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Role Of Proficiency In Source Language Activation While Learning English Lexemes In A Cross-Linguistic Context

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Abstract

The study aimed to address the lexemic cross-linguistic influence (CLI) mechanism and the role of proficiency in activating the source language of influence. The multilingual, Gujari-speaking English lexical learner participated in the study through the discourse completion tasks and self-assessment tests. The study identified evidence of lexemic influence[1] from already learned languages at form and concept levels while English lexical items were used. The study found that Urdu as L2 offered a facilitative role compared to Gujari and Pahari in influencing learning English vocabulary as Ln. The results indicate that L2 Urdu serves as the primary source of lexemic influence on English (Ln), which is shaped by the higher level of proficiency in the Urdu Language. Hence, the pattern of influence was from higher to higher and Urdu as an L2 also functions as a filter for other language features when acquiring L3 lexemes.

Keywords: *Lexemic, Cross-linguistic influence, Proficiency, Source language, Gujari.*

Introduction

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), a region administered by Pakistan, is characterized by its rich linguistic diversity. While English is the official language of Pakistan (Akram et al., 2020) and Urdu serves as the national language, the linguistic landscape of AJ&K is dominated by a variety of native languages spoken by the local population such as Gujari, Pahari and Urdu. Among these, Pahari–Pothwari stands out as the most widely spoken language, encompassing a range of dialects that vary across different areas of the region.

Despite the official status of English and Urdu, the daily lives of the people in AJ&K are more deeply connected to their native languages, reflecting the cultural and regional identities that these languages embody (Ramzan & Alahmadi, 2024). Pahari–Pothwari, in particular, plays a crucial role in communication and social interaction within communities, serving as a unifying linguistic thread across the region. This language, with its many dialectal variations, not only facilitates everyday communication but also preserves the rich oral traditions and cultural heritage of AJ&K.

The coexistence of multiple languages in AJ&K highlights the complex linguistic dynamics of the region, where official languages coexist with a vibrant array of native tongues. This situation presents unique challenges and opportunities for language policy and education in the

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region (Akram, 2020; Akram & Yang, 2021), as efforts to promote national and official languages must also account for the linguistic realities and preferences of the local population. There are also large numbers of Gujari and Kashmiri speakers, as well as pockets of Shina, Pashto, and Kundal Shahi speakers. These languages, except Pashto and English, are Indo-Aryan (Yuesti & Sumantra, 2009). Such linguistic diversity in the region creates the legitimate context of cross-linguistic influence while learning English lexical items (Ramzan et al., 2023). This phenomenon, as described by Ringbom (2006) is a psychological process in which learners employ linguistic resources other than those required in the target language. These beliefs were validated when I observed in the essay writing of Gujari-speaking students attending Government Post Graduate College in the district of Kotli, that their English writing was highly packed with the effect of previously acquired languages such as Gujari, Pahari, and Urdu. The influence was perceptible in all areas of the language like syntactical structure, phonology, and pragmatics.

According to Jarvis and Pavlenko (2013), cross-linguistic influence is observable in sound patterns, pragmatics, syntactical structure, and semantics, however, as mentioned earlier, the scope of the current study only encompasses the semantic perspective. Since studies in this area of research are sparse. The few that exist to study lexical learning and cross-linguistic influence are qualitative and the majority of them target Romance languages that have typological similarities. As DeAngelis (2007) suggests cross-linguistic influence cannot be considered only relying upon the influence of L1 alone. According to him, cross-linguistic influence is a broad phenomenon that remains inevitably uncharted and mysterious. Since such investigation encompasses the knowledge of more than one language consequently, multiple sources contribute to the level of influence, such sources of influence increase due to the increased number of languages the learners are familiar with.

When it comes to the current study, it was detected that Gujari-speaking English lexical learners use the core lexical items to account for numerous concepts of English lexemes and learners do not draw on other semantic nuances of the English words (Chen & Ramzan, 2024; Ramzan et al., 2023). Despite their exposure to the family of related or distinctive nuances of lexical items such as 'standard and criteria' learners at the secondary level tend to use the word which has an L1/L2 equivalent i.e., 'معیار/چنگی'. Their sticking to the core lexical item seems to stem from the fact that their native Gujari and other already learned languages such as Pahari and Urdu have one lexical item which is used for several concepts in English. The learners are observed using standards where criteria are required and vice-versa. Such narrowing usage of semantic nuances of English lexical items creates a legitimate context for the current research. Their interchangeable use of the English lexemes is identifiable both in written as well as spoken form however, in writing the cross-linguistic influence is more noticeable because, at this level of education, the only medium of evaluation is a written test.

This cross-linguistic influence seems to affect the Gujari-speaking English lexical learners making choices of English equivalent(s) or other nuances of the English lexemes. As in this example, Gujari is 'deo/ دیو and in Urdu and Pahari dena'. which incorporates many subtleties of English terms like 'give, donate, pay, transfer', etc. In English, all these words cover a range of notions in different contexts (Ramzan et al., 2023). According to Wagner (2010) comprehending the meaning of a vocabulary item contains more factors to understand than just knowledge of the meaning. It also includes acquiring the usage of a term in a correct context its many shades and distinct forms. As Jarvis (2009) explains, this is not the case when learners acquire a second language after acquiring their first language. Their inadequacy in learning the second/third language is due to the system of background languages they have already acquired, which causes them to filter new lexical items and concepts based on their prior understanding of the lexical items. Furthermore, according to DeAngelis (2007), the cross-linguistic effect cannot be evaluated just through the influence of L1. He goes on to suggest that the cross-linguistic effect is a vast phenomenon that will always be unknown and

enigmatic. Because such investigation includes knowledge of more than one language and, as a result, various sources that contribute to the amount of impact, such sources of influence rise as the number of languages the learners are familiar with increases.

As a result, learners attempt to adapt the new information to the concepts they already possess. This impact on learners' new learning is formally referred to as lexical influence. According to Ortega (2008) acquired knowledge of any language influences the learner's knowledge of processing, recognition, storage, and usage of lexemes in any other language they choose to acquire. According to research, language learners who are learning a language other than their native language attempt to conceive of true cross-linguistic similarity or imagined similarity among the languages, and this impression of similarities influences their new language acquisition. (Arabsky, 2006; Ringbom, 2007; Gabrys-Barker, 2006 &Singleton, 2006).

The current study is a valuable contribution to a phenomenon that is assumed both challenging and dynamic (De Angelis, 2007). He suggests that it is difficult to predict the behaviour of the learners in the cross-linguistic context as learners' preference for the selection of language(s) that are now in mind as a source to influence the new learning. Due to a large number of extra variables and their potential interaction, learning a new language is a very complex phenomenon (Sanz, 2000). As is the case in the current study where an already learned pool of languages which are Gujari, Pahari, and Urdu seems shaping the concepts while learning English, and consequently, the use of the lexical items is extensively influenced by the pool of already learned languages. The effect of such influence is determined by the number of predictive factors that are associated with already learned languages. These factors are discussed individually in several research papers as according to Szubko-Sitarek (2015) proficiency in background language(s) is one of the influencing factors.

Therefore, the current study aims to determine the influence of proficiency in background language(s) while learning English lexical items since, the Gujari learners have experienced three languages i.e., Gujari, Pahari, and Urdu before learning English lexical items.

Literature Review

According to Bardel and Lindqvist (2014), cross-linguistic influence is influenced by various factors, all of which significantly contribute to this phenomenon. One key factor is the level of proficiency. Whether or not a particular language is selected for influence, proficiency in the background language(s) plays a crucial role in determining the level of activation. A lower vocabulary size is associated with learners' lower proficiency levels in their native language, reducing the likelihood that this language will be used as a source of influence as the pool of potential influence candidates shrinks.

There are two different perspectives on the type of proficiency level that impacts the level of influence. Serrander (2011) and Szubko (2015) suggest that there is an absolute proficiency level where a certain level must be reached before any influence from that language can occur. Conversely, Lindqvist (2009) proposes a relative proficiency level, where any language in the background with increased proficiency will be selected for influence, regardless of its objective level. As a result, it remains unclear whether L1 should be included when comparing the predictive power of proficiency levels of languages in situations with multiple L2s. The question is which of the multiple L2s will dominate as the source of influence, and how one's proficiency level in the background languages relates to proficiency in the target language (TL). When a person has a low level of proficiency in the TL, their proficiency in the background languages may be selected as a source of influence (Lindqvist & Bardel, 2007).

Determining how different studies measure proficiency and which area has an impact is also challenging. Is it general language proficiency that governs lexical influence, or is it the depth and breadth of lexical dynamism that has an impact? Should we evaluate oral proficiency and fluency if we seek to explore the influence on oral production? Similarly, should orthography be considered when assessing proficiency in written production? Common methods for

determining proficiency include questionnaires, self-assessment, and personal comments (Bardel & Lindqvist, 2007; Hammarberg & Williams, 1998), and many studies also use proficiency tests (Bardel & Lindqvist, 2007; Tremblay et al., 2006).

In second language acquisition (SLA), linguistic competence is often measured to determine how correctly learners use the language. However, the current study focuses primarily on the lexical viewpoint of influence, deeming overall communicative competence more pertinent. For example, Gujari learners may produce grammatical sentences in their oral production but may be unable to write letters or complete other formal writing tasks in their native language. Consequently, this study adopts a competency-based definition of proficiency, concerned with learners' ability to perform various tasks in written and spoken forms in any language, regardless of their native language.

Several studies have examined the effect of proficiency on the source language of influence in both spoken and written expression. Williams and Hammarberg (2009) conducted a pioneering study on the influence of TL (then termed transfer), introducing a comprehensive field of study into various predictive aspects influencing the selection of source language in a cross-linguistic context. In their longitudinal study, they observed Sarah Williams, a sequential multilingual, for two years while she learned Swedish. She had English as her native language, near-native German as L2, advanced French as L2, and elementary Italian as L2. The study found that she experienced significant influence from L2 German, in which she had the highest proficiency in, compared to other L2s. The influence of L2 decreased progressively with increasing TL proficiency. If proficiency across all background languages were considered, her L1 English should have been similarly activated, but this was not the case. The study attributed this difference to German's status as a second language, given the typological similarity and equal frequency and recency of use.

Tremblay (2006) conducted a separate study to investigate the impact of L2 proficiency levels on L1 proficiency. The research examined two groups of English native speakers learning German as a third language. One group had low proficiency in L2 French, while the other had high proficiency. The study found that the high proficiency group experienced more interference (borrowing and foreignizing) from L2 French. However, these findings were considered in isolation from L1 influence, where L1 still exerted the greatest influence. Hammarberg (1998), Tremblay, and Williams (2006) posed questions about whether comparative proficiency levels alone determine source language selection across L2s, suggesting that distinct processes determine L1 activation.

Lindqvist (2010) assigned values to L1 and L2 influence, discovering that learners drew on their higher proficiency in L1 Swedish and L2 English for influence in L3 French, but not on closely related languages like Spanish and Italian, which were at lower proficiency levels. These findings suggest that proficiency significantly outweighs typology as the most predictive factor for the source language of transfer. However, caution is needed in overinterpreting these findings based on a small sample size.

Other studies have demonstrated the parallel relationship between acquired languages and TL proficiency levels. Bardel and Lindqvist (2007) found that a low proficiency background language (BL) has a higher influence when TL competence is also low. In their longitudinal investigation of lexical influence in oral output, they observed that typologically related languages exerted greater influence, but low-proficiency languages had a higher impact during initial recordings. Bardel and Lindqvist extended these trends by suggesting that low proficiency in TL results in greater influence from low proficiency in background languages. Their second study involved a bilingual L1 Swedish/Italian speaker learning Spanish as L3 alongside French and English as L2s, showing that high competence in a language (L1 Italian) dominated influence patterns differently than in their first learner. These studies indicate that source language proficiency does not have a uniform effect on influence behavior.

Given the diversity of results in the research considered, significant questions remain about the role of proficiency in lexical influence. The key questions are whether L1 should be incorporated into comparative proficiency features of source languages, and whether learners draw on low proficiency SLs when their L3 proficiency is low, subsequently drawing on higher proficiency SLs as L3 proficiency improves.

Findings from spoken production are generally thought to apply to written production as well. Several studies have examined both formats, but it is crucial to distinguish between the service modes underpinning spoken and written output. Jessner (2006) used think-aloud protocols to investigate the fundamental mechanisms of cross-linguistic influence, studying impact strategy, proficiency, recency, and psychotypology as predicting factors in English texts of bilingual German/Italian university students. Her emphasis on conscious influence strategies and decision-making processes sets her apart from previous studies. Jessner's qualitative analysis found that L1 German had a significant influence due to the study participants' German-speaking environment in Innsbruck, though typology could also explain the high dependency on German.

Odin and Jarvis (2004) conducted a study to untangle predictive elements and their impacts on target language learning, analyzing written texts of learners with L1 Finnish and L1 Swedish. They found that high-proficiency L1 Swedish learners influenced English more than low-proficiency L2 Swedish learners, isolating proficiency from typology as a source of influence. A comprehensive study is necessary to determine the effect of background languages on English learning by disentangling confounding variables. Since Williams and Hammarberg (1998) established the proficiency factor, understanding the L2 status hypothesis is critical for effective results. Previous studies have shown proficiency effects in oral and written production, but findings were often confounded by typology. Bardel and Lindqvist (2007) suggest typology may outweigh proficiency, while Lindqvist (2010) suggests low-proficiency SLs have a greater impact on low-proficiency TLs than high-proficiency SLs on high-proficiency TLs. Given these inconsistent findings, it remains to be seen whether proficiency truly determines the level of influence in a cross-linguistic context. Previous studies often confounded proficiency with typology and psychotypology, but the current study's focus on typologically dissimilar languages (Gujari, Urdu, Pahari) from English may offer useful insights into the effects of proficiency on cross-linguistic influence.

Present Study

The preceding section explored the complexities of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) in the acquisition of English lexemes. Existing literature indicates that during the acquisition of English lexemes, the first language (L1) often exerts a greater influence compared to the learner's second language (L2), or that all previously acquired languages (L1 and L2s) are equally activated in the learning process (Cenoz, 2003; 2013). This debate provides a legitimate context for the current research to investigate CLI and determine the source language of influence when L1 Gujari and L2s Urdu and Pahari are involved in learning English (Ln). Although numerous studies have been conducted in multilingual settings, the languages involved in this study have been discussed only limitedly in relation to CLI.

The current study was conducted in a rural area of Kashmir, where Gujari is the learners' first language, and Urdu and Pahari are their second languages. Gujari is the native language of the study’s respondents, while Pahari and Urdu are learned at around the age of six. The mediums of learning these languages differ: Pahari is learned from friends, as it is a common language among different tribes, whereas Urdu is learned in school, serving as the medium of instruction in academics and the language of educated people. Urdu also functions as a lingua franca for speakers of various local languages and is used for all official correspondence (Pennycook, 2017).

Typologically, these languages share similarities; for example, the English words "see," "watch," and "look" are translated into Gujari as *tekna* (تکنا), into Pahari as *teksan* (تکساں), and into Urdu as *dekhna* (دیکھنا). These typological similarities with minor differences help learners acquire these languages after learning Gujari. However, despite these intra-language similarities, these languages are typologically distant from English. Despite this distance, influence from the previously learned languages is still observed while learning English lexical items, leading researchers to assume that the level of proficiency in already learned languages may be at play.

Given the unique linguistic environment of the study's participants, this research aims to shed light on how proficiency in Gujari, Urdu, and Pahari influences the acquisition of English. By examining this particular set of languages, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of CLI, particularly in contexts where the target language (English) is typologically distant from the learner's L1 and L2s. The findings could provide valuable insights into how multilingual learners navigate the complexities of language acquisition and the role that proficiency in background languages plays in this process.

This study's focus on a rural Kashmiri context, where multilingualism is common, underscores the importance of considering sociolinguistic factors in CLI research. The distinct learning environments for Pahari and Urdu highlight the varied pathways through which these languages are acquired and how these pathways might impact their influence on learning English. Understanding these dynamics can inform language teaching strategies (Li & Akram, 2023; Akram & Abdelrady, 2023) and contribute to more effective educational practices in multilingual settings (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022).

By addressing the gap in literature regarding the specific languages involved in this study, the research aims to expand the theoretical and practical knowledge of CLI. It seeks to determine whether proficiency in Gujari, Urdu, and Pahari facilitates or hinders the acquisition of English lexemes and how these languages interact in the learner's cognitive processes. The outcomes of this study have the potential to enhance our comprehension of multilingual language acquisition and provide a foundation for further research in similar linguistic contexts. The study focuses on the following research objectives:

1. To know the cross-linguistic influence while learning English lexical items by Gujari-speaking English learners
2. To discuss the role of proficiency (cognitive factor) in the activation of source language for influence

Data Collection and Analysis

The study utilized a vocabulary size assessment to classify the learners. This test identified 130 English learners from rural public secondary schools who speak Gujari, all possessing a similar proficiency level in English as a second language (L2). Following the initial selection, these learners were assigned translation exercises and Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) to assess the extent of influence from their previously acquired languages

Speaker A: The principal of the government high school Goi said that those students who get less than 45% marks in an internal test of the school, their admission will not be sent to the Board as regular students.

Speaker B: Oh, I wonder one of my colleagues got only 36% marks in the internal exams. Is it possible to request the principal to give them a special_____ as a regular student otherwise there would be a fierce loss of the students**. (opportunity/chance).**

After gathering preliminary data to examine the influence on lexical learners, a Self-Assessment Test, as described by Goto Butler and Lee (2010), was administered. This test

aimed to understand the role of psychotypology, a cognitive factor, in the activation of previously learned languages (Gujari, Pahari, and Urdu) and how it might contribute to lexemic influence such as:
In which language you are comfortable while introducing yourself and answering simple questions?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor
Gujari					
Urdu					
Pahari					
English					

The collected data were categorized into three categories such as correct if the learners provide the lexical item which is appropriate according to the context. Incorrect it stands for those responses which are not required and the DCTs lost the subjectivity last was interchangeable where learners provided chance where opportunity was required and opportunity where chance was required, they interchange the mutually exclusive lexical items. The following table01 shows the result of DCTs.

Table 01 DCTs Responses Categorization

Word Pairs	Categories			
	Correct	Interchangeable	Improper	Total
Chance vs. opportunity	35	54	41	130
Secure vs. safe	40	44	46	130
Switch off vs. close	35	78	17	130
Decrease vs. reduce	44	50	36	130
Watch vs. See	45	39	36	130
Total	199	265	176	
Average	108.4	140.4	35.2	
SEM	5.85	2.731	5.87	

Table 01 indicates that the interchangeable category appears more frequently than the correct and improper categories. Notably, correct responses are more common than improper ones. This table also highlights the relationships among lexical items, reflecting the varying levels of understanding among learners. For instance, the pairs "secure-safe" and "watch-see" are more prominent in the interchangeable category than other pairs. Additionally, the range of responses for different lexical items varies, prompting the use of a chi-square test. This test aims to determine whether there are significant differences in respondents' general comprehension across various lexical items and the influence of lexical items from their previously learned languages. This statistical analysis seeks to establish whether variations in comprehension are affected by lexical choices and the interaction of multiple languages within the respondents' mental lexicon

Table 02

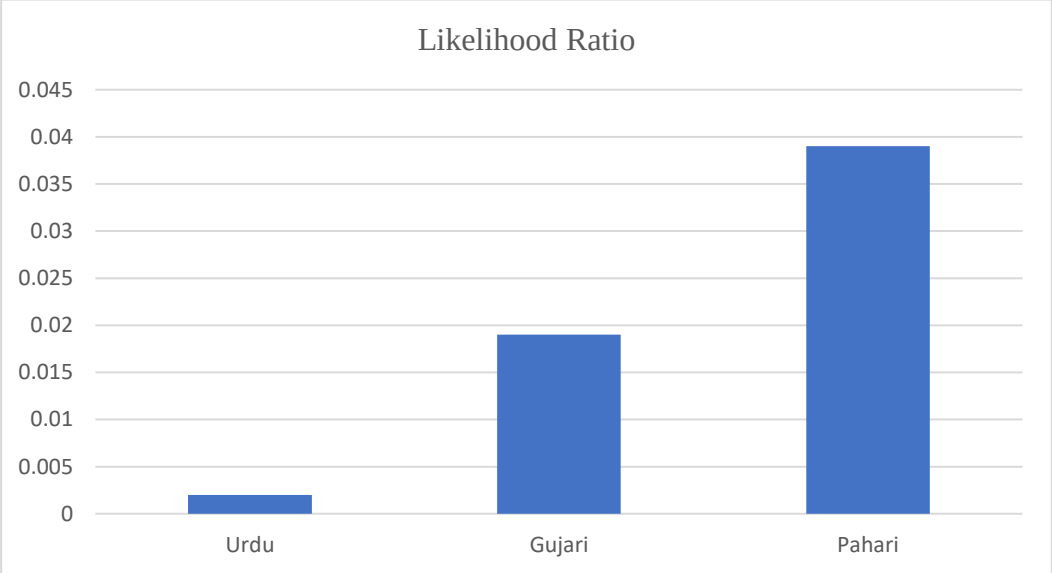
Chi-Square Test of Word Pairs vs. Responses

	Chance vs. Opportunity	Secure vs. Safe	Switch off vs. Close	Decrease vs. Reduce	Watch vs. see
Chi-Square	19.655[a]	51.894[a]	43.190[a]	10.930[a]	36.683[a]
Df	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.004	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have anticipated frequencies less than 5. The minimum anticipated cell frequency is 94.7.

A 2x5 chi-square test revealed a significant relationship between responses and lexical items. The results indicated the following chi-square values: 19.65 for "chance" vs. "opportunity," 51.894 for "secure" vs. "safe," 43.190 for "switch off" vs. "close," 10.930 for "decrease" vs. "reduce," and 36.683 for "watch" vs. "see." All these results had a p-value of $p<.05$, suggesting that respondents had varying levels of understanding for each lexical item in the discourse completion tasks (DCTs). The analysis showed that learners used these items interchangeably more frequently than other categories, indicating that previously learned languages were influencing their understanding of English lexical items. This demonstrates a significant lexemic influence from these languages on the learners' comprehension and use of English vocabulary. The second set of data focuses on analyzing the role of proficiency in the background language(s) in the activation of the source language.

Chart 01 Role of the Proficiency in the Activation of the language as a source of Influence.



The chart above presents the results of the Likelihood Ratio Test, highlighting the role of proficiency in determining the influence of background languages during the acquisition of English lexical items. The results indicate that the p-value ratio for proficiency in Gujari and Pahari exceeds the threshold of 0.05, suggesting that these languages do not significantly influence learners' English lexical items.

However, the level of proficiency in Urdu and its relation to the influence as a source language while learning English lexical items shows a p-value of 0.03, which is below the 0.05 threshold. The results show that the activation of Urdu as a source of influence while learning English lexical items is greater and more decisive as compared to the other two languages.

To analyze the nuances of each lexical item used in the DCTs and their associated transferability, the study used the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary and the New Oxford American Dictionary as objective sources. These dictionaries were chosen for three main reasons. First, they offer concise and clear explanations for each word, often making favourable comparisons within lexical pairs. Although a more comprehensive dictionary like the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) provides detailed information, including etymology, it may sometimes obscure the core meanings of words. Therefore, the chosen dictionaries were preferred for their succinct and straightforward definitions. Second, they provide a thesaurus alongside the word definitions, allowing the study to hypothesize why language transfer occurred with certain pairs but not others. Third, these dictionaries are accessible online and available to the public, making them credible and economical resources for establishing a baseline for discussion.

Chance vs. Opportunity

The lexical items "chance" and "opportunity," though often used interchangeably, have distinct meanings and usages. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "chance" is a noun meaning the possibility of something happening without certainty, while Merriam-Webster defines it as the possibility or risk of an event occurring. Examples include: "I do not think that you will have a chance to go to America," and "We chanced to go outside." On the other hand, "opportunity" is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as a specific time to do something, a scope for success, and Merriam-Webster lists it as a favourable circumstance for success. Examples include: "I had a good opportunity to go to Canada," and "Now you have an opportunity to prove yourself."

While both terms can indicate potential, "chance" suggests a probability without certainty and can be either positive or negative. In contrast, "opportunity" usually implies a favourable context for success. The interchangeable use of these lexical items by Gujari-speaking English learners indicates a lack of distinction between these concepts, influenced by their background language, which uses a single lexical item "moko" or "moka" for both such as;

اس بچہ نوں پڑھاہی غو ایک اور موقو دینا چہتو اے۔ چہتو۔

In Urdu same word pair is translated into ‘moka’ **(**موقع**)** i.e.

علی کو انگلش پاس کرنے کا ایک موقع اور دینا چاہیے۔ ہمارے ملک میں پڑہے لکھے لوگوں کو روزگار کے کافی موقعے ملتے ہیں۔

In Pahari, the lexical items have the same translation as in Urdu. But the question is that all the background languages contain a single lexical item that encompasses two distinctive English lexemes having different nuances of the meanings so these learners are found merging the different lexemes and meanings of English into single lexeme which they have learned in their background languages.

Secure vs. Safe

"Secure" and "safe" also present a challenge for Gujari-speaking learners. "Secure," according to the Oxford Dictionary, means to be free from danger or risk, and Merriam-Webster defines it as being protected from harm. Examples include: "I am feeling secure in my new house," and "It is very difficult to get a secure job these days." "Safe," meanwhile, means free from harm or risk, as defined by both Oxford and Merriam-Webster. Examples include: "I am not feeling safe here," and "Have safe traveling."

The key difference is that "secure" refers to being protected from planned threats or dangers, while "safe" generally implies being free from unplanned threats. Gujari speakers tend to use these terms interchangeably due to their background language, which uses the term "mehfooz" for both.

میں اپکے محفوظ سفر کے لیے دعا گو ہوں۔ اپ کو نوکری اب اس ارگناہزیشن میں محفوظ ہے۔

Switch off vs. Close

The distinction between "switch off" and "close" is another area of confusion. "Switch off" means to cease the motion of something through a controlling instrument or to stop thinking about something, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary. Examples include: "Please switch off your heater before going outside," and "You should switch off your thoughts about him." "Close," on the other hand, means to block against entry or to come to a conclusion. Examples include: "Please close the door," and "She has a close relationship with her mother." "Switch off" is typically used for de-energizing something or stopping the flow of something through a button, while "close" refers to blocking access or ending an operation. Gujari learners often use these terms interchangeably because their background language uses a single term "band krna" for both actions.

علی جو دروازو بند کر شوڑیو اور اس غا باپ جو بتی/پنکھا وی بند کر شوڑی۔

In Urdu same word pair is translated into band 'krna/bjao' (بجاو /بند کرو)

علی نے دروارہ بند کر دیا ہے اور اس کے ابو نے بلب بھی بجا دیا لیکن پندکھا نہیں بند کیا۔

In Urdu, band krna is used for doors and windows, and is also used for fans. However, for lights, bjao is used, but it is found that the lexical items 'close' and 'switch off' are used interchangeably because the word band krna is mostly used and students transfer the concepts and lexical items which they already learned from their background languages. It shows that the background languages contain a single lexical item that encompasses two English lexemes having different nuances of meaning, so these learners are found merging the different words and meanings of English word pairs into single lexemes that they have learned prior to the learning of English lexemes.

Decrease vs. Reduce

"Decrease" and "reduce" are also often used interchangeably by Gujari speakers. "Decrease," according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means to mark a lower number or decline in size or amount. Examples include: "The death rate of cancer patients is decreasing remarkably," and "The population rate in Pakistan is increasing, not decreasing, with time." "Reduce," on the other hand, means to mitigate the effects of something or to bring down the size or quantity. Examples include: "The train reduces its speed near the station," and "This medicine will reduce the risk of a heart attack."

While both lexical items imply making something smaller or less, "reduce" often carries the connotation of bringing down a size, quantity, quality, intensity, or value, while "decrease" refers more specifically to the reduction in number or amount. Gujari learners often conflate these due to their background language, which uses terms like "thora hona" for both concepts.

پانی گلاس وچ تھوڑو اے اور پٹرول غی قیمت وی تھوڑی ہو رہی اے۔

In Urdu same word pair is translated into band 'thora/kum hona ((تھوڑی ہونا/کم ہونا/تھوڑاہونا

پانی گلاس میں بہت کم/تھوڑا ہے۔ کھانے پینے کی چیزوں میں کمی آ رہی ہے۔ اٹیمی ھتھیاروں سے جنگ کا خطرہ کم ہو رہا ہے۔

In all the background languages, thora and kam is used wherever, reduce and decrease are required use. Reduce and decrease have different senses in English but these nuances are not appropriately translated into background languages i.e Gujari, Urdu, and Pahari. The Gujari learners generalize the lexical item kam krna thora hona on everywhere decrease and reduce is used. It shows that the background languages contain a single lexical item that encompasses two English words having different nuances of the meanings so these learners are found merging the different words and meanings of English word pairs into single lexemes which they have learned prior to the learning of English words.

So, words 'dekhna, and tekna' in background languages are used for both English lexemes i.e., watch and see. These English words have different nuances of meanings according to the context. However, Gujari learners generalize the already learned words in their previous languages while using this word pair. Consequently, two distinguished concepts and merged

with one lexical item in background languages. Similarly, different concepts of words pair are also merged and consequently used interchangeably and improperly.

Watch vs. See

Lastly, the distinction between "watch" and "see" poses difficulties. "Watch" means to notice something attentively or allocate time for observing something carefully. Examples include: "They watched a cricket match all day," and "Maybe I will go to the cinema to watch a new movie." "See," however, means to visit someone, meet with someone, or understand things by observing them. Examples include: "I can see what is going on," and "Parents want to see their children happy."

"Watch" involves intentional observation and attentiveness, while "see" implies becoming aware of something without deliberate observation. Gujari learners often use these terms interchangeably because their background language uses a single term "takna" or "dekhna" for both actions, leading to a merging of distinct concepts into one.

میرو گیرو پورو دن ٹی۔ وی تکتو رہ۔ ہوں پورو دن تونوں تکتو روں۔ ہوں اسنوں تکنا چاہوں۔

In Urdu same lexemes are translated into‘ dekhna’ (دیکھنا). i.e

میں اج پورا دن ٹی ۔وی دیھکتا رہا۔ میں اسکو دیکھنا چاہتا ہوں۔

In summary, Gujari-speaking English learners often use English lexemes interchangeably due to the linguistic behaviour of the background languages, which use single lexemes for multiple English lexemes having different nuances. In this way, the study identified the lexemic influence while learning English lexemes in the context of the Gujari-speaking region.

Discussion

As was mentioned earlier, the current study aims at knowing the lexemic CLI while learning English lexical items in the context where the learners already know two or three languages. The study generates more understanding of the cross-linguistic influence specifically, it aims at the lexemic influence from already learned languages, and the selection of the source employing the Parasitic Model. It was assumed that all the background languages tend to influence the vocabulary of Ln however, L1 works as an ex officio position in the context of CLI. Similarly, it was further predicted that L1 play the role of filter for the vocabulary of L2 as a source of transfer into Ln and learners strategically use the L2 as compared to L1. The current study successfully identified and described that Gujari-speaking English learners depended upon the already learned languages as a source for Ln learning, and consequently, it was found that PM was working simultaneously. In this sense, the learners were likely to reduce the complexity of the language assignments by recognizing similarities across the novel elements and previously learned structures.

According to Efeoglu (2019), even having dissimilarities of lexical forms across the languages, the learners of Ln sense the similarity and use it as a frame when it comes to learning new lexical items. The findings of the current study also identified the same sense of similarity since Gujari-speaking English learners tend to draw on already learned languages.

According to Ringbom (2001) and Lindqvist (2010) high proficiency in any of the background languages leads to a larger amount of influence from that language, however, it depends on the mode of use, task, and purpose of the use of the language that plays the role in the level of proficiency. Consequently, despite increased oral proficiency in Gujari and Pahari in the pilot study, since these languages are mostly spoken in the region not written, and the current study used the written mode and formal use of language for data collection because the study aims at writing mode, thus, the level of proficiency in writing is not that much higher in Gujari and Pahari, so results suggest that Urdu outweighs the other two languages in the level of proficiency. Consequently, Urdu has a major source of influence for the Gujari learners as is shown in Table (6.1) which is used as an illustrative purpose to strengthen the discussion while quoting the previous research.

In many previous studies, proficiency was not measured independently, but it was confounded with typology or L2 status (Jessner &Tremblay, 2006) however, in the current study typological similarities between background languages (Gujari, Urdu, and Pahari) and English did not yield the positive results since it was found that these background languages have no similarity with English lexemes. However, the L2 status factor may have a confounding factor in this study.

While discussing the previous research on the level of proficiency two important questions need to be answered such as, should proficiency be measured across all background languages or proficiency should be considered only across L2s? secondly as suggested by Lindqvist (2010) Odlin and Jarvis (2004) whether the learners draw on low proficiency in the background languages when their target language, in this case, English is also at low-level of proficiency and similarly on high-proficiency when their target language is also at the high level of proficiency. The first difficulty relates to the fact that studies frequently use stronger proficiency in one L2 relative to another to explicate the greater influence occurrences from that language, without regarding proficiency in the L1 into account (Hammarberg & Williams 1998). Many researchers appear to overlook the L1 when assessing the effects of proficiency, perhaps because learners often have the maximum level of proficiency in the L1, which would overshadow any variation in proficiency effects across L2(s). The current study is distinctive as it considers proficiency in all already acquired languages, regardless of the language's status. Nevertheless, in the statistical model, the L1/L2 language status is controlled to disentangle the influence of proficiency. Either L1 is included to examine the hypothesis that high proficiency leads to greater effects or only L2(s) should be included to address this hypothesis result would be the same. Concerning the second question Bardel and Lindqvist (2007) are of the view that learners draw on low-proficiency background language in the case target language is also at low proficiency which is a low-to-low pattern. Regarding the current study, the learners were at low proficiency in English language learning. They were students of secondary and higher secondary levels of education. However, the background languages which were found to influence the usage of English lexemes have relatively high levels of proficiency as compared to English. Generally, Gujari is the learners' first language and Pahari is the learners' second language both are mostly used in oral form and spoken everywhere in the region. However, Urdu as an L2 is mostly used as a medium of writing and a medium of exams as well.

Taking into account that the current study is focusing on the influence on writing. The result of the current study indicates that the influence of high proficiency is larger even though English is at a low level of proficiency. Regarding the question of reconciling the current study with the study of Bardel and Lindqvist (2007). They did a long-term study where they found that when both Spanish and the target language (TL) were at a low level of proficiency there was more influence from Spanish to the TL. As learners got better at the TL, the number of transfers from Spanish got less, while the number of transfers from French and Swedish got more. Since studies that were quoted here did not examine proficiency objectively, thus it seems hard to compare them. However, it can be assumed that the most probably, proficiency of Gujari-speaking English language learners matches recording No.4 in Bardel and Lindqvist (2007). This recording was carried out after four weeks of intensive language courses. Nonetheless, it cannot be like recording No.1 which was for novel learners. For recordings 2 and 3, we see a lot of influence from high-level French and Swedish, which is in line with what this study found. Since, recording No. 1 in Bardel and Lindqvist (2007) was made so early, when the learner's TL proficiency was almost nonexistent, it is possible that the learner used Spanish because it was the closest in terms of sound, not because it was also a language with low proficiency. Given how proficiency and typology were mixed up in their study, it is still hard to tell if there is a tendency of "low-to-low" proficiency influence.

The present study suggests that high proficiency enhances the likelihood that a BL (Background Language) can be depended on for influence, even if the TL has a low proficiency level. The results suggest that the ratio of the likelihood model and the model fitting criteria in

multinomial regression during the testing of proficiency signify that the significant p-value ($p<.005$) is less than .005 of Urdu as compared to the other two languages. Urdu is used in writing so it has a high level of proficiency in this mode. The result supports the claim of Lindqvist (2010) that high proficiency in the background language(s) has greater influence if other confounding factors are controlled i.e., psychotypology/ L2 status factors. However, most studies on proficiencies are conducted on oral production. They were supporting the oral pattern of proficiency to the oral pattern of English as a foreign language. The current study as compared to previous studies focused on written proficiency in the background languages, including the learners' first language, and Pahari and Urdu as second languages. The interpretation claims that as compared to Gujari and Pahari the level of influence concerning Urdu proficiency is more predictable as compared to the other two languages.

Conclusion

From a psycholinguistic perspective, this study aimed to explore cross-linguistic influence within the context of marginalized languages in a linguistically diverse region. The research examined the lexemic influence from previously learned languages and identified how these influences manifest when learning English lexical items. Upon identifying the extent of this influence, the study delved into the cognitive factors that significantly contribute to the activation of the source language. The findings revealed that Urdu, functioning as a second language (L2), serves as a primary source of influence in the acquisition of English lexemes. For Gujari-speaking learners of English, the learning mechanism in a cross-linguistic context is heavily influenced by their proficiency in Urdu and its activation during the learning process. Consequently, Urdu emerged as a more dominant source of influence compared to Gujari and Pahari.

These results suggest that a more comprehensive study is warranted to examine the various factors contributing to cross-linguistic influence (CLI) in the learning of subsequent languages (Ln). This includes understanding the role of both L1 and L2 usage in different contexts. Informal use, such as communication with family and friends or during recreational activities, and formal use, such as instructional language in classrooms, both significantly impact the learning process. Future research should consider these multifaceted interactions to provide a deeper understanding of CLI and its implications for language learning in multilingual settings.

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