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## Language Transfer: A Study on the Notion of Transfer and on the Cross-Linguistic Lexical Influence

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### Abstract

This paper probes into the study of language transfer from a cross-linguistic lexical perspective. It traces the above notion through all its theoretical facets by highlighting the major factors inducing language transfer in language learners and delineating its impact on second language vocabulary development.

**Keywords:** Language Transfer, Negative Transfer, Positive Transfer, Lexical Transfer

### Introduction

The study of second language acquisition draws great interest and attention for those people who are involved in second language teaching. Second language acquisition is a broad field, which concerns how second languages are learned and what cognitive systems learners employ in order to learn a second language. Gass and Selinker (1994:4) define second language acquisition as "the learning of another language after the native language has been learnt. Sometimes the term refers to the third or fourth language. The important aspect is that the term refers to the learning of a language after the learning of the native language". The aim of second language acquisition is the description and explanation of the learner's linguistic and communicative competence (Ellis, 1994:15). For this reason, various studies have been carried out in the past years and are still carried out in order to examine aspects of the learner's usage or use of the L2 in actual performance (Ellis, 1994:15). Thus, the study of second language acquisition is influenced and based on many other areas of study, among them linguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics, sociology, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, conversational analysis, education and so on (Gass & Selinker, 1994:1).

There are numerous approaches from which researchers examine second language data and analyses learners' methods in learning a second language because the language learning process always causes great interest from the point of view of "how the learner copes with the cognitive and rule governed aspects of language as he becomes a member of a linguistic community" (Richards, 1974:1). Hence, the learner's errors indicate both of the state of the

learner's knowledge and of the ways in which a second language is learnt (Richards, 1974:1). Error Analysis observes the learner's knowledge of the language and many studies have been carried out in this area. In this paper we will examine the learner's internal mechanisms in learning a second language. One way to look at the cognitive mechanisms in which learners employ is through the understanding and analysis of language transfer because error analysis simply indicates the learner's errors and "the strategies he employs to work out the rules of the new language and the rules he has developed at given stages of his language development" (Richards, 1974:1; Khalid, Islam & Ahmed, 2019).

Language transfer, on the other hand, looks at the influence of the mother tongue in the second language learning. Language transfer is considered an important characteristic of second language acquisition (Odlin, 1989:3). Hence, we look at the cognitive mechanisms involved in second language acquisition by looking at how the learner's existing linguistic knowledge influences the learning of a second language (Ellis, 1994:299; Alzgoon, 2019; Umrani, Ahmed & Memon, 2015). Having analysed the notion of language transfer and the problems that occur when trying to predict transfer, we will look transfer at the lexical level. More specifically, the focus of section four will be on the cross-linguistic lexical influence. First, we will look at the definition of language transfer since its terminology is considered problematic (Odlin, 1989:25).

### **The Notion of Transfer**

The definition of language transfer is considered problematic because some scholars stopped using this term or they were using it in highly restricted ways while others continue to use it without restriction (Odlin, 1989:25). However, many scholars tried to define transfer. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the interest on the notion of transfer was increased. Weinreich in his research used the term interference to cover any case on transfer (Odlin, 1989:12). His survey on bilingualism indicates that the effects of cross-linguistic influence are not monolithic but instead vary considerably according to the social context of the language contact situation (Odlin, 1989:12). The use of terms borrowing transfer and substratum transfer distinguishes these effects (Odlin, 1989:12). According to Odlin (1989:12). "Borrowing transfer refers to the influence a second language has on a previously acquired language (which is typically one's native language)... Substratum transfer is the type of cross-linguistic influence investigated in most studies of second language acquisition; such transfer involves the influence of a source language (typically, the native language of a learner) on the acquisition of a target language". The effects of native language influence was and is still of great importance as many studies showed and the term transfer will serve as an abbreviation of substratum transfer (Odlin, 1989: 12-3).

During the 1960s where Contrastive Analysis had a huge impact, the notion of language transfer created challenges to assumptions about the importance of transfer (Odlin, 1989: 15). In 1957 Lado claimed that individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture--both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practised by natives (p.2) (Gass and Selinker, 1993:1). Lado's quotation and work had a great impact in many studies related to Contrastive Analysis and it was the source of many empirical studies (Gass and Selinker, 1993:1). However, the work of Lado faced serious challenges during the 1970s because empirical research was beginning to show that learning difficulties do not always arise from cross-linguistic differences and that

difficulties that do arise are not always predicted by contrastive analyses (Odlin, 1989:17). Even Lado realized that the list of problems resulting from the comparison of the foreign language with the native language ...must be considered a list of hypothetical problems until final validation is achieved by checking it until the actual speech of students (Gass and Selinker, 1993:2). Corder (1993:19), on the other hand, did not use the terms "transfer" or "interference" and he believed that the terms should be banned from use unless carefully redefined. He believed that they were technical terms that constrain one's freedom of thinking about the topic of the role of mother tongue in language learning (Corder, 1993:19; Zin & Ibrahim, 2020). According to Corder (1993:25) "If anything which can be appropriately called transfer occurs, it is from the mental structure which is the implicit knowledge of the mother tongue to the separate and independently developing knowledge of the target language. The evidence for such a process is presumably the persistent occurrence of incorrect mother-tongue like features in the learner's performance".

But what is language transfer? According to Gass and Selinker (1994:54) "it is a term that was used extensively in the first half of the century and refers to the psychological process whereby prior learning is carried over into a new learning situation". However, since any definition related to the notion of transfer does not characterise what transfer is, it is essential to mention observations that were made concerning of what transfer is not. According to Ellis (1994:301) "it is now widely accepted that the influence of the learner's native language cannot be adequately accounted for in terms of habit formation. Nor is transfer simply a matter of interference or on falling back on the native language. Nor is it just a question of the influence of the learner's native language, as other previously acquired 'second' languages can also have an effect". None definition can characterise the notion of transfer and can include the cross-linguistic influence but Odlin (1989) gives a definition of transfer, which he considers somewhat vague, but can be applied in further studies on transfer (Odlin, 1989:27). According to Odlin (1989:27) "Transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired". Odlin (1989:27-28) further explains that the influence arises from a learner's conscious or unconscious judgement that something in the native language and something in the target language are similar, if not actually the same. Concerning the term acquired the terms also remains only partially understood (Odlin, 1989: 28). Finally, Odlin (1989:28) argues that "a fully adequate definition of transfer presupposes a fully adequate definition of language". However, a definition on bilingualism seems distant because it needs an accurate neurological model of language since, probably the influence of one language on another has something to do with the storage of two knowledge systems within the same brain (Odlin, 1989:28). However, it is difficult to study transfer because many theoretical and practical problems occur when someone tries to identify aspects of language transfer in second language acquisition. I will mention few of the problems that occur.

### **Problems in the Prediction of Transfer**

The prediction of transfer is based on the systematic comparisons of languages provided by contrastive analyses (Odlin, 1989:28). However, even if contrastive analysis is good, more than just structural comparisons are necessary for a thorough understanding of transfer, since native language influence interacts with non-structural factors (Odlin, 1989:28). Concerning structural

and non-structural factors one major problem that arises concerns language distance or the degree of similarity between two languages (Odlin, 1989:32). According to Ellis (1994:327) "Distance can be viewed as both a linguistic phenomenon (i.e., by establishing the degree of actual linguistic difference between two languages) or psycholinguistic phenomenon (i.e., by determining what learners think is the degree of difference between their native language and the target language)". The learners' perception about language distance is referred with the use of the term psychotypology (Ellis, 1994:327). It has been proved that the actual distance between the native and target languages acts as a constraint on transfer (Ellis, 1994:327). Corder (1993:21) notes that "There is a clear relation between speed of acquisition and so-called language distance. The more distant linguistically from the mother tongue the longer a language takes to learn. This can be explained simply by saying that the more similar the mother tongue and the target language the greater help the mother tongue can give in acquiring a second language. The less similar, the less help it can give". It has been claimed that learners possess a set of perceptions about language distance (psychotypology) and that it is this that triggers or constrains transfer (Ellis, 1994:328). Learners make their own decisions as to what can be transferred on the basis of their beliefs as to whether the native and target languages the 'same'- either in terms of 'linguistic detail' or 'in very general terms' (Ellis, 1994:328). Another term that characterizes language distance is prototypicality and is combined with psychotypology. According to Ellis (1994:329) "Prototypicality determines what learners are prepared to risk transferring. Their psychotypology determines what is actually transferred in performance. On the basis of the perceived distance between native and target languages, decide whether to go ahead and transfer those items that they perceive to be prototypical and, therefore, potentially transferable". Hence, we can note that the language distance factor results as a constraint on the study of transfer.

Another problem that occurs is the identification of those elements that characterise transfer. In other words, the discovery of general principles for making sound predictions about transfer in any language contact situation (Odlin, 1989:35). Hence, it is essential to identify these principles that are determined by cross-linguistic comparisons and explain why these principles occur. The work of contrastive analysis identifies these principles and it is important the understanding of the conditions that occasion transfer in order for linguists and scholars to understand the cognitive mechanisms that learners employ when learning a second language. Hence, in order to understand the notion of transfer, it is important to have a better comprehension of the many possible outcomes of cross-linguistic similarities and differences (Odlin, 1989:36). According to Ellis (1994:301) "In traditional accounts of language transfer, the research focus was placed on the errors that learners produce". There are two types of transfer: positive and negative. However, there are other manifestations of transfer such as underproduction or avoidance, overproduction, production of errors, which are related to negative transfer (Odlin, 1989:36). A briefly account of these types will help us to understand the varied effects that the cross-linguistic similarities and differences can produce (Odlin, 1989:36).

### **Positive Transfer**

Positive transfer helps the learning of a second language. In other words, the learner's native language can make easier the second language learning (Ellis, 1994:302). Odlin (1989:36) points out that "The effects of positive transfer are only determinable through comparisons of the

success of groups with different native languages". The effects of positive transfer are evident not so much in the absence of certain errors but rather in a reduced number of errors and, also in the rate of learning (Ellis, 1994:303). By comparing groups with different languages we will have evidence that cross-linguistic similarities can produce positive transfer in several ways (Odlin, 1989:36). Similarities between the native and target languages in language vocabulary, phonetics, syntax, grammar will help learners in an easier second language learning. According to Odlin (1989:36) "Similarities between native language and target language vocabulary can reduce the time needed to develop good reading comprehension... Similarities between vowel systems can make the identification of vowel sounds easier... Similarities between writing systems can give learners a head start in reading and writing in the target language... And any similarities in syntactic structures can facilitate the acquisition of grammar: Learners speaking a language with syntax similar to that of the target language tend to have less difficulty with articles, word order and relative clauses". Similarities in other areas can also promote acquisition. Ellis (1994:304) notes that acquisition is promoted when two languages share a large number of cognates. He states that because of the similarities between Chinese and Japanese languages, Chinese learners of L2 Japanese have an enormous advance over English learners (Ellis, 1994:304). However, some researchers marked down the importance of the 1,1 and emphasised the minimalist transfer position where the focus was on the learner's errors (Ellis, 1994: 304).

### **Negative Transfer**

Negative transfer, on the other hand, impedes second language learning. More specifically, negative transfer involves divergences from norms of the target language (Odlin, 1989:36). Even if negative transfer is associated with production errors and it is relative easy to identify, there are some other ways in which an individual's second language performance may differ from the behaviour of native speakers (Odlin, 1989:36).

### **Underproduction-Avoidance**

Research showed that learners might produce very few or no examples of a target language structure (Odlin, 1989:36). Often the production of examples results in comparatively few errors but if the structure is more infrequent than it is in the native language, the infrequency acts as divergence from target language norms (Odlin, 1989:36-37). One form of underproduction that is related to language distance is avoidance. Ellis (1994:304) notes that learners "avoid using linguistic structures which they find difficult because of the differences between their native language and the target language. In such cases, the effects of the IA are evident not in what the learners do (errors) but in what they do not do (omissions)". However, the identification of avoidance is difficult and is considered a complex phenomenon (Ellis, 1994:305). Kellerman (1992) studied the phenomenon of avoidance and distinguishes three types of avoidance (Ellis, 1994:305). Firstly, avoidance takes place when learners know or predict that there is a problem and have some idea of what the target form is like (Ellis, 1994:305). Secondly, avoidance occurs when learners know what the target is but find it too difficult to use in the particular circumstances (Ellis, 1994:305). Thirdly, avoidance is evident when learners know what to say and how to say it but are reluctant to actually say it will result in them ridicule their own norms of behavior (Ellis, 1994:305). Ellis (1994:305) notes that "The extent of learners' knowledge in the

L2 and the attitudes learners hold toward their own and the target-language cultures act as factors that interact with L 1 knowledge to determine avoidance behaviour".

### **Overproduction**

Overproduction of certain grammatical forms in L2 acquisition can take place as a result of intralingual processes such as overgeneralization (Ellis, 1994:305). Overproduction can also result from transfer, often as a consequence of the avoidance or underproduction of some difficult structure according to the learner's perception (Ellis, 1994:305). Odlin (1989:37) gives an example concerning Japanese students who in an effort to avoid relative clauses may violate norms of written prose in English by writing too many simple sentences.

### **Production Errors**

Ellis (1994:302) notes that "a substantial amount of empirical work in SLA research has been devoted to establishing to what extent errors are the result of transfer (i.e. interference) or are intralingual in nature (i.e. the result of general processes of language development similar to those observed in L 1 acquisition)". However, there is great difficulty in determining whether an error is the result of transfer or intralingual processes (Ellis, 1994:302). Odlin (1989:37) identifies three types of errors in speech and writing that are likely to occur from similarities and differences in the native and target languages: a. substitutions, b. calques and c. alterations of structures. Substitutions require a use of native language forms in the target language (Oldin, 1989:37). Odlin (1989:37) gives an example of the use of the Swedish word *bort* ("away") in an English sentence by a Swedish speaker: Now I live home with my parents. But sometimes I must go *bort*. Calques are errors that indicate very closely a native language structure (Oldin, 1989:37). Odlin (1989:37) gives an example concerning certain word errors that are can be evidence of calques: an error made by a Spanish speaking ESL student shows the same word order as the translation equivalent in Spanish-the porch of Carmen, as opposed to the more natural English phrase, Carmen's porch. Substitutions and calques are types of errors that are associated to transfer errors and these types might suggest that transfer always involves an obvious correspondence between the native and target languages (Odlin, 1989:37). Alterations of structures are considered more complicated particularly hypercorrections because it is difficult to identify them. Odlin (1989:38) notes that "Sometimes hypercorrections are overreactions to a particular influence from the native language...Other alterations resemble hypercorrections insofar that they do not reflect any direct influence from the native language".

So far we have seen the notion of transfer and the problems that are caused from its analysis and prediction. The notion of transfer is about the influence of the mother tongue in second language learning. It is commonly agreed that in the psychology of learning new learning is largely based on what the learner already knows (Ringbom, 1991:172). According to Ringbom (1991:172) "Previous knowledge includes L1 knowledge, which might be variably relevant, depending of how learners perceive the distance between the L 1 and the target language". An

important area of language learning concerns the learning of vocabulary. Thus in the following section we will look at the cross-linguistic Lexical influence.

### **Lexical Transfer**

Language transfer can be observed in the learning of second language vocabulary. Odlin (1989:77) notes that "Many language teachers and linguists have believed that similarities and dissimilarities in word forms, along with similarities and dissimilarities in word meanings, play a major role in how quickly a particular foreign language may be learnt by speakers of another language". From the learner's notion, the important question is not what linguistic differences exist between the mother tongue and the target language but rather what similarities to his L1 can be perceived in the L2 at different stages of learning (Ringbom, 1991:172). These perceived similarities are not always actual close similarities between the words, structures and functions of L1 and L2 but rather they may be only partially, or occasionally even incorrectly perceived as such, being based on superficial resemblance between the forms of words (Ringbom, 1991:172). Cook (1996: 54) points out that "learners may indeed fill in gaps in their knowledge of the new language with items from the first. When the languages are closely related, this may be effective-so-called 'true friends-".

There are two types of cross-linguistic L1 influence: covert or indirect cross-linguistic influence and overt (Ringbom, 1991-.173). Covert cross-linguistic influence usually leads to errors in production and it occurs when learners do not have the necessary L2 procedures or L2 words at their disposal and they may use L1-based procedures and words to make up for asps in their knowledge, or they may simply avoid using such words or structures as are not found in the L1 (Ringbom 1991:173). This phenomenon is frequent at the early stage of learning wholly unrelated languages, where beginners cannot establish frames of reference for their learning of the target language (Ringbom, 1991:173). Overt cross-linguistic influence, on the other hand, may either inhibit or (more commonly facilitate learning and is based on similarities perceived between words and structures, and it occurs above all between related languages (Ringbom, 1991:173). Ringbom (1991:173) notes that if the languages are so close as to be mutually decipherable not so much conscious learning is needed at all, beyond a few false friends in lexis and an understanding of some basic differences in pronunciation.

However, there are many problems when studying L2 vocabulary. One of the problems concerns lexical knowledge; that is determining what knowing a word really means (Ringhom, 1991:174). Lexical knowledge can he viewed as a system or a set of systems with a number of different dimensions such as accessibility, morphophonology, syntax, semantics, collocation, association (Ringbom, 1991:174). At the early stages of learning learners try to simplify the new L2 words encountered along several dimensions as compared with their meaning and use by native speakers because they try to reduce their learning burden (Ringborn, 1991:174). As learning, progresses, learners not only learn new lexical items but they also refine their knowledge of the items they have already learnt by becoming aware of, for example, polysemy and the importance of context, and are thus able to move up the scale of lexical knowledge in all the different dimensions (Ringbom, 1991:175). Ringbom (1991:175) points out that learners learn the associative value of an item, the ways in which it can collocate with other words and can be used to form other words, and from having been comprehended by the learner only in a special context, the words can become available for production without any stimulus provided".



While comparing comprehension with production, several differences may appear in the ways in which cross-linguistic influence occurs (Ringbom, 1991:175). Concerning reception procedure, transfer indicates that the learner interprets incoming L2 utterances on the basis on her L1 knowledge. (Ringbom,1991:175). Thus, transfer in reception procedure is about inference, more specifically "interlingual inferencing" as Ringbom characterises it (1991:175). Inferencing can be viewed as the first stage of vocabulary learning because the first time learners meet a new L2 word in context they try to infer its meaning with the aid of their world knowledge, the situation and their linguistic knowledge (Ringbom, 1991:175). Learners may understand a word the first time they meet it because their linguistic knowledge already contains elements which make it possible to work out at least the approximate meaning of a new word but "if the target language is a language closely related to the learner's IA, the formal similarity between L1 and L2 words often becomes an even more basis for the potential vocabulary" (Ringbom, 1991:175). Ringbom (1991:175) notes that "If learners can perceive crosslinguistic lexical similarities to the L1, L1-based knowledge will be an extremely important factor in the process of comprehension".

Cross-linguistic lexical influence in production can be divided into lexical transfer and borrowing (Ringbom, 1991:177). Ringbom (1991:177) explains that "Lexical transfer means that learners assume identity of semantic structure between the words in L1 and L2, and it is manifested in loan translations and semantic overextension". Semantic overextension involves words in which there is no morphological similarity but appear to be semantically equivalent (Odlin, 1989:79). For example Finish speakers who learn English produce the word 'oldboy' for 'bachelor' because the equivalent Finish word *vanhctpoika* contains the elements 'old' and 'boy' and this type of lexical transfer is identified as erroneous loan translation (Ringbom, 1991:1771). Overextension of the semantic properties of a word is the other type of lexical transfer error, which is more frequent (Ringbom, 1991:177). For example, when a Swedish learner writes 'carry a baby in one's fathom' the interpretation lies in the Swedish word *farnn*, which has two different meanings: it can be translated either 'lap' or 'fathom' (Ringbom, 1991:177). Ringbom (1991:177) points out that "The learner knows one of these translation equivalents and assumes the other one as well, overextending the semantic properties of the L2 on the basis of the L1 model". Lexical transfer also occurs when the word forms are similar but the meaning is not. For example the forms of French *prevenir* and English *prevent* seem to be a reliable signal of cognate relation but they are not: *prevenir* means 'to warn', and thus the pair *prevenir* and *prevent* is deceptive for English learners of French and French learners of English (Odlin, 1989:78-79).

While lexical transfer has its parallels in other linguistic areas, borrowing transfer begins at the lexical level (Ringbom, 1991:178). Ringbom (1991:178) explains that "Borrowing means that the search for a lexical item activates an L1 item, which is then taken over into the L2 either in an unmodified form or in a form where it has been modified by L2 phonology and/or morphology (hybrids, blends and relexifications)." Concerning a full language switch, when the L1 item is used in an L2 context without any modification at all, there seems to be a difference between the borrowing of function words and the borrowing of content words (Ringbom, 1991:178). Concerning switch of content words, there is generally crosslinguistic formal similarity between the word used and the correct L2 word, but this need not be the case with function words (Ringbom, 1991:178). However, problems occur when trying to identify lexical transfer. In speech an writing a strong constraint that works against transfer involves the transfer of bound morphemes, which are prefixes, suffixes, and any other forms that are meaningful yet unable to

stand alone (Odlin, 1989:82). For example, Spanish speakers cannot use the English plural suffix seen in the words tops, kites and cakes even though the form is almost identical with the Spanish form (Odlin, 1989:82). However, the existence of general lexical similarities between the native and target languages is considered a major influence on how much transfer of bound morphemes will take place (Odlin, 1989:82-83).

There is no doubt that cross-linguistic lexical similarities in two languages can influence comprehension and production in a second language. Odlin (1989:83) notes that "Cognates can provide not only semantic but also morphological and syntactic information, and while some of the information may be misleading, some can facilitate acquisition". However, problems occur when trying to identify lexical transfer. Ringbom (1991:177) notes that "The problem of assessment of the facilitating versus inhibiting effects lies in the difficulty of finding out when fully acceptable utterances are assumed similarities to L1". Much uncertainty arises about how much influence semantic structures in one language can have on production and comprehension in another language (Odlin, 1989:83). It is essential that more research should be done in order to understand the problem of meaning not only in lexis but also in other linguistic areas. So far we looked at the notion of transfer and the problematic study of it with reference to the cross-linguistic lexical influence and the structural factors relevant to transfer and lexical transfer. However, other non-structural factors affect transfer and I will mention a few of them.

### **Non-Structural Factors**

Non-structural factors such as motivation, the age of the learner, the human awareness of the language, personality influence transfer (Odlin, 1989:129-130). Some individual differences can affect how often cross-linguistic influences have an impact, for instance in linguistic proficiency and literacy (Odlin, 1989:153). Odlin (1989:153) notes that "The linguistic awareness of learners can also increase or decrease the probability of transfer". Social and pedagogical factors affect language transfer (Odlin, 1989:136). Concerning social factors, negative transfer is more likely in unfocused contexts than in focused contexts where there is concern to maintain the standards of language (Ellis, 1994:317). According to Ellis (1994:317) "whereas some communities have a very clear idea of what constitutes a language, others do not, mixing languages without much concern for what is 'grammatical' or 'ungrammatical'. It has been observed that negative transfer is more common in natural settings than in classroom settings because in the latter learners compose a 'focused' community and as a consequence treat L1 forms as intrusive and even stigmatized (Ellis, 1994:317). In natural settings learners may constitute either 'focused' or 'unfocused' community (Ellis, 1994:317). Ellis (1994:317-318) notes that "where they are unfocused, mixing will be freely permitted, thus encouraging negative transfer to take place. In addition, classroom learners are often explicitly warned when interference might occur through the contrastive presentations of items". Concerning pedagogical factors, teachers who know the native language of their students may provide information about native-target language contrasts that other teachers cannot provide (Odlin, 1989:136). Likewise, textbooks and other

materials that present analogies between the native and the target languages may promote or inhibit some kinds of transfer (Odlin, 1989:136).

### Conclusion

The study of language transfer is of great importance in second language acquisition because it observes the influence of the native language in second language learning. It has been proved that the mother tongue indeed influences second language learning and those cross-linguistic similarities between native and target languages can produce positive transfer and quicker understanding and learning of the second language. We have seen in the analysis of the lexical transfer that similarities not only in the form of the word but also in the meaning may produce positive transfer. However, the problem that arises concerns "how much influence semantic structures in one language can have on the production and comprehension in another language" (Odlin, 1989:83). The study of transfer is considered complicated and difficult to work on because few of the problems that L2 acquisition researchers face concern the problems of comparing two languages and distinguishing transfer (Ellis, 1994:340). Even if transfer is considered difficult to quantify it, it is an important factor in second language acquisition. However, Ellis (1994:341) claims that "it is now generally accepted that although transfer is an important factor in L2 acquisition, it is not the only factor and often works together with other factors, such as natural principles of language acquisition". Hence, researchers should study transfer in combination with other factors that influence second language acquisition. But no theory of L2 acquisition is complete without an account of L1 transfer (Ellis, 1994:341).

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**Bio**

Velissarios Houssos holds a B.A. degree from the University of Athens in English Language and Literature and a B.A degree from the same University in Italian Language and Literature. He also holds an M.A. in Applied Linguistics-TEFL from the University of Bedfordshire. Moreover, he has received training in teaching EFL from the universities of Brighton and Edinburgh. He has been actively involved in TEFL, as a researcher and as a Mentor in cooperation with the Department of English Studies of the University of Athens. He has published articles and he has experience in curriculum development for adults in the public sector. He speaks Italian and he is engaged in TEFL in the secondary education.