

IN THE NAME OF GOD

WH-QUESTION MOVEMENT PARAMETER SETTING: BILINGUALS
VS. MONOLINGUALS AND CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING

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ABSTRACT

WH-QUESTION MOVEMENT PARAMETER SETTING: BILINGUALS VS. MONOLINGUALS AND CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING BY

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There seems to be a difference between monolinguals and bilinguals in their ability to learn a subsequent language. The results of the previous research comparing bilinguals and monolinguals in learning an additional language have been mixed and sometimes even contradictory. However, some researchers have revealed that bilinguals are better than monolinguals in the area of lexical knowledge. Therefore, the lexical enhancement helps bilinguals to set and acquire the parameters of another non-native language easier and in a faster rate in comparison with monolinguals learning a second language. Following some studies in this domain, this thesis tested two groups of 34 Kurdish bilinguals and 34 Fars monolinguals who were participating in their general English course in Kurdistan University. The instruments of this study were a questionnaire and a grammaticality judgment test (GJT) based on Klein (1995b). They were tested on their ability to judge some special verbs subcategorized for their specific prepositions in 20 English statements. Besides, they were investigated on wh-movement parameters including pied-piping

(P-P) and preposition stranding (P-S) in English questions related to the 20 statements in the study.

The bilingual group significantly outperformed the monolinguals in the judgment of both statements and wh-questions sentences. This provided further support for lexical learning hypothesis and parameter setting model stated in Klein (1995b).

Following the above mentioned study, within the framework of UG model, some researchers have suggested that form-focused instruction and error correction in the form of consciousness raising (C-R) toward the similarities and differences between the parameters of the previously-learned languages and the new language helps the learners to reset the parameters in a better way. To test the effects of C-R on learning wh-movement parameters in English questions, an experimental C-R group was compared with a control group. The results showed that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UG= Universal Grammar

C-R= Consciousness-Raising

GJT= Grammatical Judgment Test

GCT= Grammatical Correction Test

P-S= Preposition Stranding

P-P= Pied-Piping

SK= Subcategorisation Knowledge

Null-Prep= Null-Preposition

LAD= Language Acquisition Device

CAH= Contrastive Analysis Hypotheses

SLA= Second Language Acquisition

CC= Creative Construction

PSG= Phrase Structure Grammar

ECP= Empty Category Principle

PGH= Pedagogical Grammar Hypotheses

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.0. Preliminaries

There are many myths about the superior abilities of a bilingual person to learn subsequent languages. The present researcher, as a bilingual, has sometimes felt that he resorts to his native language, Kurdish, for learning some English elements. However, in other times he has found consciously-learned rules of his second language, Farsi, more helpful for learning some other linguistic aspects of English. In this thesis, by a bilingual is meant a person who has developed the functional abilities in one or more second language skills. Therefore, there may be a difference between monolingual, Persian, and bilingual, Kurdish learners in the degree and nature of using their previously-learned languages in learning English as a foreign language. This issue of the impacts of bilingualism compared with monolingualism on learning another language has been investigated within both structural and universal grammar models of language learning (Klein, 1995b). The researchers have been interested in studying different aspects of such impacts on language development, educational attainment, cognitive style, and intelligence. Nevertheless, the results have been mixed and sometimes even contradictory.

Following some studies in this domain, especially Klein (1995b), this study attempts to investigate the effects of bilingualism on learning a third language as compared with monolinguals in the domain of Universal Grammar (UG) model of language acquisition as developed by Chomsky and his followers. The UG theory includes two main parts: principles which are common to all languages and parameters which may differ among languages. The principles are genetically structured or internalized in the human mind, but the parametric values can be set and thus acquired by exposure to particular languages. Principles and parameters together form "the core grammar". Nonetheless, there are some peripheral rules which fall outside the constraints of UG and are idiosyncratic aspects of particular languages. White (1989a) states three hypotheses regarding the availability of UG principles and parameters in second language acquisition: 1. UG is available and works exactly as it does in first language acquisition 2. UG is totally unavailable in second language acquisition and 3. access to UG is mediated through first language (White, 1989a, p. 48). In this regard, some applied linguists have studied the application of UG theory to second or third language learning. Also to test the three hypotheses mentioned above, some studies have shown that bilinguals are better than monolinguals in the rate of setting the new language parameters; and they have argued that this may be due to their enhanced lexical knowledge or matched

parameters between their first or second language and the third language that they are learning (Klein, 1995b).

Furthermore, within the framework of UG model, some researchers have suggested that form-focused instruction or error correction in the form of raising the students' consciousness toward the similarities or differences between parameters in the previously-learned languages and the new language parameters may help the students to reset the new language parameters at a much faster rate (Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, 1986; Cook, 1986). Some of the properties or parameters of L1 do not exist in L2 grammar; and they may be transferred negatively in the course of second language learning. Therefore, fostering students' awareness toward the absence of those parameters have been experimentally studied under the term of Consciousness Raising (C-R) in the literature and they are reported with some success in White (1989a).

1.1. Objectives of the study

As far as the researcher knows, no research has been carried out on subcategorization of verbs, wh-movement, and C-R of wh-movements in English with Persian and Kurdish participants. Using a Grammaticality Judgment Test (GJT) along with a Grammatical Correction Task (GCT) based on Klein (1995b), the present study statistically tested and compared two groups of Kurdish and Persian

participants. It also studied an experimental C-R group versus a control group. The purpose was to find answers to the following two questions:

1. Are bilinguals better than monolinguals at setting wh-question movement parameters? If so is this due to their increased lexical knowledge ?
2. Does raising the students' consciousness toward the similarities or differences between their first language and English help them to set the second language parameters better?

1.2. Significance of the study

This study will be significant in the following ways:

1. If question 1 above is answered positively according to the analysis of the empirical data, then it will provide further support for the parameter setting model of universal grammar and lexical learning hypotheses.
2. If the answer to the second question is positive as the result of the experimental application of C-R in the classroom, C-R as part of the Pedagogical Grammar (PG) can be used as a tactic to teach grammatical aspects in situations similar to those of this study.

1.3. Scope and limitation of the study

Wh-movement occurs both in relative clauses and wh-question forms. Moreover, lexical knowledge can be examined in a number of ways. However, this study is restricted only to investigating lexical knowledge of some statements and wh-movement in wh-questions as follows:

1. It examines lexical knowledge of some special verbs requiring some strict prepositions as their complements such as *wait for* as shown in the following example (i):

(i). The young girl is *waiting for* the school bus now.

2. It deals only with the corresponding wh-question movement of the statements like (i) above in two forms of pied-piping parameter as (ii) and preposition stranding parameter as (iii) in the following:

(ii). *For* which bus is the young girl *waiting* now?

(iii). Which bus is the young girl *waiting for*?

1.4. Data Analysis

Based on the participants' judgments, their scores were collected in the form of interval data and subjected to statistical analysis on the four variables including 1. Preposition Stranding (P-S) 2. Pied-Piping (P-P) 3. Subcategorization Knowledge (SK) and 4. The omission of

the preposition in the P-S and P-P cases above or Null-preposition (null-prep).

Therefore, two cases of one-way ANOVA followed by two Scheffe tests were used to interpret the results of the first and second study on the three variables of P-S, P-P and Null-prep.

Also a matched t-test was run to compare the results of the experimental and control groups in the C-R study.

1.5. Organization of the study

This thesis is organized into the following five chapters

- 1. Introduction:** This chapter is an introduction to the study. It briefly introduces the study.
- 2. Review of Literature :** This chapter reviews in detail the related literature including language learning theories of structuralism, UG, C-R and their corollaries. It also goes over the experimental studies regarding the influence of second language on third language learning, wh-movement in questions, and C-R of wh-questions.
- 3. Methodology:** the methodology employed in the study is the concern of this chapter. Thus, it will discuss the instrumentation, grouping, treatment and procedures of data collection and analysis.