

THE ACQUISITION OF MANNER-OF-MOTION VERBS WITH DIRECTIONAL/LOCATIONAL PPS BY IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of first language (L1) argument structure on that of a second language (L2) in a situation where the L1 argument structure differs from its L2 counterpart. Hence, it tended to examine whether Iranian learners of English can recognize the ambiguity of English manner-of-motion verbs with locational/directional PPs. Forty seven Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners were tested using a proficiency test and a picture-matching task. Results indicated that Iranian EFL learners allow mostly a directional reading because Persian is more restricted than English in this respect. Additionally, Iranian speakers of different proficiency levels consistently failed to recognize a locational reading. It is suggested that as a remedy, explicit instruction can provide learners with positive evidence which is frequent and clear and can be utilized by L2 learners to broaden and restructure their interlanguage grammar.

KEYWORDS: argument structure, conflation patterns, directional/locational PPs, L1 influence, manner-of-motion verbs.

INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of argument structure is attracting increasing attention in second/foreign language acquisition research. One of the important issues examined in L2 argument structure studies is how the outcomes of L2 acquisition vary depending on the nature of learners' first language (L1); that is, what the influence of L1 argument structure is on that of the L2. In argument structure research, it is claimed that lexical entries contain different types of information; for instance, semantic and syntactic information. According to Jackendoff (1990), meaning is represented at the level of lexical conceptual structure (LCS) particularly those aspects of meaning which have consequences for other areas of grammar. Jackendoff (1990) adds meaning is compositional in the sense that the meaning of a lexical item can be broken down into semantic primitives or conceptual categories, such as: THING, EVENT, STATE, PATH, PLACE, PROPERTY, and MANNER. These primitives can be combined by various functions, such as ACT, GO, CAUSE, BE, HAVE and they are universal. However languages differ in their conflation patterns; that is, in the ways in which these primitives may combine into words (Talmy, 1985).

According to Talmy (1985), there is crosslinguistic variation in conflation patterns or possible combinations of semantic primitives into a single word such as a verb or a preposition. Recently, some researchers have tried to explore the potential effects of such crosslinguistic differences on interlanguage grammars. Since different conflation patterns result in differences in the surface expression of meaning from language to language, researchers attempted to investigate whether or not L2 learners acquire L2 conflation patterns. In line with this area of research, this paper intends to explore the acquisition of manner-of-motion verbs with directional/locational PPs by Iranian EFL students taking into account the differences in conflation patterns between English and Persian.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers tried to investigate the influence of L1 argument structure on the acquisition of its L2 counterpart. Yu (1996), for instance, tested thirty Chinese and thirty Japanese speakers in their use of lexical items related to motion events in L2 English. Chinese is similar to English in terms of the lexicalization patterns of motion events; Chinese encodes PATH in a complement which is external to the verb. Although the Japanese group outperformed the Chinese group in terms of vocabulary level in the pre-test, the Chinese speakers performed significantly better than the Japanese speakers in the actual test. In a story retelling task and a picture description task, the Chinese speakers used the same or similar expressions with verb complexes (e.g. *jump out of*, *run into*) as the native controls produced. Conversely, the Japanese learners tended to use two different motion verbs to describe one motion event. For instance, four Japanese speakers produced *fall and get into the water* instead of *fall into the water* and four other speakers produced *jump and run*, *jump to run* or *jump and go over* instead of *jump over the table*. Interestingly, this type of error was not observed in the Chinese group in either task.

Inagaki (2001) conducted a bidirectional study on motion verbs with goal PPs, testing Japanese-speaking learners of English and English-speaking learners of Japanese on the same structures using the same task. His task made use of pictures followed by sentences which had to be judged for naturalness in the context of the pictures. Results indicated that there were directional differences in success in acquiring L2 conflation patterns. The learners of English behaved similarly to the native speakers of English: they accepted manner verbs with goal PPs. They tended to reject sentences which use a verb of motion and a gerund even though equivalents of these sentences are possible in the L1 Japanese; such sentences are accepted, though not very strongly, by the native speakers of English. Both groups, then, preferred the V+PP forms. The learners of Japanese, on the other hand, contrasted with the native speakers of Japanese. They accepted the English-like manner-of-motion verbs preceded by PPs, whereas the Japanese controls rejected them. Both groups accepted the sentences with directed motion verbs and gerunds. His results supported the claim for directional differences in acquirability of L2 conflation patterns: English-speaking learners of Japanese overgeneralize the English conflation pattern, while Japanese-speaking learners of English appeared to have no difficulty acquiring a pattern not present in the L1.

In another study, Inagaki (2002) investigated the influence of first language (L1) on second language (L2) argument structure in a situation where an L2 argument structure forms a superset of its L1 counterpart. According to him, in such a situation, a partial fit between the L1 and the L2 may trigger L1 transfer, whereas availability of positive evidence may allow the learner to arrive at the L2 grammar. He tested these predictions by investigating whether Japanese speakers can recognize the directional reading of English manner-of-motion verbs (*walk*, *swim*) with locational/directional PPs (*under*, *behind*), such as *John swam under the bridge*, where *under the bridge* can be either the goal of John's swimming (directional) or the location of John's swimming (locational). By contrast, their Japanese counterparts allow only a locational reading, as Japanese is more restricted than English in allowing only directed motion verbs (*go*) to appear with a phrase expressing a goal. Thirty-five intermediate Japanese learners of English and twenty three English speakers were tested using a picture-matching task. Results indicated that, unlike English speakers, Japanese speakers consistently failed to recognize a directional reading. He suggested that positive evidence need not only be available but also be frequent and clear in order to be used by L2 learners to broaden their interlanguage grammar.

Hohenstein, Eisenberg and Naigles (2006) investigated bidirectional transfer, of both lexical and grammatical features, in adult speakers of English and Spanish who varied in age of L2 acquisition. Early and late learners of English watched and orally described video depictions of motion events. Findings suggested bilinguals' patterns of motion description lexically and grammatically resembled those of monolinguals in each language. However, although participants showed bidirectional lexical transfer, they displayed only L1-to-L2 grammatical transfer. Furthermore, learning L2 post-puberty affected L2 lexical choice, but both early and late L2 learners showed L2 influence on L1 lexical choice.

According to the results of a study conducted by Hawthorne (2005), native speakers of English learning L2 German face a complex learning problem in acquiring locational and directional prepositional constructions such as *Das Buch liegt auf dem Tisch* /The book is on the table, *Er legte das Buch auf den Tisch* /He put the book on the table, *Das Bild hängt an der Wand* /The picture is hanging on the wall, *Er hängte das Bild an die Wand* /He hung the picture on the wall. In his paper, he argued that this is because the two languages differ lexically in the way they represent spatial orientation and functionally in the way they represent direction: through the preposition (English) or through case-marking (German). He tested the knowledge of the prepositional and associated case-marking properties in thirty native English speaking learners of second language German at three proficiency levels, compared to ten native controls, using a forced elicitation task and a quasi-production task. Results showed that, although learners follow an incremental development path in their acquisition of both preposition and case, lexical properties emerge before functional properties and hence locational expressions are acquired before directional expressions. However, use of case becomes largely native-like with proficiency, but problems correctly selecting the German prepositions *auf* and *an* persist into advanced proficiency. These appear to be connected with the processing complexity of these items for L2 speakers rather than the acquisition of the features they encode.

Matsunaga (2007) investigated whether motion expressions in L2 is constrained by the morphosyntactic restriction in learners' L1. German- and Japanese-speaking learners of English were tested by an elicited production task. The outcome revealed that the less proficient learners of English in the Japanese group tended to encode PATH in the verbal domain, not in the adpositional domain; they utilized path verbs as a main verb demoting manner verbs to a subordinate verb in L2 English. On the contrary, the more proficient learners in the Japanese group performed similarly to the native speakers of English encoding MANNER as a main verb in the verbal domain and PATH as a preposition in the adpositional domain as a result of recovery from L1 influence. In addition to L1 influence, variability amongst learners was found; a small group of the German speakers constantly involved path verbs in the production.

Luk (2009) investigated whether learning a second language that is typologically different from the learner's L1 would change how the learner pays attention to different aspects of motion events. In the first part of his study, the participants were monolingual English speakers and L1 English learners of Japanese as a foreign language at two different proficiency levels (i.e., lower and higher). They were presented with target videos, and for each target video a Path-match and a Manner-match video, and were instructed to indicate which video was most likely the target one. Given that English is an S-language, which conflates Manner and Motion in the main verb, and Japanese is a V-language, which conflates Path and Motion in the main verb, it was hypothesized that (1) the L1 English learners of Japanese would fixate longer on the Path-match videos than the monolingual English speakers, and (2) advanced L1 English learners of Japanese would fixate longer on the Path-match videos than the less advanced learners of Japanese. Both hypotheses were not confirmed by the findings. In the second part of his study, the participants were monolingual Japanese speakers and Japanese learners of English as an L2 at two different proficiency levels (i.e. low and advanced). They were asked to do the same tasks as in the first study. It was hypothesized that (1) the Japanese learners of English would fixate longer on the Manner-match videos than the monolingual Japanese speakers, and (2) advanced Japanese learners of English would fixate longer on the Manner-match videos than the less-advanced learners of English. Again, no significant differences were found among the three groups. He, therefore, concluded that in the domain of motion events, in contrast to what previous research has suggested, learning an L2 that is typologically different from the learner's L1 may not result in any alteration of habitual attention on different aspects of an event.

Noguchi (2010) attempted to illustrate how Japanese, which is classified as a V-language, may express motion events differently from what the typology proposed by Talmy (1985) typically suggests. The results showed that (1) Japanese elaborates on the Manner of motion via nouns, adjectives and adverbs, and that (2) Japanese verbs conflate Manner and Motion via Chinese loanwords and compound verbs. In order to shed light on *what* is learnable and *why* certain lexicalization patterns are (un)learnable for specific population groups in adult L2 acquisition, he argued that a deeper understanding of the nature of L2 input and learners' native languages (NL), especially in terms of input frequency, the complexity of form-meaning relationships, and the ease of processing of lexicalization patterns would be indispensable.

In their study, Larrañaga, Treffers-Daller, Tidball, and Ortega (2011) argued that L1 transfer from English is not only important in the early stages of L2 acquisition of Spanish, but remains influential in later stages if there is not enough positive evidence for the learners to progress in their development. Their findings were based on analyses of path and manner of movement in stories told by British students of Spanish (N = 68) of three different proficiency levels. Verbs that conflate motion and path, on the one hand, are mastered early, possibly because the existence of Latinate path verbs, such as *enter* and *ascend* in English, facilitate their early acquisition by British learners of Spanish. Contrary to the previous findings, the encoding of manner, in particular in boundary crossing contexts, seemed to pose enormous difficulties, even among students who had been abroad on a placement in a Spanish-speaking country prior to the data collection. An analysis of the frequency of manner verbs in Spanish corpora showed that one of the key reasons why students struggle with manner is that manner verbs are so infrequent in Spanish. They claimed that scarce positive evidence in the language exposed to and little or no negative evidence are responsible for the long-lasting effect of transfer on the expression of manner.

In the context of Iran, Abbasi Bagherian Poor (2010) conducted a study on the acquisition of English unaccusative verbs by intermediate and advanced Persian learners of English but he did not take into account the way manner-of-motion verbs with directional/locational PPs are acquired by Iranian EFL learners. In order to fill this lacuna and expand our knowledge of how Iranian EFL learners of different proficiency levels acquire different aspects of argument structure, this study intends to examine the acquisition of manner-of-motion verbs with directional/locational PPs as part of argument structure studies on Persian language.

Manner-of-motion verbs with directional/locational PPs in Persian

As stated by Inagaki (2002), native English speakers consider prepositions such as *in*, *behind*, and *under* as ambiguous having two interpretations; that is, a locational and a directional one, in the absence of context. Hence, in these prepositions without having clear explicit morphological reflex of the incorporation, PLACE has been incorporated into PATH and they are considered ambiguous by native English speakers as having two interpretations; they can be either interpreted as directional (PATH) or locational (PLACE).

In contrast to English, in Persian, PLACE cannot incorporate into PATH in this way. Rather, the order of words in the sentence determines the directionality or locationality of such prepositions. For example, in the case of a sentence such as:

Bacheha	paridand	tu	aab.
The children	jumped	in	the water.

tu “in” has only a directional interpretation and native Persian speakers assume that in such a context there were some children who jumped into the water from somewhere outside of the water (directional). However, if the same words are reordered in the following way:

Bacheha	tu	aab	paridand.
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The children in the water jumped.

the locational reading of *tu* “in” will be preferred by native Persian speakers. Therefore, prepositions which are ambiguous between location and direction in English are unambiguous in Persian. However, the decision as to which interpretation is preferred depends on the way such a sentence is translated into Persian; that is, if the sentence “The children jumped in the water” is translated verbatim and word for word, the sentence is unambiguously directional in Persian. But, if it is translated and reordered based on Persian SOV word order, a locational reading will be preferred by native Persian speakers.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

On the basis of the above-mentioned characteristics of Persian language and the crosslinguistic differences existing between Persian and English, the researcher attempted to investigate whether or not Persian learners of English at different proficiency levels exhibit different preference patterns for locational/directional readings of ambiguous English prepositions. It is assumed that with an increase in the proficiency level of Iranian EFL learners, there will be a corresponding increase in their interpretation skills. Therefore, it is predicted that lower-level learners will prefer mostly a directional reading in harmony with their native tongue interpretation and because of paying attention only to the verbatim translation of such sentences while higher-level ones will be able to detect the ambiguity of such sentences in English because of an increase in their proficiency level. To test these predictions, the following research questions were posed to be answered in this study:

- 1) Which type of interpretation, a locational or a directional one, is preferred by Iranian EFL learners of different proficiency levels?
- 2) Do Iranian EFL learners of different proficiency levels interpret such prepositions as ambiguous in English?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A convenient sample of 49 (Male = 15, Female = 34) students participated in this study all of whom were Shiraz University students who studied English Literature in the department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics of that university which is one of five big universities of Iran. They were freshmen studying in the second semester and their average age was 19 years old. Additionally, they received neither explicit instruction nor negative evidence regarding the conflation of PATH and PLACE in prepositions such as *in*, and *behind* in English. The purpose was to find out whether or not learners will acquire the conflation patterns of prepositions in English implicitly without being taught explicitly or without being provided with negative evidence.

Instruments

Two instruments were utilized for data collection purposes in this study. The first instrument of the study was a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to determine the proficiency level of the participants. The second instrument was a questionnaire which was designed to investigate whether or not Persian-speaking learners of English are able to discover the ambiguity of prepositions like *in*, *under*, and *behind* which occur with manner-of-motion verbs. It consisted of fifteen items. Each test sentence was followed by a pair of pictures, one of which showed a directional context and the other a locational one. In each picture, there were two objects: an object that moves, or 'Figure', and an object with respect to which the Figure moves, or 'Ground' (Talmy, 1985). Both the Figure and the Ground were named in English to make sure that participants were familiar with the vocabulary.

Data collection and analysis procedures

First, the proficiency test was administered and the participants were divided into three groups on the basis of the distribution of their scores. 27 percent of the participants who got the highest scores constituted the high group (N = 14); 27 percent who got the lowest scores formed the low group (N = 14). From the remaining participants, the ones whose scores overlapped with the scores of the participants assigned to the high and low groups (N = 2) were eliminated from the study and the rest were considered as the mid group (N = 19). Then, they were asked to fill out the questionnaire. To do this, the researcher explained to them that all pictures showed situations that took place in the past, and thus that all sentences would be in the past tense. One of the pictures had an arrow with a 'blob' to provide a directional context. Participants were told that the arrow indicated the direction of the movement and the blob indicated the endpoint of the movement. Thus, the first picture depicted the situation where the Figure moved towards the Ground and ended up being there. The other picture did not have an arrow with a blob, thus showing a situation where an action took place at some location. Below each sentence were three options: '1 only', '2 only', and 'either 1 or 2'. Participants were asked to circle '1 only' if the sentence matched the first picture only, '2 only' if it matched the second picture only, and 'either 1 or 2' if it matched either the first or the second picture. There were twelve target items consisting of six manner-of-motion verbs and six prepositions, as the following:

Manner-of-motion verbs: *walk, run, swim, crawl, jump, fly*

Prepositions: *in, on, under, behind, inside, above*

There were also three distracters including both ambiguous and unambiguous sentences. To control for possible ordering effects, the test items and distracters were randomly ordered. The two pictures within each item were also randomly ordered for the same purpose. The participants were allowed sufficient time to complete the questionnaire carefully. After gathering the required data, the items were scored on the basis of the responses given.

In order to answer the first research question, the means of locational and directional interpretations for each group were calculated and compared. To answer the second research question, their scores were calculated in the following way: if the participants had chosen only one of the pictures as corresponding to the given sentence, they were given one point whereas if

they had chosen both pictures, they received two points. Hence, if they perceived most of the items as ambiguous, their scores were expected to be closer to thirty and if they did not consider most of the sentences as ambiguous, their scores would approach fifteen. Then, the sum of their responses was calculated and an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was run to decide the differences among the three groups of participants. ANOVA was run to determine whether proficiency level had an effect on the acquisition of conflation patterns of prepositions in English; that is, whether Persian-speaking learners of English are able to acquire English conflation patterns implicitly with an increase in their level of proficiency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to answer the first research question, each participant's choices of directional or locational readings were scored. Then, in each proficiency level, the mean of locational and directional interpretations were calculated and compared. Results of these analyses are presented in Table 1. As shown in this table, in each proficiency level, the mean of the choice of directional reading as the appropriate interpretation is much higher than the mean of the locational one indicating that the majority of the participants' choices were the directional ones. That is, these participants tended to choose the pictures corresponding to the directional interpretation of these prepositions and they did not interpret most of the sentences as having a locational reading.

Table 1: Mean of directional/locational readings in each proficiency level

	Mean of directional reading	Mean of locational reading
Low	11.71	4.14
Mid	11.89	4.36
High	12.57	4.58

Therefore, in each group, the majority of the participants' responses cluster on the directional interpretation of the sentences given and they tended to choose the picture corresponding to this interpretation. For example, in the low group, the mean for the directional interpretation is 11.71 while that of the locational one is 4.14. In the same way, for the mid group, the mean of the directional reading is 11.89 while that of the locational one is 4.36. The high group also showed the same tendency having a mean of 12.57 for the directional interpretation and a mean of 4.58 for the locational one. Hence, it was found that the majority of these participants decided the directional reading for each of the items in the questionnaire rather than the locational one or both of the interpretations.

In order to answer the second research question, first, descriptive statistics for the three proficiency levels were calculated. These results are presented in Table 2. As revealed in this table, the mean of the three groups were different with the low-level group having the lowest mean ($M = 15.85$, $SD = .86$) and the high-level group showing the highest mean ($M = 16.85$, $SD = 1.40$) while the mid-level is in between ($M = 16.26$, $SD = 1.19$). This finding indicates that Iranian EFL students of different proficiency levels interpret English directional/locational PPs in different ways; that is, more proficient learners perceived some of these prepositions as

ambiguous while those in the low proficiency level did not understand the ambiguity of such prepositions that much. In order to find out whether these differences were statistically significant or not, ANOVA test was run. Table 3 presents the results of this test.

					95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	14	15.85	.86	.23	15.35	16.35
Mid	19	16.26	1.19	.27	15.68	16.83
High	14	16.85	1.40	.37	16.04	17.66
Total	47	16.31	1.21	.17	15.96	16.67

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

A closer look at Table 3 revealed that there were no statistically significant differences among the three proficiency levels ($F = 2.55$, $\text{Sig.} = .08$, $p > .05$) although with a large effect size (effect size = 0.1). This finding indicates that the relative magnitude of the difference is large even though it is not statistically significant. Looking at the means of the three groups, one can come to the point that their means were close to fifteen indicating that most of the participants of this study had chosen only one of the interpretations for each sentence being unable to detect the ambiguity of the sentences in English. This is because of the fact that if they had considered the sentences as ambiguous, they would have chosen both pictures as depicting the given sentence and their scores would approach thirty. This kind of interpreting PPs is consistent with their mother tongue indicating that they have not acquired the conflation pattern of prepositions in English

Table 3: Analysis of Variance Test (ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Effect size
Between Groups	7.10	2	3.55	2.55	.08	0.1
Within Groups	61.11	44	1.38			
Total	68.21	46				

Figure 1 also illustrates the differences among the three proficiency levels in their interpretation patterns of English ambiguous prepositions.

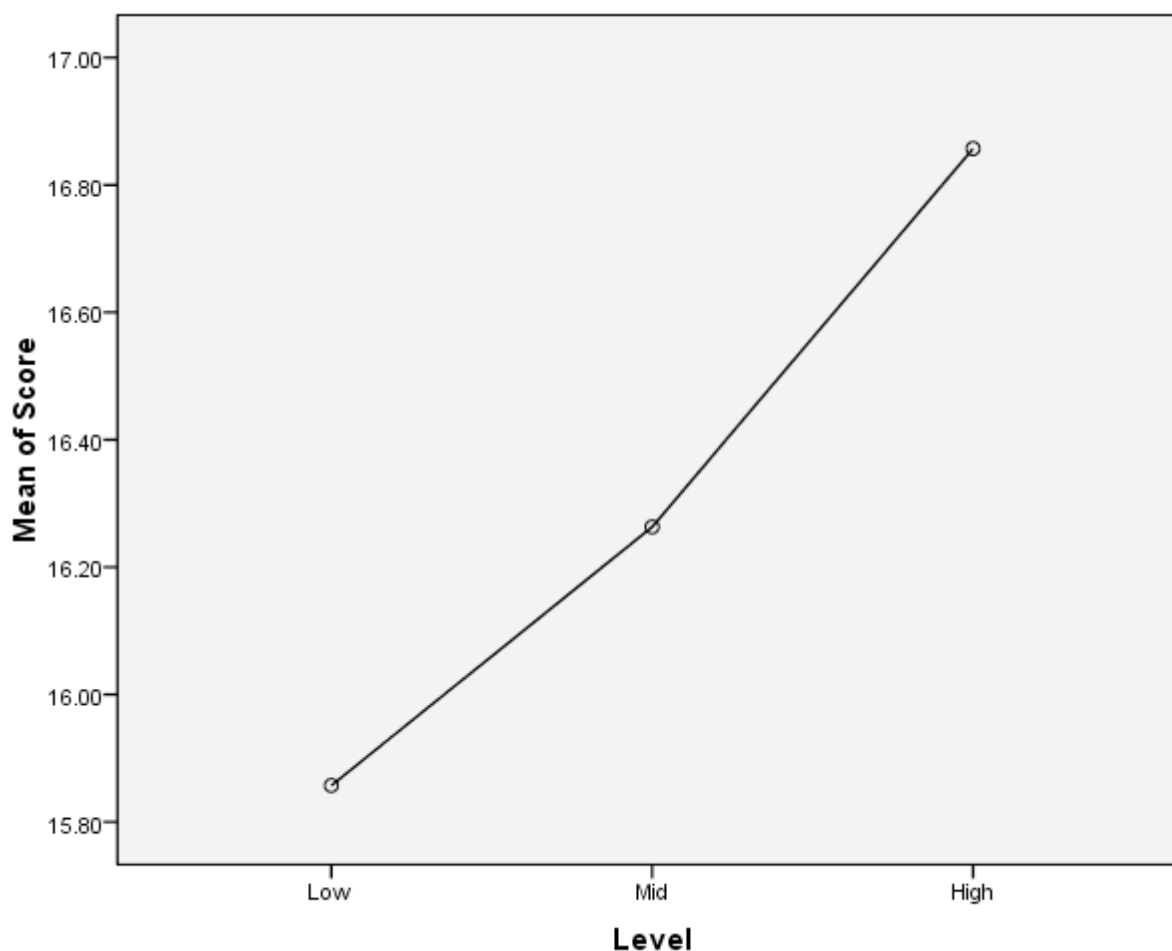


Figure 1: Mean plot of the three groups of participants

As it is evident in the above figure, there is a tendency to detect the ambiguity of these prepositions with an increase in the proficiency level of the participants. That is, as these participants' level of proficiency increases, they tend to interpret some of the sentences as ambiguous. However, this tendency is not that much prevalent as indicated by the lack of a statistically significant difference among the three groups. Hence, the majority of the participants did not interpret these prepositions as having two different interpretations.

Considering the above-mentioned findings, one can answer the two research questions posed at the outset of this study. In response to the first research question, results of data analysis indicated that most of the participants had chosen a directional interpretation for each of the sentences given in the questionnaire. That is, they preferred a directional reading over a locational one. In fact, this finding is in line with that of Inagaki (2002) in that EFL learners tend to choose the interpretation consistent with that of their L1. Examining Japanese learners of English, Inagaki (2002) found that they tended to choose the locational reading which is consistent with their L1 Japanese rather than perceiving sentences as ambiguous. Iranian EFL

learners in this study, too, tended to interpret the ambiguous sentences as having mostly a directional interpretation which is also consistent with what they have in their L1 (Persian).

With respect to the second research question, it was found that although Iranian EFL learners follow an incremental developmental path in their acquisition of English conflation patterns, they do not acquire those patterns completely and do not restructure their interlanguage perfectly and such problems are even observed in advanced proficiency level learners. That is, findings indicated that L1 transfer plays an important role in the acquisition of L2 conflation patterns not only in the early stages but also in the later ones. L1 transfer remains influential in later stages provided that input is not sufficiently available in the environment for learners to be able to reset their L1 conflation patterns. Hence, lack of enough positive and/or negative evidence in addition to a lack of explicit instruction were found to constitute the causal factors in producing a long-lasting transfer effect in Iranian EFL learners acquiring English conflation patterns.

These findings are also consistent with those of Yu (1996) who found that L1 plays a vital role in the L2 acquisition of motion events. The same findings also confirm Inagaki's (2002) and Matsunaga's (2007) results which showed that L2 learners follow an incremental developmental path in their acquisition even though some problems persist into advanced proficiency level. They are also in line with Larrañaga, et al.'s findings (2011) indicating that L1 transfer is not only important in the early stages of L2 acquisition but also remains influential in later stages if there is not enough positive evidence for the learners to progress in their development. Thus, we fully agree with Larrañaga, et al. (2011) in accepting the claim that scarce positive evidence in the input learners are exposed to or little or no negative evidence are responsible for the long-lasting effect of transfer in the domain of argument structure.

CONCLUSION

This study intended to investigate crosslinguistic differences in conflation patterns of prepositions between English and Persian and the effect of such differences on the acquisition of English argument structure. To this aim, two research questions were posed. Results indicated that Iranian EFL learners allow mostly a directional reading because Persian is more restricted than English in this respect. Additionally, Iranian speakers of different proficiency levels consistently failed to recognize a locational reading. A possible justification for this finding can be the effect of these participants' L1 conflation patterns. That is, as stated above, because in Persian, the order of words in the sentence determines the kind of interpretation appropriate for the context, most of these participants even the high-proficiency level ones interpreted most of the sentences as having only a directional interpretation based on what they had in their mother tongue. Since these participants received no explicit instruction or negative evidence as to the ambiguity of such sentences in English, we can argue that the locational interpretation of English prepositions is not sufficiently robust in the input they receive to lead to a reanalysis of the L1-based conflation patterns. Hence, Iranian EFL learners fail to conflate PLACE into PATH in the same manner as English native speakers do. Additionally, restructuring depends on sufficient input in addition to many other internal factors and a lack of restructuring in such cases is not surprising.

It is worth mentioning that results of this study are not definite because of some inherent limitations of the study. First, as mentioned above, these participants had not received explicit instruction as to the ambiguity of such prepositions in English and they were expected to grasp it implicitly. But, Iran is an EFL context where few native speakers are present to interact with. One reason for a lack of restructuring and resetting the English conflation patterns can be insufficient input in this context. Future studies can eliminate this problem by providing learners with more appropriate input and explicit instruction on the ambiguity of such sentences and then investigating the effects of them on learners' acquisition of L2 conflation patterns.

In spite of its limitations, however, this study paved the way for more studies on Persian and English crosslinguistic influences especially in the case of the acquisition of conflation patterns. Further studies in the future can examine other types of conflation patterns of a larger group of Iranian EFL learners using more sophisticated instruments and statistical techniques.

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