Intermodal Transfer of Zero-Equivalent FL Forms from Writing Skill to Speaking Skill and Vice Versa in EFL Iranian Learners

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Abstract

The experiment undertaken in this study focused on testing the hypothesis that the context or activity through which language learning takes place and specific FL forms that learners are expected to learn may be possible causes of variation in the learner's performance. This study, thus, investigated the possible causes of variation in intermodal transfer, a process which is believed to be partly responsible for foreign language learning (FLL). An almost linguistically homogenous sample of sixty subjects was randomly selected out of 1500 newly accepted university students in Islamic Azad University-

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Shahrekord Branch. The subjects were chosen from a variety of majors such as Persian Literature, Sociology, History, Public Administration, Educational Administration, Preschool Education, Nursing, Civil Engineering, Geography, and General sciences. They were assigned to two groups, each receiving exposure to the English language forms in focus through a different context: Group A through conversational activities and group B through writing activities. The language elements studied were eight English forms non-existent in the learners' L1 (Persian). The results supported the hypothesis that knowledge of FL forms not present in L1 learned through writing contexts/activities is more readily transferable to other contexts than the same knowledge learned through conversational contexts/activities. The possible causes of such variation in the learners' performances were discussed along with implications of the findings for FLL studies and EFL pedagogical purposes.

**Key Words:** Intermodal Transfer, Zero-Equivalent FL forms, Interlanguage Knowledge, Learning Activity/Context, Performance Variability, EFL Iranian Learners.

1. Introduction

A question which has occupied the minds of some researchers in the field of foreign language learning (FLL) (e.g. Canale & Swain, 1980; Selinker & Douglas, 1989) is whether performance in a given context guarantees successful performance in another context as well. Success or failure to perform in different contexts has formed the basis of the concept of intermodal transfer, a process which is believed to play a role in FLL (Selinker & Douglas, 1989).

The relationship between intermodal transferability and the context of learning has not been investigated very much in FLL studies. The kind of foreign language forms to be learned has also received little attention in FLL studies dealing with intermodal transferability of this type, especially in writing contexts.
This study addressed the hypothesis that knowledge of specific FL forms learned in writing activities is more readily transferable to speaking than the same knowledge learned through speaking activities. The language forms probed are “zero-equivalent FL forms” (FL forms not present in learners’ L1 ‘Persian’) and the skills/activities in which these forms are examined are “writing” and “speaking” respectively. Zero-equivalent FL forms are chosen for this study with the following points in mind: First, there are controversial ideas concerning them in terms of being more difficult to learn because they are more marked (since they are not present in L1, Zobl, 1983), or easier to learn because only positive evidence suffices for their internalization (White, 1990).

In practice, also, they induce evident linguistic problems in ordinary conversation of Iranian students learning EFL. The reason for this might be that, since there is no equivalent for such forms in the learners' L1, they either produce the closest possible L1 equivalent construct, as in the case of ‘wh-words’, or use the forms in all situations regardless of their appropriate use, as in the case of ‘the’.

Taking all these factors into account, the following English forms were adopted to be studied in the present investigation:

1. One of the English forms non-existent in Persian studied in the present investigation is the definite article ‘the’, a form which is problematic for many learners of EFL. This form is not morpho-phonologically realized in L1 Persian, though it is contextually understood.

The definite article ‘the’ shows controversial behavior in the writing and oral performance of Iranian English learners. They tend to either overgeneralize the use of the article to almost all types of noun phrases, regardless of the noun phrases being specific referents or not, or ignore using it in a majority of cases.

2. The forms ‘who’, ‘whom’, ‘which’, ‘whose’ which do not have exact equivalents in Persian. The only relative pronoun that is used in
Persian is “ke”; however, its usage is not restricted by the subjective/objective, genitive or human/nonhuman features of the noun it replaces in the relative clause.

3. The form which is known as emphatic ‘do’ or ‘do’ support (in sentences such as ‘I do apologize.’, ‘He did go.’) is also a zero-equivalent FL element in Persian.

4. The phenomenon of inversion after “so” and “neither” (in word strings such as ‘so did I.’, ‘neither did she.’) is also included as a non-equivalent form in Persian L1.

Although it might be argued that the forms in focus are not linguistically or grammatically related, it is presumed that they are related from the point of view of learning in that they are all absent in the learner's L1. This characteristic of the forms may make the investigation interesting because the study may raise the question whether, for the intermodal transferability, grammatical similarity of the forms is of prime importance or their learning similarity.

In this study, in fact, we are not dealing with structural similarities or differences between Persian and English but with the learner's developing IL knowledge, represented through his/her performance using the appropriate forms. The term context, in this study, is used to refer to context of use such as writing or speaking as well as learning contexts such as classroom. Contextual transferability in FLL literature usually means, “the way in which the accuracy of any given form may vary when produced or perceived in different linguistic contexts” (Tarone, 1987, p. 35). The choice of contexts is based on observation of many cases in which variation in intermodal transfer seemed obvious due to the contexts of learning. These observations were provided by a number of the researcher’s colleagues, who thought their students did not do well in writing courses because they only learned English in conversation classes or the language laboratory. In addition, Celce-Murcia (1992) cited two studies carried out in different universities in the United States.
showing the learners’ lack of proficiency in writing even after seven or more years of being exposed to English in natural environments. Since there is always a danger in generalizing the assumptions made on the basis of observations, the present study undertakes to test this claim empirically.

In discussing contextually based foreign language learning, Selinker and Douglas (1989) wonder whether IL knowledge that has been learned in one domain, genre or activity type can be transferred to another domain, genre or activity type. By knowledge here, it is meant structural as well as functional knowledge that are the two integrative parts of a learner’s general proficiency. It is generally believed that any new item added to the learner’s IL may result in a rearrangement in his existing IL system. Spolsky (1989) holds a similar view to this respect when he says new “items learned contribute in crucial, but difficult to define, ways to the development of functional and general proficiency” (p. 61).

In order for IL knowledge to develop into general proficiency, the present researcher argues, there must be an internal transfer of IL knowledge gained in different contexts. Selinker and Douglas (1989) cite some studies which show the relationship between proficiency and the domain of discourse, expert knowledge, genre, and particular tasks. The question in this study is whether context of learning is also effective in the variation of IL knowledge. This phenomenon has been referred to as intermodal transfer, a process believed to be responsible for much of FLL, and the failure of which may be one of the main causes of variation in IL performance.

Another issue to which due attention has been paid in recent decades is the role of instruction in FLL. The two issues above, i.e. the issue of variability in IL and the issue of the role of instruction in FLL, have stimulated the research questions being tackled in the present study: First, can specific FL forms that learners learn in one learning context/skill be transferred to another skill/context? Second,
are English language items absent in L1 (Persian) learned through writing skill transferable to and accessible in conversation skill/context? Third, are English FL forms absent in L1 (Persian) learned through conversation skill/context transferable to and accessible in writing skill/context?

In this regard, the following null hypotheses were proposed to be tested:

Ho1: “Specific FL forms that learners learn in one context/skill are not transferable to another skill/context.”

Ho2: Knowledge of FL forms absent in L1 (Persian) learned through writing skill is not transferable to and accessible in conversation skill/context.

Ho3: Knowledge of FL forms absent in L1 (Persian) learned through conversation skill/context is not transferable to and accessible in writing skill/context.

2. Methodology
2.1. Subjects

Out of 1500 newly accepted university students in Islamic Azad University-Shahrekord Branch, an almost linguistically homogeneous sample of sixty subjects was randomly selected. The sample was taken from all those who had scored below 33% in the University Entrance English Test. Moreover, a multiple choice test (Test A) containing the 8 language items to be studied was administered to the subjects to ensure that the research treatment would not be invalidated by any kind of prior knowledge effect.

The composition of the selected sample, in terms of sex, was thirty females and thirty males. Then, they were randomly assigned to two groups: the speaking group and the writing group. An equal number of male and female subjects was assigned to each group to enable the researcher to eliminate the interference of sex factor, that is, each group contained 15 male and 15 female subjects. The age and
profession of the subjects were not considered in the placement of the students. To avoid any biased assignment, a list of the subjects' names was made and all those registered under odd numbers were assigned to the speaking group while those registered under even numbers were assigned to the writing group. The same procedure was employed in assigning both male and female subjects. The subjects were chosen from a variety of majors such as Persian Literature, Sociology, History, Public Administration, Educational Administration, Preschool Education, Nursing, Civil Engineering, Geography, and General sciences.

Although the subjects were selected based on their proficiency scores, their language background was also taken into consideration in another respect. This was initially done by screening out all those who came from the capital city or had the opportunity to have attended private English classes, usually common in larger cities. This screening was done to make sure that all the subjects have had the same educational background and that they are homogeneous even in terms of the amount of practice and educational privileges they have enjoyed before.

2.2. Materials and Instruments
The following materials were used by the researcher in the present study.

2.2.1. Classroom Materials
For the classroom activities, the two tasks were question and answer with pictures used as cues, and completion tasks, used both in writing and oral activities. The content of these tasks was derived from a variety of sources such as high school English textbooks, New Interchange (Richards, Hull, & Proctor, 1998), New American Streamline (Hartly & Viney, 1999), and On We Go Series (B.B.C. English Language Teaching Department, 1998).
2.2.2. Test A
Test A consisted of 40 items, that is, 5 items of this test were allocated to each one of the total 8 forms in focus in the study, namely ‘the’, ‘who’, ‘whom’, ‘which’, ‘whose’, emphatic ‘do’, ‘so’ and ‘neither’. The content of the test items was based on the English textbook materials in high school and pre-university level. Kuder-Richardson formula twenty one (KR-21) was utilized reliability estimation. The results manifested the estimated reliability coefficient of 0.78 that was deemed appropriate for the purposes of the present study.

2.2.3. Elicitation Tasks (Test B)
Test B, a post-test consisting of an oral and a written version, was intended to elicit the instructed forms via a different skill. The oral version of test B was administered to the speaking group to elicit the 8 forms that they learned during the study through writing. The written version was utilized for the writing group to elicit the 8 forms learned by the subjects via speaking. Kuder-Richardson Twenty One formula (KR-21) was utilized to estimate the reliability of this test. The results manifested the estimated reliability coefficient of 0.85.

2.3. Procedure
To accomplish the purposes of the study, the following procedures were adopted. Based on test A, 60 subjects who gained scores below 20 were chosen and randomly assigned to two groups: group A (or the speaking group), and group B (or the writing group). Low proficiency learners were selected for this study to be assured that the students had not learned the intended items before. If higher proficiency learners had been selected for this treatment, it would not have been possible to claim that the obtained data was a direct indication of the treatment given in the study. The Speaking Group were involved in speaking activities/contexts and the Writing group through writing activities/contexts.
Group A were exposed to the forms through short dialogues which served as the necessary situations with pictures being used as cues. Class sessions were arranged twice weekly. The first session would serve for the presentation of a specific form in focus through the activity type allotted to that session. The following session would be used to have the subjects complete tasks using the intended forms acquired in a different context/activity.

The one-week time lapse between the exposure and the elicitation was allowed for two reasons: On the one hand, this is a period of time long enough for a learner to either forget something or transfer it to his long-term memory. Therefore, the one-week lapse would ensure that the subjects' performances would be based on long-term memory (Biehler & Snowman, 1993). Second, this limited length of time would allow the researcher to control the subjects in terms of the time they spent learning English and ensure that they would not be exposed to the forms under investigation in other situations. This precaution was in addition to the fact that the students were only registered for this particular English course and had no access to English in any form outside the classroom.

The approach used in the presentation of the forms was of a communicative type in which the teacher acted as a member of the group. In the conversation classes, short dialogues containing the forms would be presented either through the teacher or by playing it on video or audio machines. All the materials used were presented by native speakers (The oral and written materials were prepared by the aid of ‘New Streamline English’ and ‘New Interchange’, ‘Follow me’ and the ‘On We Go Series’). The texts and pictures used presented familiar situations such as foods, times of the day, ordinary life situations, parties, simple activities like reading, etc.

Free talk and obligatory contexts have been popular elicitation tasks in FL studies designed to look at the learner's variable performance, but as Corder (1981) suggests, the elicitation procedures
must be developed in such a way that they work "to find out something specific about the learner's language, not just to get him to talk freely" (p. 61). That is why in this study zero-equivalent forms have been exploited to specify the learners' IL knowledge in a particular activity.

Consequently, subjects in group A, who were introduced to the intended English forms through conversational contexts, would have to perform on the written version of the final test B. The written tasks were constructed in such a way that completing them would only require the knowledge the learners were supposed to have acquired before in a different context. The structures in both tasks were similar and the contexts used were all obligatory ones.

Subjects in group B (the writing group), who were exposed to the English forms through writing activities, were interviewed by the same teacher or had to complete some spoken or conversational tasks on the oral version of test B, in the language laboratory, based on the forms they had acquired in the previous classes but in a different context/activity. The materials used for the interviews were the same as the ones used in the speaking group presentations.

The data from group A were in written form and went through the process of scoring. The scores were recorded on each separate work sheet and then transferred to the subjects' record for inclusion in the data analysis procedure.

The recorded data from group B, were later carefully transcribed in normal English orthography. Since there were only obligatory contexts in which the intended forms were expected to be used by the subjects, there seemed to be no need for analyzing inter-rater reliability, and both sets of data were equally scored by the researcher for the production of the utterances or written sentences that expressed the required meaning through the required forms.
3. Data Analysis
The results of both groups were submitted to descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The subjects’ performance outcomes and the statistical procedures thereof were analyzed using the statistical program of ‘SPSS’, and applying the t-test. The analysis was divided into two parts. The first part was related to the analysis of different linguistic items (i.e., the, who, whom, which, whose, do, so, neither) to obtain the values of means, standard deviations, t-values and p-values for the speaking group and the writing group. These tests were conducted to determine the significance of the differences between the performance scores of the subjects in the two groups. The level of significance observed in this study was .05. In the second part of the analysis the overall performance of writing and speaking groups were compared to each other to confirm the research hypotheses put forward in this study.

3.1. Group Performance on Separate Items
The result of the t-test statistical procedure for the eight zero-equivalent FL forms studied is presented through tables 1 to 8.

“The” analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Language Item “the” for Writing and Speaking Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>.809</td>
<td>.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>.093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ t = 3.058, df = 58, p = 0.003 \]
“Who” analysis

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Language Item “who” for Writing and Speaking groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.648</td>
<td>.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>.479</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ t = 5.664, df = 58, \ p = 0.0004 \]

“Whom” Analysis

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Language Item “whom” for Writing and Speaking Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHOM</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.547</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.691</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ t = 3.728, \ df = 58, \ p = 0.0004 \]

“Which” Analysis

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Language Item “which” for Writing and Speaking Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHICH</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.814</td>
<td>.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>.630</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ t = 5.856, \ df = 58, \ p = 0.0002 \]
“Whose” Analysis

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Language Item “whose” for Writing and Speaking Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHOSE</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$t=6.905, df=58, p=0.0004$

“Do” Analysis

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Language Item “do” for Writing and Speaking Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>.776</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>.571</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$t=10.988, df=58, p=0.0008$

“So” Analysis

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of Language Item “so” for Writing and Speaking Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SO</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.008</td>
<td>.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.626</td>
<td>.114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$t=10.616, df=58, p=0.0003$
**“Neither” Analysis**

**Table 8: Descriptive Statistics of Language Item “neither”**

for Writing and Speaking Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEITHER speaking</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>.761</td>
<td>.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.615</td>
<td>.112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ t = 14.367, \, df = 58, \, p = 0.0009 \]

The result of t-test (presented below each table) is obviously significant and follows the same trend for each item. In each table, the writing group mean is significantly higher than the speaking group mean. For each case, therefore, there seems to be enough evidence to reject the initial hypotheses Ho1 and Ho2 and no evidence to reject Ho3. What can be inferred from this analysis is that the writing group’s subjects who learned the specific language items through writing activities seemed to manifest what they had learned in the form of speaking activities, while the speaking group could not manifest what they learned through speaking activities in the form of writing activities as successfully as the writing group. In other words, intermodal transfer could have occurred at least more readily in the subjects who learned the items through writing skill.

**3.2.: Overall Performance of Writing and Speaking Groups**

Table 9 shows the results of the holistic descriptive statistics for the overall performance of the two groups. Comparison of the means manifests the superiority of the performance scores of the writing group subjects (\( M = 37.56, \, SD = 1.88, \, n = 30 \)) that gained a higher mean than the speaking group (\( M = 25.40, \, SD = 2.25, \, n = 30 \)).
**Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for Writing and Speaking Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVG speaking</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.4000</td>
<td>2.25297</td>
<td>.41133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37.5667</td>
<td>1.88795</td>
<td>.34469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ t=22.671, \ df=58, \ p=0.0001 \]

Finally, since the result of the t-test \((t= 22.671, \ df= 58, \ p= 0.0001)\) showed a clear statistical significance in the performance of the two groups, it can be concluded that intermodal transfer occurred at least more strongly in the writing group subjects. This gives sufficient evidence to reject Ho1 and Ho2, but provides no evidence to allow the rejection of Ho3.

**4. Discussion and Conclusion**

Results achieved through this study needs to be accounted for by explanations dealing with the type of context-induced transferability, which is predicted to occur FL items in this case L1-absent English items. There also seems to be a relationship between this type of intermodal transfer and the view that "because different kinds of knowledge and different processes of language use are involved in different discourse types, it cannot be expected that the acquisition of one style will facilitate the use of another style." (Iwahara & Hatta, 2003, p. 15)

An important factor that seems to account for the learner’s intermodal transferability is attention to form. The type of activity, or the mode of discourse, can also be considered as a cause of transfer in IL development and performance. Another explanation for such transferability can be found in the difference in terms of the level of alertness and involvement. The higher degree of involvement intensity required in the writing activities may make the knowledge learned in
writing more accessible in another skill/activity, since writing requires more attention, higher involvement and provides sufficient time for internalization of language knowledge.

In the speaking skill, on the other hand, the learner mostly focuses on accomplishing a communicative task. Focusing on the content may only remain at the input stage, not becoming “intake”, insofar as the forms in this study are concerned. Some researchers have suggested that “it is extremely difficult to bring about a focus on a specific linguistic feature while maintaining true ‘communicativeness’” (Breznitz, 2002). One reason for this may be that once the learners recognize that there is a focus on specific forms, they tend to switch into what Breznitz calls a ‘learning mode’. This mode may keep them from continuing communication.

From a cognitive point of view, we may assume that the reduction of attention has the consequence of reducing the vividness of detail in the mental representation, i.e. the capacity of cognition is limited by deviation from form to meaning only. (see Garlock, Walley & Metsala, 2001)

Factors such as visual and auditory or kinesthetic modes of representation and their effects on the learner’s final intake are also important in the scene. This difference in the mode of learning may make ‘uptake’ easier in the writing skill in comparison with the speaking skill in which contact is less visual and more auditory (for more details see De Cara & Goswami, 2002). Castro-Caldas and Reis (2003) believe that “even different metalinguistic tasks which require different operations on the part of the learner may affect the brain strategies for information processing” (p. 1). They suggest that “tasks which demand that learners perform different sorts of mental operation may provide very different impact on brain adaptation to the type of information that is processed as well” (p. 1). Writing skill demands more profound mental processes than oral production does.
The distinction they make between what is available for entering the brain and what is actually digested in it can explain the difference detected in the transfer of some FL forms from one context/activity to another in that it refers to:

Not a single event, but to a complex phenomenon of information processing that involves several stages, roughly characterized as (1) the initial stages of perception of input, (2) the subsequent stage of recoding and encoding of semantic (communicated) information into long-term memory, and (3) the series of stages by which learners fully integrate and incorporate the linguistic information in input into their developing grammar. (Castro-Caldas & Reis, 2003, p. 2)

Intermodal transferability can also be explained in terms of controlled versus automatic processing in IL performance. It can be assumed that IL production will initially take place by means of controlled processing which require active attention on the part of the learner. This results in the learner’s better control over the language forms not available in L1.

In the FLL literature, distinction has been made by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) between knowing the rules (declarative) and using them for communicative purposes (procedural). A third stage of knowledge has also been called the ‘tuned procedures stage’ by Stevenson (1993, p. 234). It involves the strengthening and generalization of procedures. Strengthening takes place every time productions are used successfully, and generalization occurs by replacement of some of the conditions of productions with variables. It is at this third stage that productions are generalized to other conditions. Based on this argument, one can assume that while both writing and speaking activities provide procedural and declarative knowledge, it is the writing activity which equips the learner with the third stage of development.
Altogether, the variation observed in the findings shows that the forms are tied somehow to a particular kind of context, and another context may impose inhibiting conditions which prevent learners from accessing and applying what they know. It seems reasonable to argue that it is not only the context but also the forms in focus that constrain transfer. This may be where the universalist core IL grammar (marked vs. unmarked forms, for instance) plays a role in the learner’s IL development. The researcher has tried to combine the concerns of both contextually-based IL development and universal grammar by investigating zero-equivalent L2 forms, which are marked in that they do not have counterparts in the learner’s L1.

References


