



# Cross-linguistic influence in third language: Examples from students' written production

*Influencia interlingüística en una tercera lengua: Ejemplos de la producción escrita de los estudiantes*

Fatiha Sadouki  
University of Szeged



## Abstract

The present study sheds light on cross-linguistic influence in third language learning and intends to find out how the previously acquired languages influence the learning of L3. This study focuses on the nature of cross-linguistic influence when more than two languages are involved. It aims to explore how language transfer manifests itself in participants' written production. Twenty-six secondary school students, who have two languages as their background languages (Arabic and French) and English as a third language, took part in this study. The instruments included a written task that is designed to find out how the previously acquired languages affect the learning process of the third language and to explore the factors that affect cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition. The findings showed that due to the typological proximity between L2 French and L3 English, participants transfer from the second language, which works as a facilitation in L3 learning due to the typological similarity between French and English.

**Keywords:** Cross-linguistic influence; TLA; Language transfer; Written production

## Resumen

El presente estudio arroja luz sobre la influencia interlingüística en el aprendizaje de una tercera lengua e intenta descubrir cómo las lenguas adquiridas previamente influyen en el aprendizaje de la L3. Este estudio se centra en la naturaleza de la influencia interlingüística cuando están implicadas más de dos lenguas. Su objetivo es explorar cómo se manifiesta la transferencia lingüística en la producción escrita de los participantes. En el estudio participaron veintiséis estudiantes de secundaria que tienen dos lenguas como lenguas de base (árabe y francés) y el inglés como tercera lengua. Los instrumentos incluyeron una tarea escrita diseñada para averiguar cómo las lenguas previamente adquiridas afectan el proceso de aprendizaje de la tercera lengua y para explorar los factores que influyen en la influencia interlingüística en la adquisición de una tercera lengua. Los resultados mostraron que, debido a la proximidad tipológica entre el francés (L2) y el inglés (L3), los participantes tienden a transferir elementos de la segunda lengua, lo que facilita el aprendizaje de la L3 gracias a la similitud tipológica entre el francés y el inglés.

**Palabras clave:** Influencia Interlingüística; ATL; Transferencia Lingüística; Producción Escrita

## INTRODUCTION

The process of language acquisition constitutes a complex interplay of factors, wherein prior language knowledge and linguistic experiences wield significant influence (Gass & Selinker, 2008, Odlin, 1989). Within the realm of third language (L3) acquisition, the presence of learners' previously acquired languages assumes to play a pivotal role in shaping their learning trajectories and outcomes (De Angelis, 2007). This phenomenon, recognized as cross-linguistic influence, has garnered substantial attention within the domain of second language acquisition research (Ringbom, 2007). However, the exploration of cross-linguistic influence within L3 acquisition, particularly in instances involving more than two languages, remains an area that has yet to receive comprehensive scrutiny to decide which one of the prior language knowledge impacts the target language acquisition (Cenoz, 2001, 2003, 2008; Cenoz & Gorter, 2010; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008; Jessner, 2006; Nation, 2003; Poplack, 1980).

The current study aims to explain how learning a third language (L3) is influenced by the languages that were previously acquired as investigated by previous research (Balla, 2013; Dewaele, 1998; Carlisle, 2000; Cenoz, 2001; Cenoz & Gorter, 2010; Farnia & Geva, 2011; Ramirez et al., 2013; Sadouki, 2020a, 2020b, 2021, 2022; Talebi, 2013). Drawing from findings in prior studies, this study aims to shed lights on the influence of prior linguistic knowledge on the growth of L3 proficiency by closely examining the instances of language transfer in participants' written production, particularly in cases of language transfer between Arabic and French to English, the target L3 (Gherzouli, 2019; Hanafi, 2015; Mami, 2013; Negadi, 2015; Sadouki, 2020a, 2020b, 2021, 2022).

This article is divided into the following sections. The literature review begins with a thorough explanation of the acquisition of a third language, followed by a survey of theoretical frameworks relevant to cross-linguistic influence. This section thoroughly examines the many factors that support cross-linguistic influence while also exploring earlier studies on how cross-linguistic influence appears in written production. Following the comprehensive literature review, the methodology section carefully outlines the study's participants, research design, data collection tools, data collection procedures, and the analytical techniques that were used in the study. After that, the results section presents an exposition of the observable patterns of cross-linguistic transfer through a thoughtful presentation of qualitative analysis of the participants' written output, thereby presenting a lucid exposition of the discernible patterns of cross-linguistic transfer. The task of

interpreting the empirical findings is then taken on in the results and discussion section, where careful consideration is given to the role of typological affinities, the range of cross-linguistic influences that are both facilitative and inhibitive, and the factors that shape cross-linguistic influence within L3 acquisition. This discourse culminates in offering pedagogical implications while also suggesting promising directions for subsequent research endeavours.

As the scholarly exploration delves into the intricate dynamics between pre-existing linguistic competencies and the acquisition of a third language (L3), this research contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic influence and its implications within the domain of multilingual education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The complexity of learning a third language (L3) depends on a number of variables, such as the languages you already know and your prior exposure to other languages (Cenoz, 2008). The primary goal of most third language acquisition (TLA) studies is to better understand how learning multiple languages affects how different languages interact with one another. The typological primacy model, put forth by Rothman (2011), is a crucial theoretical viewpoint for comprehending L3 acquisition because it emphasizes the significance of similarities between the new language and previously learned languages in the L3 learning process. Furthermore, the L2 status factor concept, as discussed by Bardel and Falk (2011), effectively emphasizes the impact of learning a second language (L2) on learning a third language, indicating that knowledge from L2 can significantly transfer to L3.

### **Third Language Acquisition**

The intricate process of third language acquisition (L3) stands as a dynamic interplay of multifarious factors, with antecedent linguistic knowledge and diverse language experiences emerging as paramount influencers (Gass & Selinker, 2008). In line with the broader aims of this study, this section embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the crossroads where L3 acquisition and cross-linguistic influence converge, especially within the milieu of multilingual scenarios. Theoretical underpinnings from the typological primacy model (Rothman, 2011) offer an illuminating lens through which the complexity of L3 acquisition can be understood. This model posits that the proximity of typological features between the target language and learners' prior linguistic repertoire significantly shapes the trajectory of L3 acquisition.

Rothman's (2011) typological primacy model assumes a pivotal role in framing the discourse surrounding L3 acquisition. This theoretical construct postulates that the typological affinity between the target language and learners' antecedently acquired languages plays a pivotal role in modulating the ease and efficacy of L3 learning. The degree of typological proximity potentially dictates the extent to which linguistic features and structures are shared across languages, subsequently influencing the transfer of knowledge and linguistic patterns during L3 acquisition. As learners navigate this problematic landscape, the typological primacy model provides a critical vantage point from which to understand the complex interplay between linguistic systems and their cascading influence within the realms of L3 acquisition.

Additionally, the role of the second language (L2) as a significant conduit in L3 acquisition cannot be understated. The L2 status factor, as highlighted by Bardel and Falk (2011), unveils a noteworthy avenue through which L2 knowledge permeates the L3 acquisition journey. The intrinsic connections and parallels drawn between the L2 and the subsequent L3 engender a platform for the transference of linguistic constructs, ranging from vocabulary to syntactic patterns. Learners harness this bridge between languages to navigate the challenges of L3 acquisition, effectively capitalizing on their existing linguistic resources to bolster their proficiency in the new linguistic terrain.

To summarize this section, it is crucial to emphasize the complex interaction between the typological primacy model and the L2 status factor in defining the contours of L3 acquisition. The interaction of these factors ripples as learners embark on this complex linguistic journey, affecting their process of learning a third language. The following sections of this review extend this investigation by exploring the complex mechanisms and factors that control cross-linguistic transfer within the complex context of L3 acquisition.

### **Cross-Linguistic Influence**

The phenomenon of cross-linguistic influence stands as an important aspect in the study of language acquisition, particularly in the context of acquiring a subsequent language, such as the L3. Odlin (1989) defines transfer as the impact of similarities and differences between the target language and any previously acquired languages. This influence can lead to either positive or negative outcomes, depending on the perceived similarities and differences. Learners often benefit from similarities, but negative transfer can also occur, such as with false cognates (Kırkıcı, 2007). Cross-linguistic influence encompasses the impact exerted by languages previously

acquired by an individual on the process of acquiring a new language (Cook, 2003; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). This intricate interaction between languages plays a vital role in shaping the linguistic development and proficiency levels of multilingual individuals. In the L3 context, learners can draw from both their background languages (L1 and L2), unlike second language learners who rely solely on their L1 as a source (Hermas, 2014).

### **Factors Influencing Cross-Linguistic Influence in L3 Acquisition**

Delving into the realm of cross-linguistic influence within the framework of L3 acquisition, a multitude of factors emerge as key determinants that guide the degree and nature of such influence. These factors, which intertwine and collectively shape the trajectory of cross-linguistic influence, are crucial to understanding the intricate nature of multilingualism.

A wide range of controlled are at play during the complex process of learning a third language (L3), influencing the ways of interaction of different languages. These elements and their critical function in determining the L3 learning experience have been the subject of prior research. It is noteworthy that researchers like Cenoz (2001) and De Angelis (2007) have thoroughly investigated a range of factors that affect the acquisition of L3, including psychotypology, language proficiency, context of acquisition, language mode, the foreign language effect, age, and recency. Numerous studies conducted in various contexts have influenced our understanding of these factors (e.g., Balla, 2013; Bardel & Falk, 2007; Cenoz, 2003; Hanafi, 2015; Rothman & Cabrelli, 2009; Tremblay, 2006).

One of the central factors that significantly influences cross-linguistic influence in L3 acquisition is the level of proficiency attained in the previously acquired languages (Herdina & Jessner, 2002). Researchers have demonstrated that individuals who have higher levels of proficiency in their background languages are more likely to exhibit cross-linguistic transfer in the acquisition of the subsequent language (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). The knowledge structures and cognitive mechanisms developed during the acquisition of earlier languages create a foundation upon which subsequent languages are built, leading to varying degrees of transfer. The concept of language dominance and exposure emerges as another significant determinant of cross-linguistic influence (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). Learners tend to draw upon the linguistic resources of their dominant or frequently used languages, resulting in a transfer of linguistic elements to the L3. The language that holds a dominant position in a learner's linguistic repertoire exerts a greater influence on

the L3 acquisition process, shaping both structural and lexical aspects of the language produced.

Psychotypology, a learner's awareness of linguistic differences between languages, and language distance, the degree of linguistic similarity between languages, also play crucial roles (Cenoz, 2001; De Angelis, 2007). When learners are aware of similarities, learning becomes smoother, which means that the L2 contributes positively to L3 learning (Cenoz, 2003; Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008; Negadi, 2015; Sadouki, 2021). In cases where awareness is low, difficulties arise in recognizing language distinctions, resulting in negative transfer (Sadouki, 2020a; Calvo Cortés, 2005). The linguistic proximity between the languages within an individual's repertoire also plays a pivotal role in cross-linguistic influence (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). Languages that share typological features or belong to the same language family are more likely to exhibit transfer, as the structural similarities ease the process of mapping linguistic elements from one language to another (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). Conversely, greater linguistic divergence between languages might result in limited instances of cross-linguistic influence, as the cognitive effort required to reconcile differences hinders the transfer process.

An essential factor influencing cross-linguistic influence in L3 learning is typological proximity (De Angelis, 2007; Rothman, 2011). The term "typological proximity" was introduced by De Angelis (2007) to describe the distance between languages or language families. Even between languages that are not genetically related, formal similarities in features and components fall under this concept. Studies have shown that learners prefer to transfer from languages that are more similarly related to L3 than from languages that are more distant from it (Cenoz, 2001). Similarly, Rothman (2011) emphasizes that cross-linguistic influence is frequently caused by typological similarities between previously acquired linguistic knowledge and the target language. Language relatedness has been shown to have a significant impact on the L3 learning process (e.g., De Angelis & Selinker, 2001; Rothman & Cabrelli, 2009; Sadouki, 2020a, 2021, 2022; Tremblay, 2006). According to Rothman (2011), the language that is most typologically similar to the L3 is frequently used as a transfer source because learners rely on familiarity when choosing a language to facilitate learning. The broader contexts in which individuals employ their languages also contribute to the manifestation of cross-linguistic influence. Language experiences and usage scenarios shape the areas of language where transfer is more pronounced (Cenoz, 2001). For instance, domains of high language use, such as academic or professional contexts, may lead to specialized

cross-linguistic influence, impacting specific lexical and syntactic structures (De Angelis, 2007).

In summation, the phenomenon of cross-linguistic influence in L3 acquisition is a complex interplay of factors. Language proficiency, dominance, exposure, typological similarities, and language distance collectively shape the extent and nature of transfer. The dynamic nature of these factors and their intricate interactions underscore the process of multilingual language acquisition, yielding insights that are pivotal for educators and researchers alike.

### **Cross-Linguistic Influence in Written Production: Previous Studies**

The analysis of written production has been the primary focus of earlier research to understand the complexities surrounding cross-linguistic influence within the context of L3 acquisition. These studies have looked into a wide range of topics, including lexical choices, syntactic structures, and language-specific characteristics, illuminating the various ways that cross-linguistic influence manifests itself in written language. Transfer patterns have been identified in this analytical framework in a variety of ways, including positive transfer, negative transfer, and language blending (De Angelis, 2007).

Significantly, the influential research conducted by Cenoz and Gorter (2011) has revealed a diverse range of ways in which languages influence each other. Their thorough investigation has illuminated how trilingual learners' writing is affected by both positive and negative influences from their languages. This study, along with many similar ones, highlights the complex interaction between different languages and how they impact the quality of writing in a third language (L3).

It is important to recognize that many of these studies have primarily focused on bilingual contexts or on the interaction between two languages and then on multilingual contexts where more languages are involved. The existing literature has undeniably made a significant contribution to the understanding of cross-linguistic influence in written production. Our knowledge of how cross-linguistic influence functions during the acquisition of an L3 remains distinctly lacking, especially in situations involving uncommon language combination (Arabic, French, and English). This gap in the literature offers a great opportunity for the current study to explore uncharted territory and shed light on the manifestations of language transfer within the complex multilingual context.

Based on the aim of the current study, which aims to explore instances of cross-linguistic influence in English as a third language, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent does cross-linguistic influence from previously acquired languages (Arabic and French) impact the written production of English as a third language (L3) among secondary school students?
2. Is typological similarity an important factor in learning English as an L3?

## THE STUDY

### Participants

The participants of this study were carefully selected to ensure a representative sample that reflects the dynamics of cross-linguistic influence in L3 acquisition who have Arabic as L1, French as L2 and they are learning English as L3. A total of 26 secondary school students has participated in the study. The age range of the participants spanned from 16 to 18 years as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Age details of the participants**

Age	Number	Percentage
16 years old	9	34.6%
17 years old	10	38.4%
18 years old	7	26.9%

The participants' socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds were comparable, featuring Arabic and French as the dominant languages in their language skills. Arabic, in particular, was a shared native language for all participants, frequently spoken at home or within their communities. Meanwhile, French was often acquired as a second language in the school curriculum and was also extensively used in social communication. Their present endeavour involved the acquisition of English as their third language (L3) in formal settings. The selection process considered participants' linguistic history, which was obtained through a brief questionnaire designed to gather additional details about the participants. This questionnaire aimed to gather information about their linguistic background, as well as the level of exposure to their second language, French, and their third language, English.



## **Instruments**

The primary objective of this instrument was to uncover the ways in which previously acquired languages, specifically Arabic and French, shape the learning process of the target language, English. The written task was designed to prompt participants' written production and to capture instances of linguistic transfer. By strategically eliciting participants' engagement with English while simultaneously allowing the incorporation of the previously acquired knowledge (Arabic and French knowledge), for the purpose of an in-depth analysis of cross-linguistic influence.

Participants were asked to write a paragraph on a story that happened in school approximately (150-200) narrating a personal or fictional story relating to an event happened in school settings. To further guide the participants, the prompt was accompanied by sub-questions to help them elaborate their text such as:

- what happened?
- where did it take place?
- who was involved in the story?
- what do you remember about it?

The task was administered in a classroom environment. Clear instructions were given exclusively in English, and participants were allocated a specific timeframe to complete the writing task (duration of one hour). This setting ensured uniformity in data collection and minimized external influences that could affect the results.

The written task aimed to capture the intricate interplay of language influences to offer a valuable opportunity for in-depth analysis for the instances of cross-linguistic influence in third language learning process. By examining how participants integrated their language knowledge and whether they activated their prior knowledge of their previously acquired languages (Arabic and French), the task provided insights into how cross-linguistic transfer manifested itself in their written production.

## **Procedure**

The methodological approach employed in this study embraced a qualitative design, harnessing its capacity to capture a snapshot of participants' language written production. Participants undertook the written task in formal settings, ensuring

uniform conditions that facilitated data comparability. According to task instructions delivered exclusively in simple English (with a translation in Arabic), participants were granted a designated time frame to complete the assignment. The strategic encouragement to integrate their familiarity with Arabic and French into their English writing added depth to the exploration of transfer patterns.

### Data analysis

The completion of data gathering marked the commencement of a thorough data analysis stage, characterized by a qualitative lens. The analysis constituted a comprehensive examination of participants' written outputs, rigorously aimed at detecting the errors and instances of cross-linguistic influence. Notably, the analysis process transcended mere identification, delving into the nuanced nature and patterns of linguistic transfer from Arabic and French to English. These instances of transfer were subsequently subjected to a systematic categorization process, facilitating a refined exploration of the factors governing cross-linguistic influence within the realm of L3 acquisition.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### The role of typological similarity

The analysis of the participants' written production revealed significant instances of cross-linguistic influence. Participants demonstrated a transfer of linguistic features from their previously acquired languages, Arabic and French, to the target language, English. The cross-linguistic influence was notably evident, primarily because of the typological similarity between the participants' second language (French) and third language (English). This similarity extended to the typology of the French equivalents of the words. Additionally, the influence of Arabic grammar and syntactic structure was observed, as illustrated in the following examples:

In the written productions of the participants, we observed instances of cross-linguistic influence in vocabulary and word forms. For example, the French sentence "Il est un étudiant responsable" was rendered into English as "He is a responsible student," illustrating the typological similarities between the two languages. Both languages share numerous cognates (words with similar forms and meanings), such as responsible (responsable), important (important), and information (information). This overlap facilitates vocabulary acquisition for French-speaking learners of English, enabling them to produce accurate and sophisticated vocabulary with reduced additional learning effort. Furthermore, the recognition

of these cognates supports language transfer and minimizes the necessity for extensive vocabulary learning.

Cross-linguistic influence was also seen in verb-noun collocations. For example, the Arabic expression “قراءة كتاب” (qira’at kitaab, or “reading of a book”) appeared in English as “reading of a book,” reflecting Arabic genitive structures where noun phrases are constructed with possessive constructions. The similar French expression, “lecture d’un livre,” also uses this pattern, further encouraging transfer from both Arabic and French to English. These patterns demonstrate how participants’ previous languages influenced their English, with the typological similarity of French to English facilitating smoother transfer.

Instances of transfer also occurred with idiomatic expressions and “false friends,” or similar-sounding words with different meanings. Some participants transferred expressions literally from Arabic or French into English, resulting in phrases that were non-standard. Examples include the Arabic word “معمل” (meaning “laboratory”) incorrectly used in English as “labor”, and the French word “librairie” (meaning “bookstore”) translated as “library.” This transfer highlights how subtle differences between typologically similar languages can still lead to misunderstanding when structural or semantic nuances are missed.

Verb tense and aspect transfer was another clear area of cross-linguistic influence. Differences in tense systems between Arabic, French, and English resulted in variable patterns of tense use. For example, participants are familiar with the French present perfect tense sometimes transferred this structure into English, producing sentences like “I have visited Paris before” (French: “J’ai visité Paris auparavant”). Both English and French use the present perfect to describe past experiences relevant to the present, whereas Arabic typically uses the simple past, which can lead to some interference. This similarity helped learners transfer the English present perfect accurately when referencing experiences, showing how typological proximity between French and English facilitated correct tense usage.

However, Arabic’s influence appeared in phrases like “I go to the concert tomorrow,” where the present tense is used for future events, reflecting Arabic’s use of the present tense in similar contexts. In contrast, English would typically require the future tense “I will go to the concert tomorrow”. In French, the present tense is often used in a similar context. Likewise, the French past tense “passé composé” was at times transferred to English, leading to sentences like “She has arrived yesterday,” instead of using the past simple tense “She arrived yesterday.” These

examples emphasize how both positive and negative transfer can occur, with French aiding more accurate English tense usage due to its typological similarity.

One significant finding of this study was the facilitative effect of typological similarity on cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition. The participants' transfer from their second language, French, to the third language, English, was attributed to the typological proximity between these languages. The similarities in grammatical structures, vocabulary, and phonological patterns between French and English seemed to facilitate the participants' learning process of English. The analysis also aimed to explore the factors that influenced cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition. It was observed that the degree of participants' proficiency in their previously acquired languages played a crucial role in the transfer process. Participants with higher proficiency in French demonstrated a higher frequency of cross-linguistic influence.

The observed transfer from French to English can be explained by the concept of positive transfer, where knowledge and skills from the second language positively impact the acquisition of the third language. The typological similarities between French and English provided a foundation of linguistic knowledge that participants could use in their learning of English. For instance, similar word order patterns and verb tenses in French and English may have allowed participants to transfer their knowledge and apply it to their English writing. However, it is important to note that while typological similarity can facilitate language transfer, it is not the only determinant factor. Other factors, such as the impact of Arabic (L1), often affect the learning of English, especially through the transfer of semantics.

These findings align with previous research that has emphasized the facilitative role of typological similarity in language transfer (Tremblay, 2006). When learners encounter a third language that shares structural and lexical features with their previously acquired languages, they are more likely to recognize and apply the linguistic patterns that overlap across languages. This recognition and transfer of knowledge can aid in comprehension and production tasks, resulting in more accurate and fluent language use.

The implications of these findings for language instruction are significant. Teachers should take into account the typological similarities between the learners' background languages and the target language when designing instructional materials and activities. By explicitly highlighting the similarities and differences between languages, teacher can help learners leverage their existing knowledge and promote more efficient language acquisition.

## **The facilitative role of L2 French in written production**

The analysis of the participants' written production revealed a clear and significant facilitative role of their second language, French, in their written production of the third language, English. The participants demonstrated instances of cross-linguistic influence, where features from French were transferred to their English writing. This transfer can be attributed to the typological proximity and similarity between French and English, as evidenced by similarities in grammatical structures, vocabulary, and phonological patterns.

The observed transfer from the participants' second language, French, to the third language, English, can be attributed to the typological similarity between the two languages. The similarities in grammatical structures, vocabulary, and phonological patterns between French and English seemed to facilitate the participants' learning process of English.

To provide concrete examples, Table 2 presents specific instances of cross-linguistic influence in participants' written production. This table underscores how the typological similarity between French and English led to positive cross-linguistic transfer, enabling learners to produce more accurate and contextually appropriate English structures. In particular, shared grammatical features such as tense usage (present perfect for past relevance), noun-adjective ordering, and collocations with verbs like "make" supported learners' English production. These examples highlight how familiarity with similar structures in French allowed for effective application in English, resulting in positive linguistic outcomes.

The findings of this study align with previous research (Rothman, 2011) that has shown the facilitative role of typologically similar languages in language transfer. The typological proximity between French and English, characterized by shared linguistic features, seems to have facilitated the participants' learning process of English. This facilitation can be attributed to the learners' ability to recognize and apply familiar linguistic patterns from French to English, resulting in more accurate and fluent written production.

Table 2: Examples of Cross-Linguistic Influence in Participants' Written Production

Participant	Previous language	Sentence Structure Used in English Sentence	Corrected English Sentence	Type of Transfer	Explanation of the influence
P1	French	"They are interested in the project" (ils sont intéressés par le projet)	"They are interested in the project"	Positive	Similarity in passive structure use in French and English, helping learners to accurately apply the passive form.
P2	French	"This information is important" (cette information est importante)	"This information is important"	Positive	Influence of shared uncountable noun rule, where "information" is non-countable in both languages.
P3	French	"She finished her homework quickly" (elle a fini ses devoirs rapidement)	"She finished her homework quickly"	Positive	Transfer of typical sentence structure in French (subject-verb-object-adverb), aiding fluent and accurate construction in English.
P4	French	"I need to make a decision" (je dois prendre une décision)	"I need to make a decision"	Positive	Similar use of "make" with abstract nouns in French and English, facilitating accurate collocation use.

These findings support studies that have highlighted the positive impact of cross-linguistic influence on language learning outcomes. They suggest that leveraging learners' previously acquired languages, particularly when they share similarities with the target language, can enhance language acquisition and reduce cognitive load. Language instructors can leverage this positive transfer by integrating cross-linguistic awareness into teaching strategies. Activities that highlight typological similarities—particularly in grammar, vocabulary, and syntax—can help learners consciously apply familiar patterns from their L2 to English.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the central aim of this study was to explore the impact of cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition. With a specific focus on how the knowledge of previously acquired languages (Arabic and French) affects learning a third language (English). This study was particularly intended to explore the dynamics when more than two languages come into contact, particularly in participants' written production. The findings not only illuminate the presence of cross-linguistic influence, but also offer crucial insights into the role of typological similarity in the multilingual acquisition journey. Based on the first research question, it was found that cross-linguistic influence from previously acquired languages (Arabic and French) impacted written production in English (L3) manifesting in both positive and negative transfer. The results of analysis showed that prior languages have an impact on English (L3). Regarding the typological similarity,

participants transferred from the more typologically similar language to English (L3) which in this case is French (L2).

Scrutinizing the participants' written outputs yielded compelling insights into the prevalence of cross-linguistic influence and its subtleties. Evident within these written productions was the tangible transfer of linguistic features from the participants' second language, French, to their third language, English. The underpinning thread facilitating this transfer resided in the typological similarity between French and English. These findings align with previous research on cross-linguistic influence research, placing a spotlight on the significant role typological similarity plays in third language acquisition (Hanafi, 2015; Rothman, 2011; Sadouki, 2020a, 2022).

The ramifications of this study are manifold, rippling through the realms of language instruction and curriculum design. Teachers can develop a better understanding of how learners' background may influence their acquisition of a third language. Understanding the typological similarities and differences between languages equips pedagogues to create effective teaching strategies and materials that address and reduce cross-linguistic influence. Additionally, fostering learners' awareness of how their existing language knowledge affects their learning can further enhance their language acquisition and overall outcomes (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011).

This study, however achieved its objectives, is not without its limitations. The fact that the study's scope was restricted to a particular participant group within a particular educational setting may limit generalizing of the findings to other contexts. Furthermore, examining only written production overlooks other important aspects of language acquisition. Future research should aim to include a more diverse range of participants and use varied data collection methods. Expanding the participant pool and employing multiple approaches will provide a more complete understanding of cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition.

This study makes an important contribution to our understanding of multilingual acquisition. By examining cross-linguistic influence in situations involving multiple languages, it highlights key patterns and typological similarity factor involved in language transfer. Typological similarity between languages appears as a significant factor in facilitating transfer. Each finding adds to our understanding of the complexities involved in third language acquisition within multilingual contexts.

To further explore this phenomenon, future research could investigate the specific linguistic features that are most susceptible to cross-linguistic influence and examine how they vary across different proficiency levels and language combinations. Longitudinal studies tracking the development of cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition would provide valuable insights into the long-term effects and implications for language instruction.

## REFERENCES

- Balla, Á. T. (2013). The perceived role of L2 English in the process of learning L3 German. *Romanian Journal of English Studies*, 10(1), 62–76. <https://doi.org/10.2478/rjes-2013-0005>
- Bardel, C., & Falk, Y. (2007). The role of the second language in third language acquisition: The case of Germanic syntax. *Second Language Research*, 23(4), 459–484. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658307080557>
- Bardel, C., & Falk, Y. (2011). Object pronouns in German L3 syntax: Evidence for the L2 status factor. *Second Language Learning*, 27, 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658310386647>
- Calvo Cortés, N. (2005). Negative language transfer when learning Spanish as a foreign language. *Interlingüística*, 16(1), 237–248.
- Carlisle, J. F. (2000). Awareness of the structure and meaning of morphologically complex words: Impact on reading. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 12, 169–190. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1008131926604>
- Cenoz, J. (2001). The effect of linguistic distance, L2 status, and age on cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition. In J. Cenoz, B. Hufeisen, & U. Jessner (Eds.), *Cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition: Psycholinguistic perspectives* (pp. 8–20). Multilingual Matters.
- Cenoz, J. (2003). The additive effect of bilingualism on third language acquisition: A review. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 7(1), 71–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069030070010501>
- Cenoz, J. (2008). The acquisition of additional languages. *ELIA*, 8, 219–224. <https://revistas.uned.es/index.php/ELIA/article/view/18079>
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2010). The diversity of multilingualism in education. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 205, 37–53. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.2010.038>
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2011). Focus on multilingualism: A study of trilingual writing. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95(3), 356–369. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41262372>
- Cook, V. (2003). *Effects of the Second Language on the First*. Multilingual Matters.
- De Angelis, G. (2007). *Third or additional language acquisition*. Multilingual Matters.
- De Angelis, G., & Selinker, L. (2001). Interlanguage transfer and competing linguistic systems in the multilingual mind. In J. Cenoz, B. Hufeisen, & U. Jessner (Eds.), *Cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition: Psycholinguistic perspectives* (pp. 42–58). Multilingual Matters.
- Dewaele, J. M. (1998). Lexical inventions: French interlanguage as L2 versus L3. *Applied Linguistics*, 19(4), 471–490. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/19.4.471>
- Farnia, F., & Geva, E. (2011). Cognitive correlates of vocabulary growth in English language learners. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 32(4), 711–738. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716411000038>



- Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Gherzouli, I. (2019). Educational reforms and language planning quandary in Algeria: An illustration with Arabization. *Sustainable Multilingualism*, 15(1), 27–47. <https://doi.org/10.2478/sm-2019-0012>
- Hanafi, A. (2015). The second language influence on foreign language learners' errors: The case of the French language for Algerian students learning English as a foreign language. *Euro-pean Scientific Journal*, 2, 30–38. <https://doi.org/10.19044/ESJ.2014.V10N10P%25P>
- Herdina, P., & Jessner, U. (2002). *A dynamic model of multilingualism*. Multilingual Matters.
- Hermas, A. (2014). Multilingual transfer: L1 morphosyntax in L3 English. *International Journal of Language Studies*, 8, 1–24.
- Jarvis, S., & Pavlenko, A. (2008). *Crosslinguistic influence in language and cognition*. Taylor & Francis.
- Jessner, U. (2006). *Linguistic awareness in multilinguals*. Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748619139.001.0001>
- Kırkıcı, B. (2007). Meine Hobbys sind Musik hören und Schwimmen: Lexical transfer in L1 Turkish-L2 English learners of L3 German. *Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht*, 12(3), 1–15.
- Mami, N. A. (2013). Teaching English under the LMD Reform: The Algerian experience. *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business and Industrial Engineering*, 7, 910–913. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1081679>
- Nation, P. (2003). The role of the first language in foreign language learning. *Asian EFL Journal*, 1–8. [https://openaccess.wgtn.ac.nz/articles/journal\\_contribution/The\\_role\\_of\\_the\\_first\\_language\\_in\\_foreign\\_language\\_learning/12560333?file=23411891](https://openaccess.wgtn.ac.nz/articles/journal_contribution/The_role_of_the_first_language_in_foreign_language_learning/12560333?file=23411891)
- Negadi, M. N. (2015). Learning English in Algeria through French-based background proficiency. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 496–500. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.537>
- Odlin, T. (1989). *Language transfer: Cross-linguistic influence in language learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English y terminé en español: Towards a typology of code-switching. *Linguistics*, 18(7/8), 581–618. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling.1980.18.7-8.581>
- Ramirez, G., Walton, P., & Roberts, W. (2013). Morphological awareness and vocabulary development among kindergarteners with different ability levels. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 47(1), 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022219413509970>
- Ringbom, H. (2007). *Cross-linguistic similarity in foreign language learning*. Multilingual Matters.
- Rothman, J. (2011). L3 syntactic transfer selectivity and typological determinacy: The typological primacy model. *Second Language Research*, 27, 107–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658310386439>
- Rothman, J., & Cabrelli, J. A. (2009). What variables condition syntactic transfer? A look at the L3 initial state. *Second Language Research*, 25(4), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658309349410>
- Sadouki, F. (2020a). Examples of cross-linguistic influence in learning German as a foreign language: The case of third-year students of foreign languages at Al-Kawakibi Secondary

- School in Touggourt, Algeria. *Edulingua*, 6(1), 61–83.  
<https://doi.org/10.14232/edulingua.2020.1.4>
- Sadouki, F. (2020b). The influence of French on learning English vocabulary for L1 Arabic speakers: The case of secondary school students in Algeria. *European Journal of Teaching and Education*, 2(1), 179–189. <https://doi.org/10.33422/ejte.v2i1.188>
- Sadouki, F. (2021). The effect of the second language on metalinguistic awareness in third language vocabulary learning. *Romanian Journal of English Studies*, 18(1), 98–109.  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/rjes-2021-0011>
- Sadouki, F. (2022). The role of the background languages in L3 vocabulary acquisition: The Cumulative Enhancement Model and Typological Similarity Model. *Proceedings of the World Conference on Education and Teaching*, 1(1), 1–10.  
<https://doi.org/10.33422/etconf.v1i1.29>
- Talebi, S. H. (2013). Cross-linguistic transfer (from L1 to L2, L2 to L1, and L2 to L3) of reading strategies in a multicompetent mind. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(2), 432–436. <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.4.2.432-436>
- Tremblay, M. C. (2006). Cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition: The role of L2 proficiency and L2 exposure. *CLO/OPL Ottawa*, 34, 109–119.



#### FATIHA SADOUKI

Is a doctoral student in the English Applied Linguistics PhD program at the University of Szeged. Her research focuses on Third Language Acquisition (TLA), multilingualism, language transfer, and cross-linguistic influence, with interests in psycholinguistics, classroom technology, and online-based language learning.

[sadoukifatiha1994@gmail.com](mailto:sadoukifatiha1994@gmail.com)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8771-7383>



Sadouki, F. (2025). Cross-linguistic influence in third language: Examples from students' written production. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 18(2), e1348.  
<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/jtl3.1348>



Rebut / Recibido / Received / Reçu: 02-02-2024  
 Acceptat / Aceptado / Accepted / Accepé: 31-05-2025

<https://revistes.uab.cat/jtl3/>