most frequency of misused items.

As shown in breakdown figure, the differences and comparison of grammar 'linguistic systems' of the two languages 'L1 and L2' were checked. The number and the percentage of the errors are given in this figure indicated that the Iranian EFL learners had more perceptible problem due to L1 interference in column one with 'verbs' (transitive and intransitive). That is, 7.77 in translation-recognition test and less in 'word order'. That is, 3.12 respectively. As indicated both genders performed hesitantly.

**4.6 The Summary of the Findings and their Implication on the basis of data analysis**

Based on the data collected from the analysis of the participants' translation-recognition answer sheets and the edited researcher-made Opinionaire, the aforementioned hypotheses are proved, so it is possible to draw up the following conclusions about the influence of L1 grammatical rules in the writing of L2.

1. Iranian EFL learners should be deductively or inductively taught and informed about the differences of the linguistic items between the L1 (Persian) and L2 (English).
2. In order to improve the standard of L2 in Persian schools/universities, the hour of teaching for the L2 learner should be undoubtedly considered. In other words, according to the L2 teacher, the EFL learners are already having many linguistic problems with their L1 especially in school. Therefore, learning L2 with limited teaching hours is sure to limit their learning.
3. The learners should be more exposed to some kind of contrastive studies not only grammatical items but also L2 culture.

4. Those grammatical items (rules) of the respective L1 classification that were not found in L2 are used incorrectly in L2 writing due to L1 negative transfer.

5. More importantly, the L2 teacher him/herself should be informed beforehand and should be up-to-date from different points of teaching view especially cultural and around the language due to the lack of real L2 situation and in other words, L2 learner is living and learning the language in their native environment.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Considering the meticulous result of the present study as well as the findings of the previous study related to this revisited study in a larger population, it is obvious that Iranian EFL learners, even in an academic level, experience difficulty when they tend to use English 'grammatical items' e.g. verbs (transitive, intransitive), linking verbs in their proper patterns and adjectival collocation, tenses, articles, auxiliaries, prepositions, relative pronoun, adjective, sub-verb agreement, singular/plural nouns and word order due to both L1 negative transfer and the linguistic differences (language system) between source language (L1) and target language (L2). Meanwhile; the absence of article 'the', absence of auxiliary, being null subject, absence of 'to be about to' structure in L1, absence of present and past perfect continuous, differences in noun modifiers, differences in collocations, under differentiation, overgeneralization, etc and other factors like: due to lack of motivation, attitude, exposure, socialization, related writing material, adequate teaching hour and the benefit of good instruction as well as well-prepared teacher cause difficulties for Iranian EFL learners leading fossilization. As it is believed that 'unlearning is much more difficult than learning.' The tenor of respective findings indicated that L1 grammar negative transfer does affect on L2 writing skill on EFL universities' students.

On the whole, the researcher believes that the grammar-translation method could benefit the students in Persian schools/universities (especially for non-major students) to understand the L2 better since both languages can be used actively in classrooms. According to Davis and Pearce (2000), translation is regarded as a very good technique to practice the application of rules and for transformation exercise in order to improve their grammatical performance. In a word, factors like: trained teacher as Brook (1964, p. 63) states; "if a teacher of English as a foreign or second language can acquire a considerable knowledge of two languages, he/ she would be more successful in his job." (see also Hayati, 2005), adequate teaching hour, adequate exposure to good models of language use, encouraging the learner to use English at home with their school-going siblings, alongside their native language, changing the learner's attitude towards L2 and above all, seem to be the most efficient way to help the EFL learners master L2 in general and the L1 grammatical items in particular.

In conclusion, the present research demonstrates that by applying CA (referring to the edited Opinionaire and literature review) in EFL classes and drawing the learners attention to those problematic areas of L2, increasing the time of teaching hour and more importantly assigning a well-prepared teacher for the respective classes, and above all, to make these steps more practical. We would probably be able to have more informed and less frustrated university EFL learners owing to negative transfer. In this line, L1 negative transfer would be, to some extent, decolorized or diminished.

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