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The acquisition of future tense properties by Iranian Persian monolingual and Kurdish-Persian Bilingual learners of English: A generative study

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the acquisition of the syntactic features of future tense by Persian monolingual speakers and Kurdish-Persian bilingual learners of English in light of the prediction made by several second language (L2) and third language (L3) generative theories. To this end, 36 Persian monolinguals and 36 Kurdish-Persian bilingual learners of English took part in the study. At first, the participants took an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) based on which they were assigned to three groups, namely, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced with regard to their English Language Proficiency. Then, they received a grammatical judgment test and a translation test. The results revealed that the contributors of the study in both groups faced difficulties acquiring syntactic features of future tense since their former languages lack the same feature. According to the results, the inconvenience learners struggle with is much more noticeable at the early stages of English learning. As the participants got closer to advanced levels, they gradually build the ability to produce more target like productions. The findings also demonstrated that since both Kurdish and Persian speakers have a lack of specific syntactic features for expressing future tense, they face difficulties acquiring the same feature in English.

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1. Introduction

As with the second language acquisition (SLA) within the field of generative linguistics, much effort is made upon identifying the factors that can affect non-primary language acquisition (Leung, 2007). In fact, while learners are acquiring a second or a third language, they may fail to practice the correct morphosyntactic inflections. According to Lardier (2000) this deficiency might be the result of the morphosyntactic limitations in learners' first language (L1) or simply because they are incompetent in the L2 and L3 structure. As a result, a number of second language acquisition (SLA) generative theories were proposed to make some predictions about the possible sources of deficiency in Ln expressions.

A countless number of studies have been conducted to identify the plausible sources of cross-linguistic influences (CLI). While searching about the sources of CLI, some scholars assign a paramount role to L1 (Hermas, 2014a), whereas others either consider L2 as the main source of transfer (Bardel & Falk, 2007, Falk & Bardle, 2011) or take both the role of L1 and L2 into account (Flynn et al., 2004, Cabrelli Amaro et al., 2015).

Researchers have also detected the other variables that can play a role in CLI. Language proficiency, for instance, can lead to a transfer from L1 and L2 if learners are having a low level of L3 proficiency (Hammarberg, 2001). On the other hand, L3 exposure is another determining factor in the transfer from L1 and L2. The more learners are exposed to and deal with L3, the less transfer may occur from L1 and L2 (Dewaele, 2001).

This paper, then, aims at investigating the possible sources of transfer in L2 and L3 production of English future tense. As a matter of fact, the present research article is an attempt to substantiate whether the interlanguage patterns generated by L2 and L3 learners of English is due to their distinct language backgrounds. Then, the major question which is addressed in the current study is to what extent the production of morphosyntactic features of future tense by L3 and L2 learners resembles or varies from that of the already accepted ones in the target language (English). To achieve this, the results obtained from Kurdish-Persian bilinguals and Persian monolinguals of English went through a comparative study. Finally, the results were tested from the standpoint of the most recent and credited theories of generative linguistics namely, FAFT, RDH, MSIH, L2SF, CEM, TPM.

2. Theoretical background

In the realm of generative linguistics, a large number of researchers believe that UG plays a role in L2 and L3 acquisition since the logical problem of L1 acquisition constantly remains for L2 acquisition as well. In fact, the repertoire of knowledge a learner acquires surpasses what he has been exposed to (White, 1989). In this regard, much effort has been made to determine the responses to two basic questions of this field, the first one asks about the foundation of L2 acquisition and the second one investigates if the discrepancy between L1 and L2 structure can block the parameter resetting in the target language. In fact, relying on the importance of recognizing the sources of transfer, the researchers have made an effort to specify the factors that can affect Ln acquisition.

The first of these theories, FAFT (Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996; White 1989, 2003) claims that L1 grammar constitutes the initial state of L2 acquisition and since an L2 learner has thorough access to UG, parameter resetting is possible in L2. According to this theory, while talking about the feasible sources of transfer, there are four possibilities that one can think of. One possibility notes that no matter how much linguistic knowledge one has accumulated during his/ her former learning experience, the learner's initial state of language learning remains constant. This condition is called 'no access no transfer' position. The other probability claims that a learner's first language acts as the main source of transfer in all adults' language acquisition experiences. This standpoint is named 'full access full transfer'.

The second theory is RDH (Hawkins & Chan 1997; Hawkins 2003) which argues that there is a critical period for the acquisition of functional features that varies between L1 and L2. It implies that if a feature is not instantiated in their L1, they won't be able to acquire it. Furthermore, learners are only confined to the functional feature inventory of their native language. According to this hypothesis, learners' interlanguage repertoire can't go far beyond their primary language one even if there are some signs permitting parameter resetting.

The third theory is MSIH (Lardiere 1998a, 1998b, 2000; Prevost & White 2000a) with the claim that accounting for morphological variability by appealing to parametric selection or non-selection of features is way too simplistic. Lardier (1998) attempts to indicate that the way grammatical features are morphologically combined and conditioned may well affect their overt realization in L2 and L3. Based on this model which has the opposite assertions in comparison to RDH, learners have the target features beyond their primary language, but the problem arises when they are about to produce the suitable inflectional morphology.

As stated in the L2SF hypothesis (Bardel and Sanchez, 2017; Falk and Bardel, 2011) a learner's L2 which is acquired in adulthood can have a beneficial role in his/ her L3 morphosyntactic transfer. This transfer would remain active all over L3 learning process. It means that it is not confined just to the initial stages. This model has more similarities to the declarative/ procedural model (Paradis, 2009), which claims that various systems of memory are able to maintain the grammars of native or non-native language learned after puberty. In fact, the above-mentioned model is about to say that both grammar and lexicon of the proceeding languages learned are facilitated by declarative memory, while L1 grammar is basically procedural. L2SF hypothesis analogously assumes that since L2 and L3 have more cognitive resemblance, L2 has more effect in the process of L3/Ln acquisition (Bardel and Falk, 2012).

The next theoretical model is CEM (Berkes and Flynn, 2012) which contends that transfer is possible from both L1 and L2 languages at any stage in the process of L3 acquisition. In line with this model, the transfer is supposed to only facilitate the course of the proceeding language acquisition. Therefore, it is considered to be non-redundant. While talking about the specific source of transfer one can think of two possibilities: (1) in a situation when one of the languages includes target like features and the

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other one lacks such properties, the language with more alikeness would act as the source of transfer. (2) if the target feature which is supposed to be learned doesn't exist in either L1 or L2, the process of L3 acquisition proceeds like that of L1.

The last model known as typological proximity model (TPM; Rothman, 2013, 2015) asserts that as the learner is at the starting point of L3/Ln acquisition, grammars of both L1 and L2 are ready for transfer. In this regard, TPM is considered to be in the same direction with full access/full transfer model. In fact, according to TPM, one of the grammars of already learned languages is totally transferred to the current language's linguistic system. The main claim put forward by TPM is that the learner is supposed to be able to pick up the language (from the available L1 or L2) for which there is the utmost adjacency. In point of fact, as the learner is exposed to L3 input he/she makes an effort to find the most similar structure in L1 or L2 source to the L3 input. According to Rothman (2015) multilingual transfer is selective whereby selectivity is delimited by linguistic cues interpreted by the parser. The prior language which is proved to have more similarities to the target language being acquired is the main source of transfer (Rothman, 2013).

L3 acquisition studies in the field of generative linguistics have made an effort to identify the possible sources of transfer (Puig-Mayenco et al., 2018). During this process researchers came to some L3 theories, for example, some researches came to this conclusion that no matter what the learner's prior language is, his/her target linguistic system is independent of it. In fact, there is a dissociation between their linguistic systems, and no morphosyntactic transfer is about to occur (Epstein et al., 1996, Platzack, 1996).

On the other hand, it was also believed that the L1 factor was the only source of morphosyntactic transfer (Hakansson, 2002). Such a claim would clearly reject the RDH proposal which asserts that learners are just confined to the syntactic categories they have acquired. Actually, each language may encompass some syntactic features that seem uninterpretable for the students. Thus researchers may relate this situation to the non-presence of that feature in learner's first language.

Other studies considering L3 acquisition investigated the probability of CEM and TPM proposals. In this regard, Flynn et al. (2004) searched for the acquisition of English complementizer phrases with different language groups. In the end, they found that each prior language has the potency of playing a role in target language learning. However, this transfer can be either facilitative or neutral.

There are a number of studies advocating TPM underpinnings in the process of L3 acquisition (Cabrelli Amaro et al., 2015). A research was conducted on the acquisition of adjective placement and the semantic differences among Brazilian, Portuguese, and Spanish L3 learners. The findings illustrated that L3 learners place the adjective accurately based on the semantic interpretations they had. It implied that the groups were able to successfully transfer from L2 Spanish and L1 Italian, regardless of their order of acquisition.

In another study, Siemund and Lechner (2015) searched for L3 learning during ages 12-16 by child bilinguals. In their study, they worked upon the acquisition of articles and subject-verb agreement by the learners whose L3 is English and they are Vietnamese-German, Turkish-German, and Russian-German bilinguals. In fact, they learned German since it was spoken in their country and English as a foreign language. The results were tested along with the TPM model and it revealed that Vietnamese-German bilinguals had more target-like productions.

The above-mentioned studies and most of the studies in the realm of generative linguistics have taken the acquisition of some syntactic features into account and compared them against a target language. These pieces of research aim to find out what the possible sources of transfer from prior language/s to the target language are and how they can have an effect on the acquisition of syntactic properties. What seems to lack in the previously conducted studies is a study on the future acquisition in the case of both Kurdish and Persian language. As a result, the current study is an effort to find out how Kurdish and Persian as two background languages can affect English as a target language. Furthermore, it tries to realize if learners' level of proficiency can have an effect on the target-like production of future syntactic features.

Most of the languages in the world are having some syntactic means for expressing the time an event occurs or a process holds in the proposition. This phenomenon is called Tense. Tenses are mainly represented by inflections, particles, or auxiliaries in construction with verbs. The three languages (English, Persian, and Kurdish) under study make distinctions between two grammatical tenses, namely past and present in their sentence structure. In other words, these languages encode two segregated tenses on the main verb of the sentences in the form of past and present stems. Taking future tense into account, none of the aforementioned languages uses grammatical future tense, in that, none of the languages encode future tense distinctions on the main verb. However, English and Formal Persian apply an auxiliary verb "will or xah" which is positioned in the head of TP. The auxiliary verb attracts the tense feature of the head T. that is why whenever will is used, no tense feature is realized on the main verb and it is used in its in its base form with no tense specification. English language is having a wide range of syntactic structures for expressing future tense, but the ones selected for the purpose of this study are simple future passive, future perfect, passive form of future perfect, future perfect continuous, future continuous, and future in the past in the three languages under study, Persian, Kurdish, and English.

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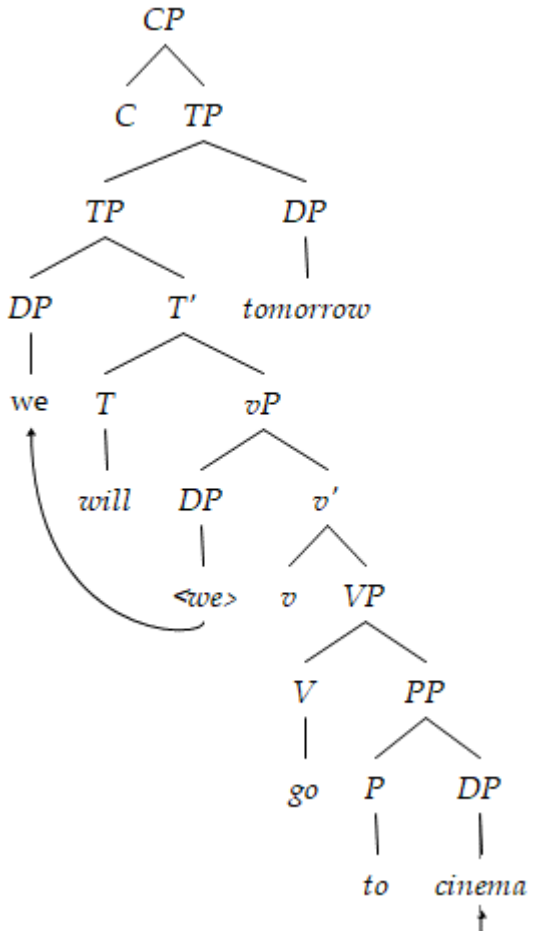
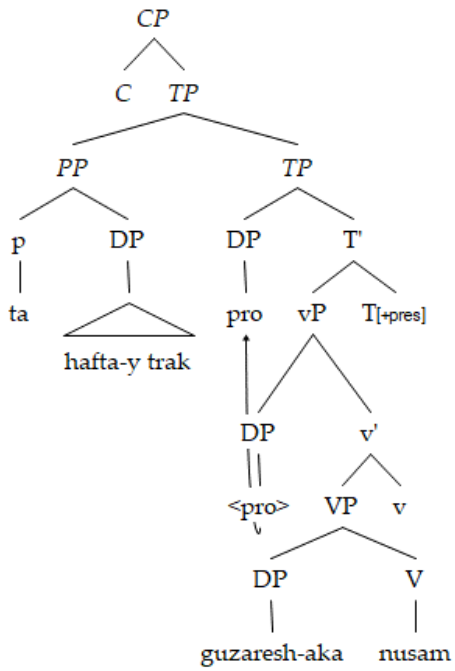
1. **we will go to cinema tomorrow.**



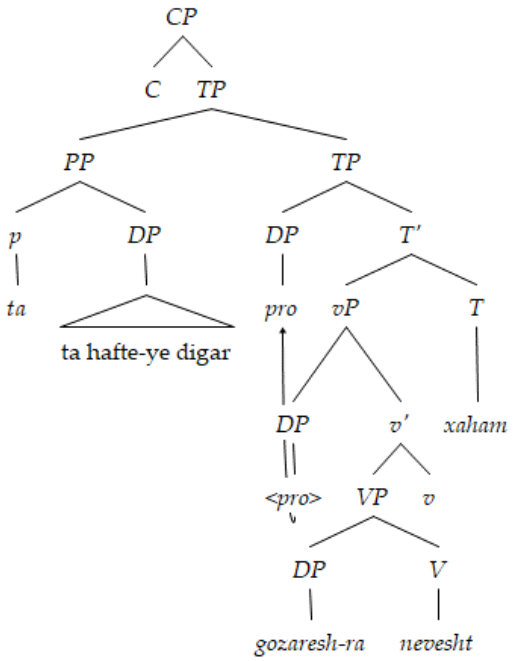
As it is clear in this diagram, in English propositions of future, the tense node is projected by an Aux named *will*. Whereas in Kurdish language there isn't any syntactic feature standing for future tense, as it is represented in the following diagram of the sentence "ta hafteye trak gozareshaga nusam", the tense node is empty.

2. **ta hafteye trak gozareshaka nusam.**



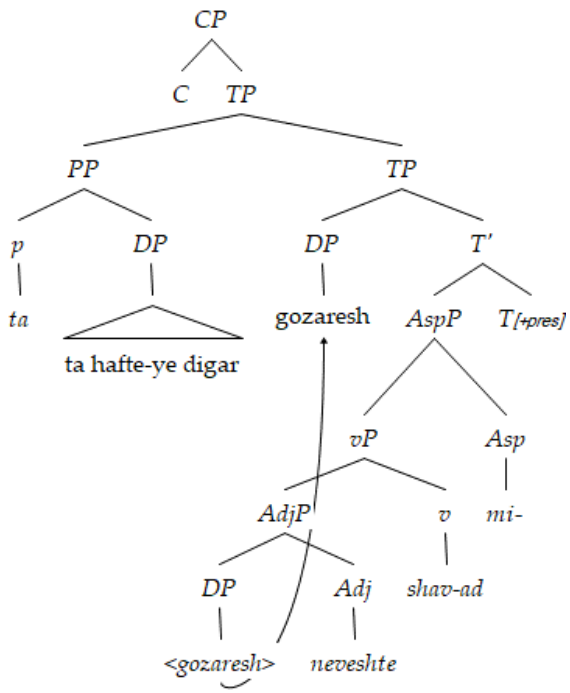
Talking of Persian language structure for future tense, what is worth mentioning is that there is a distinction between the way future tense is depicted in formal vs. informal structures. As a matter of fact, the oral version of Persian to which all the people are exposed in the society contains no syntactic feature indicating future tense, whereas in the case of written texts, which are more formal, future conceptualization is perceived by the use of "xah" verb. Therefore, if we consider the official version of Persian language, future simple tense and the passive form of it are the only tenses in which tense node is filled with a future feature. As it is illustrated in the coming diagram there is "Xah" under the tense node.

1. **ta hafteye digar gozaresh ra xaham nevesht.**
2. **the report will be written until next week**



Since all Persian speakers are in the massive exposure of oral language which encompasses the use of simple present for expressing future related activities, it is hypothesized that they might have deficiencies acquiring a target language in which there are various features used for expressing the actions depending on the meaning being conveyed. Therefore, in order to fulfill the purpose of the current study, we took the spoken version of Persian language into account. As it is illustrated in the following diagram of an unofficial Persian language tense node is not dominating any syntactic feature.

1. **ta hafteye digar gozaresh neveshte mishavad.**



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As it's realized by the depicted diagrams so far, there is a clear difference between English language sentences' internal structures and its Persian and Kurdish counterparts. In fact in English inside a TP which is dominated by VP there is a T posititon that demonstrate the Copular verb or Auxillary verb. In the case of our study this Aux is will or be going to that convey future meaning. However, in verb-framed languages like Persian and Kurdish this is not the case and the speakers imply their intention through simple present tense and by reliance on the utilization of some adverbial phrases which stand for future tense such as, "ta hafteye digar".

Regarding the morphological realization of tense on the main verb, the three languages in the study only encode past and present tenses on the verb. With regard to future tense, English uses an auxiliary verb which attracts the tense of the sentence. That's why after " will" no inflecting of tense occurs on the main verb and the main verb appears in its base form. The same process happens in formal Farsi with "xah". However, in colloquial persian and Kurdish speakers use the present form or even sometimes the past form of the verb to imply an event in the future. Since Kurdish, Persian, and English languages vary regarding their parameter resetting of the syntactic features of future tense, it is assumed that Persian and Kurdish learners have difficulty both acquiring and constructing English structures. As a result, the present study aims at cross-examining the acquisition of syntactic properties of future tense from the parameter resetting perspectives. This means that the current research is an attempt to investigate if Kurdish-Persian bilinguals and Persian monolinguals are more likely to face difficulty acquiring English as their third and second language, or they are simply capable of resetting parameters from L1 or L2 . Taking the basic underpinnings' of learnability theory into account, transfer errors might be the result of L1 or L2 parameters being reset inaccurately.

Research Questions

According to the aforementioned theoretical backgrounds regarding target language acquisition, the possible effect of the previously known languages, and the parametric resemblance or discrepancy between Kurdish, Persian, and English languages, the current research is an attempt to address the following questions:

1. Is the acquisition of existent properties of future tense construction in English affected by the non-existence of the same features in Kurdish and Persian?
2. Do Kurdish-Persian bilingual learners of English surpass their Persian monolingual counterparts in the acquisition of syntactic properties of future tense?
3. Is both Kurdish-Persian bilinguals and Persian monolinguals' proficiency level an effective factor in their capabilities of constructing appropriate syntactic properties of future tense?

3. Method

Participants

The participants of the study included 78 Persian monolinguals and Kurdish-Persian bilinguals who were acquiring English as their second and third languages. In order to ensure

that English is their second and third language 6 of the participants with knowledge of a further language were removed from the research. 72 remaining participants were initially divided into two groups, 36 monolinguals and 36 bilinguals. In a further attempt and through administering an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) each group was subdivided into 3 proficiency levels namely, Intermediate, Upper intermediate, and Advanced. Each level consisted of 12 members who had attended English learning courses in Kermanshah language learning institutes in Iran.

Three instruments were used in this study. An Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was firstly applied to assign the subjects to their appropriate level. Then, in order to elicit future acquisition inflectional features in English two tasks were performed in the following mentioned order. A grammatical judgment (GJT) test with a Translation Test (TT) coming next. Both these tests assessed learners' knowledge of syntactic properties related to future constructions. Learners took these tests in three occasions in 2019.

In order to answer the research questions, 3 tasks were applied in a pre-determined manner. The total population of 72 participants were assigned to two groups, namely L2 and L3 learners of English based on their prior language background. After that a recent version of Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was conducted to allocate the learners into their appropriate proficiency levels. In the present study the so called levels are intermediate, upper intermediate, and advanced levels.

The second task designed for the students was a 40 item Grammaticality judgment test which was administered to the three subgroups of each group of learners. Since this test provided learners with two items of grammaticality and ungrammaticality, researchers were able to find out about their ability in recognizing the correct grammatical forms in a glance. Their responses were assessed on a 1 and 0 scale which implies that by having an item correct they gained 1 and by responding wrongly they received 0.

The third task performed in this study was a Translation test, by the use of each student was able to demonstrate his/her capabilities in utilizing the inflectional features of future tense. In this test students were given 18 sentences in both Kurdish and Persian and then they were asked to write their English equivalents. The final translated sentences were subsequently scored based on their grammaticality correctness. In fact, the ones in which future inflectional features were used accurately obtained 1 and the reverse ones 0.

The above mentioned procedures provided us with some data which was fed into statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) afterwards. In order to do this the collected data were coded and valued at first. After that the reliability and normal distribution of the responses were respectively tested through Kolmogorov Smirnov and Duncan test. After that, an independent sample t-test was conducted to see if there is a difference in performance between L2 and L3 learners of English. At the end a one-way ANOVA was utilized to demonstrate between group comparisons.

4. Results and discussion

In order to meet all the pre-assumptions of a parametric test, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted on both GJ and TT test results. As the following table illustrates, the KS indices are both

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greater than 0.05, specifying that the available data goes after a normal distribution.

Table 1. Normal distribution of both GJ and TT test scores

	TT	GJT
Ks sig	0.978	1.318

Persian monolinguals vs. Kurdish-Persian bilinguals

As the initial analysis of the two sets of data illustrates, intermediate level participants in both groups performed less target like with reference to their group means (12.5, 13), regarding comprehension (in the case of grammaticality judgment test) and production (in the case of translation test) of future related features.

However, a detailed scrutiny of learners' accomplishments indicates that advanced attendants with the obtained means of 34 and 36.92 outperformed their intermediate and upper-intermediate counterparts.

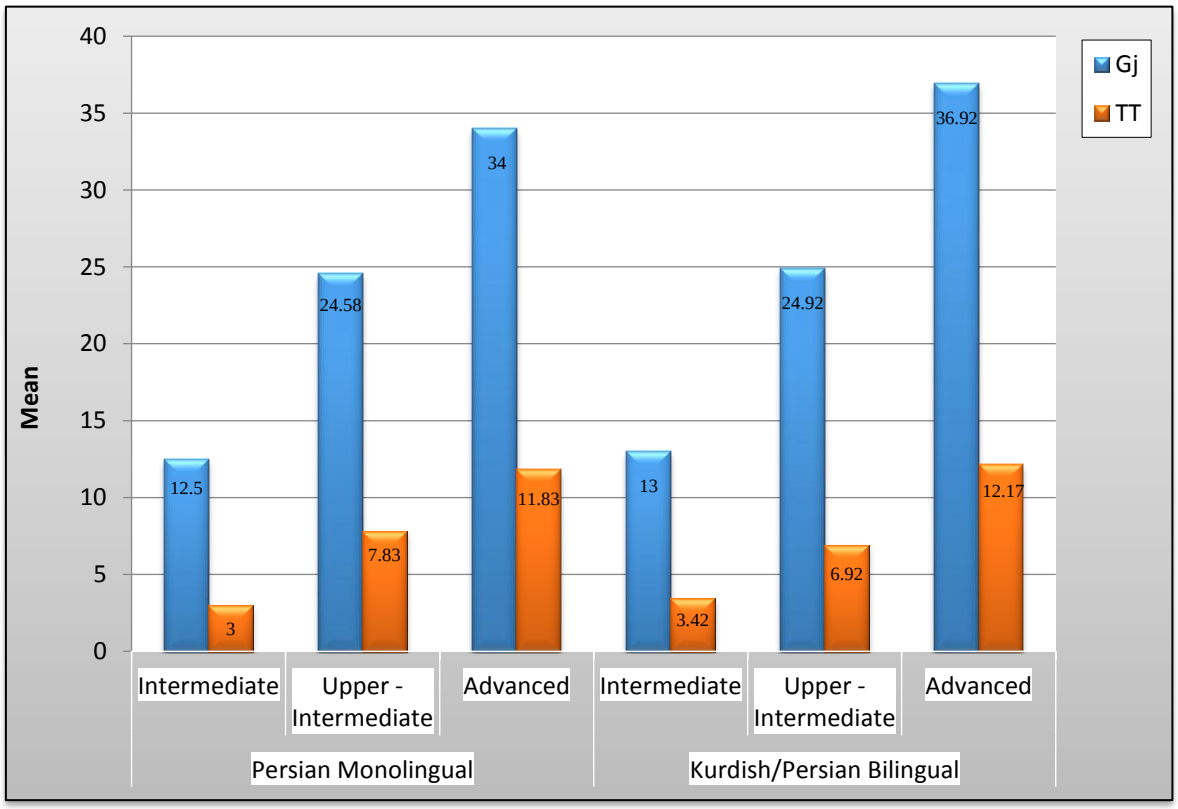

Figure 1. Comparisons of the three groups performances in both GJ and TT

The results derived from figure 1 signifies that the six sub categories of both Persian monolinguals and Kurdish-Persian bilingual groups went through an ascending rate from intermediate to advanced levels. Although Kurdish-Persian bilinguals outperformed their Persian monolingual counterparts, this discrepancy is so imperceptible.

Following the descriptive phase, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted on the initial obtained data of GJ and TT test to compare the average performance of learners across different levels of proficiency both within and between groups.

Table 2. One-way ANOVA

group			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Persian Monolingual	GJ	Between Groups	2787.722	2	1393.861	460.358	0.000
		Within Groups	99.917	33	3.028		
		Total	2887.639	35			
	TT	Between Groups	469.556	2	234.778	170.904	0.000
		Within Groups	45.333	33	1.374		
		Total	514.889	35			
Kurdish / Persian Bilingual	GJ	Between Groups	3432.056	2	1716.028	545.383	0.000
		Within Groups	103.833	33	3.146		
		Total	3535.889	35			
	TT	Between Groups	465.500	2	232.750	176.569	0.000
		Within Groups	43.500	33	1.318		
		Total	509.000	35			

The table evidently indicates that, as learners' level of proficiency rises, their performance seems to be more target like. In other words, it points out to the issue that the various L1 and L2 realization of future syntactic properties seem to have an effect on attendants' English learning at initial stages, but this transfer is more likely to disappear as the learners are passing advanced courses.

As manifested by the former statistical analyses, in both bilingual and monolingual groups advanced learners of English performed significantly better than their intermediate and upper-intermediate counterparts. The obtained results unveiled the fact that while learners are at the initial stages of English learning, their precedingly acquired language structures are the sources of their cross-linguistic transfer. In the present study, Persian and Kurdish are both the communication languages of subjects in which there is no specified feature exercised for the expression of future affairs. As a result, learners couldn't take advantage of their linguistic background in the case of English future acquisition since Persian and Kurdish had a non-facilitative role in their learning.

As mentioned before, the present study aims at inquiring five generative hypotheses. The first model which is FAFT claims that the entire L1 grammar constitutes the initial state in L2 acquisition (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1994, 1996). In addition, they notify that the learners' initial grammar can undergo some alteration; that is to say they aren't supposed to be confined to the L1 grammatical manifestations. Actually, L2 learners can have an access to UG options that didn't instantiated in L1, including new parameter setting for functional categories and their feature values. As the findings of this study illustrates L1 and L2 are a deterministic factor in the initial state of language acquisition of both groups. Therefore, the results are in line with the first hypotheses.

The second generative model is RDH (Hawkins & Chan, 1997; Hawkins 2003). This theory argues that in order to acquire the discrepant functional features of L1 and L2 learners need to be at a critical age. It means that

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if a feature doesn't instantiate in a learner's L1, he/she is not able to acquire it. Therefore, no learner can go beyond the syntactic features of his/her native language. However, according to the current study findings RDH model is under question. it is simply because learners in high levels of proficiency could overcome the difficulties of acquiring the syntactic features of the target language which are not present in their prior languages. They were able to produce grammatically correct sentences encompassing future-related features.

The third hypothesis, MSIH by Lardier (2005), claims that learners are holding an unconscious knowledge of functional projections and features including tense and agreement, but they have problem realizing the correct surface morphology. According to this model, learners' problem at the initial stages wouldn't disappear due to the mapping problems they deal with. However, the outcomes are inconsistent with these assertions and it is clear from the figure number 1 that both groups could exceed at learning the future related features at the end state.

According to the basic underpinnings of L2SF hypothesis which states that if L2 is acquired during adulthood, it would be conducive through L3 learning process. In fact, the process in which transfer occurs is a nonstop one in all stages of L3 acquisition. As reported by the findings of the current study in the case of L3 English acquisition, the L2 that learners had acquired before only affected their L3 in the initial stages of learning process. As a matter of fact, as learners accumulate more and more knowledge of L3, L2 transfer is decreased and fewer mistakes are made as a result of L2 negative transfer.

The following hypothesis considered for this study is CEM which claims that although both L1 and L2 can be the source of transfer in L3 acquisition, they only have a facilitative or neutral role not a non-facilitative one. If the basic underpinnings of this model is accepted, there must not have been any transfer from the structural patterns of both Kurdish and Persian languages in the process of English language learning. In fact, it is obviously cognizable from the statistical tables and figures that what learners comprehend and produce at the early stages of L3 learning is directly affected by their previously acquired languages. Since future syntactic features were absent in both Kurdish and Persian language, these two languages couldn't have a facilitative role. Therefore, according to the findings of the present study, not only can former languages have a facilitative role but also they can have non-facilitative transfers which can impede accurate production and comprehension at the initial stages.

The last hypothesis applied in this study is TPM (Rothman 2013, 2015). According to this theory, while acquiring an L3, transfer can occur from both L1 and L2 sources. However, depending on the effect it has, this transfer can be both facilitative or non-facilitative. As the statistics of the present study show, while learners are at the initial stages of English learning a negative transfer from their L1 and L2 impedes their learning which is according to TPM a non-facilitative transfer. Since participants of this study were speakers of Persian and Kurdish, two languages that are not holding a specific syntactic feature representing future, they couldn't take

advantage of a facilitative transfer.

In addition to what is mentioned, knowing about the lack of target language syntactic features in first and second language can help instructors innovate new methods of teaching. For example, a group of researchers investigated the efficiency of playing video games which were designed for sake of language learning (Nabi Lo, Torki, Moradi, 2019). They claimed that these games can help facilitate students' grammar learning. In correspondence with this study, Ghafouri, Dast Goshadeh, and Amin Panah (2016) asserted that using computers in language learning process can contribute to the acquisition of syntactic features and writing skills.

The obtained results from the current study had an interesting contribution to the L3 acquisition field since it pointed out to the fact that antecedent languages can have a non-facilitative role in the primary levels of L3 acquisition. Furthermore, learners' who are at the preliminary steps of language learning confront difficulties developing an accurate structural system of the target grammar, but as they accumulate more syntactic knowledge, they gradually converge on the target. In fact, producing well-formed, target-like utterances needs learners improve an interlanguage grammar by the use of which they have the potency of both producing and comprehending the utterances. In addition, achieving syntactically accurate structure of target language, is highly dependent upon learners' endeavor to generate propositions and perceive pragmatic functions.

5. Conclusion

The current study investigated the acquisition of future-related syntax in English language by two groups of Persian monolinguals and Kurdish-Persian bilinguals. These two groups of participants were chosen from three different proficiency levels namely, intermediate, upper intermediate, and advanced ones. Following this phase, GJT and TT were conducted and further statistical procedures were carried out on the obtained test scores. Finally, the findings were used to examine 3 relevant generative theories; FAFT, MSIH, and CEM.

The research findings demonstrated that since both Kurdish and Persian speakers have the lack of specific syntactic features for expressing future tense, they face difficulties acquiring the same feature in English as target language. However, this difficulty is very noticeable while they are at the early stages of English learning. Approaching the end state learners gradually obtain the ability of overcoming the difficulties and verging target-like productions. Therefore, it can be concluded from the present study that similarities of syntactic properties among background and target languages can have a facilitative role in the acquisition process. However, being syntactically distinguishable can impose obstacles on learners. On the other hand, this difficulty is not permanent and it will disappear as the learners accumulate more information about the target language and their proficiency level increases.

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