

## L1 INTERFERENCE IN THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH SYNTAX AND LEXIS

Syed Mazharul Islam

### ABSTRACT

*By and large, the occurrence of errors is integral to the process of learning. The learning of languages (both the mother tongue and the second language), likewise, involves the making of errors. It is claimed and supported by research evidence that SLA errors are caused by inter- and intra-language factors. Inter-lingual errors result from the negative transfer of a learner's L1 features while intra-lingual errors are due to factors within the L2 itself like overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized. Although both inter- and intra-lingual factors act as sources of errors in SLA, there is compelling evidence in the research literature that SLA errors are overwhelmingly L1 driven, i.e. mainly caused by the negative transfer of the language features of the first language of the learner. There is also strong evidence that first language interference presents itself to the learning of all aspects of a second language, i.e. morphology, syntax, semantics and discourse. At first, this paper discusses the claims and views on L1 negative transfer to SLA. Next, it presents secondary data and its analysis in support of and as evidence for the claims made for L1 interference in the acquisition of the English syntactic properties of word order, subject-verb agreement, tense, copula BE, subject omission, the subordinate clause, expletive pronouns, positions of adverbs and plurals among other things. Later, L1 lexical negative transfer of form and meaning, is discussed at word, phrase and idiom level. Finally, form-focused L2 instruction in tandem with meaning-focused communicative activities is explained, justified and recommended for nonnative English language learners and users of English for the remediation of linguistic errors. The evidence and examples of L1 transfer of syntax and lexis to English learners' language and that of nonnative English users have been collected from diverse English language learning contexts and contexts of use which are likely to be found in any other similar contexts other than those examined in the article.*

Key words: SLA, L1 transfer, syntactic errors, lexical errors, form-focused instruction.

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE PROBLEM: L1 INTERFERENCE IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Learning of anything involves making errors. Language learning in general and second language learning in particular involves making errors, too, as Dulay and Burt (1974, p. 95) puts, "you can't learn without goofing." The SLA process involves errors which are said to be caused by a learner's first language (interlingual factors) as well as factors within the target language (TL) itself being learnt like overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and false concepts hypothesized. Having said that there are strong claims and compelling research evidence that first language interference is the overwhelming reason for erroneous or deviant L2 linguistic forms. The similarities or the differences between the two language systems determine the intensity of influence. When the two languages are similar, facilitation or positive transfer occurs whereas differences result in inhibition or negative transfer manifesting itself in erroneous or deviant L2 forms. Lado (1957, p.2); Corder (1967); Gass (1996); Ellis (1997); Benson (2002, pp. 68-70); Collins (2002, 43-94), and a host of other experts strongly believe that SLA errors are mainly due to the interference of the first language of the learner. Cornu (1973, pp. 13-47) and Steinbach (1981, pp. 249-259) share this view and add that there is evidence that the share of L1 induced L2 errors is usually 60% of the total number of errors. In this paper, the term *transfer* is deemed synonymous with *influence* and *interference* as factors responsible for L2 errors; hence, these three terms are interchangeably used.

L1 influence is said to be negative in most cases because no two languages share the same linguistic properties; if they do, the acquisition of the L2 is facilitated by the L1, examples being Hindi and Urdu which are almost identical with respect to syntactic structures and their lexis have some similarities too. Therefore, spoken Hindi and spoken Urdu are mutually intelligible but the two alphabets are so different from each other that without the knowledge of them, written Hindi and written Urdu would be far from being mutually comprehensible. The role of similarities and differences were first conceptualized by Fries (1945, p.2) who has the view that when two language are similar, L2 learning is facilitated but when they are different, inhibition occurs making it difficult for the learner to learn the L2. Larsen-Freeman (1986, p.53) holds the same view that similarities assist in L2 acquisition whereas differences negate it giving rise to errors. Recently, Chen (2006, pp. 56-74) supported the view that L2 language deficiencies are mainly caused by L1 negative interference. He adds, when a learner finds it difficult to communicate in the TL, s/he resorts to his/her previously learnt repertoire, i.e. his/her L1 habits.

Evidence is also in favour of the claim that L1 negative interference occurs in all aspects of language, namely phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Odlin (1989, p.23) and Lee (1999) subscribe to the claim that transfer can occur in all linguistic subsystems including morphology and syntax.

### PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Due to lack of space, this paper examines L1 influence on the acquisition of English syntax and lexis alone. The investigation is carried out through a survey of literature as well as examinations of illustrations from various English learning cultural contexts and contexts of use. The data encompass the syntactic properties of word order, tense, copula BE, subordination, plural forms,

articles and the passive, among others. L1 influence on the acquisition of English lexis, on the other hand, is examined at the level of words, phrases and idioms. The survey is followed by a discussion of pedagogical implications of L1 interference for teaching the English language. Finally, the use of an English teaching approach based on form-focused instruction in tandem with a meaning-focused communicative approach is explained, justified and recommended. The survey of secondary data on L1 interference in the learning of English syntax follows next.

### L1 SYNTACTIC TRANSFER

The literature abounds with findings on L1 influence on the acquisition of the various aspects English syntax. From the survey of literature and the examination of relevant examples where research data have not been available, the following facts have emerged with respect to the transfer of L1 syntactic features to the acquisition of English by various nonnative English speakers and learners representing a wide variety of contexts.

### TRANSFER OF PLURALITY AND ARTICLES

Farooq (1998) carried out a study of written English of Aichi Women's Junior College in Japan. The students were aged 19-20 having six years of English learning at a secondary school. Their English speaking and writing were at upper-basic level. They were given this topic to develop into an essay: "My English learning." Errors of the following types, among other things, emerged:

### ERRORS OF PLURALITY

- A. She taught **song**.
- B. I wanted to study other **language**.

### ERRORS OF ARTICLES

- A. I studied English for- time.
- B. I met – good host family.

The above errors of plurality and articles can be easily justified as Japanese (L1) induced on the ground that in Japanese language, similar constructions do occur as correct sentences because plurals and articles are not available in Japanese. The findings of this study, thus clearly show that unavailability of certain L2 syntactic forms in learners' L1 is a difficulty factor which may deplete their acquisition of the second language.

Such interference is also noticeable in a Bengali speaker's acquisition of the English syntactic features in question. The following examples of wrong English sentences, adapted from Syed (2016, pp. 75-76), bear testimony to this:

- A. The **boy** (for 'boys') play.
- B. I have bought a few **book**.
- C. I'm eating some **mango**.

In Bengali, plural forms are not always morphologically differentiated from the corresponding singular forms, which, in effect, give rise to such wrong word forms. Articles in Bengali, as in Japanese, sometimes may be omitted resulting in the following wrong sentences (omission errors):

- A. He is reading **book**.
- B. I have written **assignment**.
- C. I couldn't take **test** because I was sick.
- D. Textbook is (article omitted) good source of materials. (From Syed, 2016, p. 74)

### DETERMINER ERRORS

Santesteban and Costa (2005) conducted research on the processing of L2 determiner nouns by two groups – Basque-Spanish and Catalan-Spanish early bilinguals. Four different groups of sixteen subjects took part in the study. The Basque-Spanish subjects were students of Basque philology at the University the Basque Country whereas the Catalan-Spanish subjects were students of psychology at the University of Barcelona. Both groups were passively exposed to Spanish through TV, the radio and other means and the media. The subjects were given 39 pictures with the job of producing: 1) singular DPs 2) plural DPs and 3) numeral DPs in singular and iv) numeral determiners in plural. Each participant was asked to supply a suitable determiner to each picture. It was found that the Basque-Spanish speakers made more errors than the Catalan speakers because Basque determiners have N+D structures whereas Catalan and Spanish have D+N structures. The Catalans, therefore, made a fewer errors in processing the D+N structures in Spanish, the second language they were learning than did their Basque counterparts. The results confirm that L2 syntactic processing is different when L1 and L2 structures are different.

### MISCELLANEOUS ERRORS (1): OMISSION OF DETERMINERS, WRONG POSSESSIVE FORMS, SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT, AND COPULA 'BE'

Moros and Saleuddin (2007) conducted a study involving 20 students from two rural schools in each of the three States of Malaysia (Pahang, Selangor and Melaka). They wrote two essays for half-an-hour on "My family" and the following types were found among others:

#### OMISSION OF DETERMINERS

- A. Sometimes I bring it to \_\_\_\_ park to play.
- B. He works as \_\_\_\_\_ meter reader.
- C. She plays \_\_\_\_\_ piano while I play.

The above errors indicate direct transfer of Malay grammar which does not require a determiner before a noun. Many other languages too, including Bengali, have the same property and they exert the same influence on the learners' English.

#### WRONG FORM OF THE DETERMINER/POSSESSIVE

- A. All **this** countries lost their properties.
- B. My **mother** name Zahora.
- C. **She's** hobby is drawing.

The above can be justified as the transfer of the Malay possessive form of the determiner which is the same as the nominative form of the noun.

#### SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

- A. My mother **like** to eat chicken rice
- B. She **stay** at home.
- C. The game **consist** of two teams.

In Malayan grammar, the verb form does not differ according to the person of the subject. In some other languages too, including Bengali, this grammatical characteristic exists, like:

*They eat* (correct); *He eat* (incorrect) (from Syed 2016, p.75).

#### COPULA 'BE'

- A. My mother's name \_\_\_\_ Maznah Binti Haz Dahlan.
- B. My cat's name \_\_\_\_\_ Koko.

The presence of the copula 'BE' is not often essential in Malayan sentences so the first language behaviour is transferred to English language, the learners' L2.

### MISCELLANEOUS ERRORS (2): SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT, SUBJECT OMISSION, AND PREPOSITIONS

Chen (2006, pp. 76-110) conducted a quasi-experimental research at a private college in Taiwan to find out computer assisted instruction's impact on EFL grammar skills of beginning EFL learners. He used grammar instruction with contrastive analysis between Mandarin and English to help students learn English grammar. Fifty students were in the control group and fifty were in the experimental group. The participants were medical technology students who received formal education at school for six years. The population was divided into 29% male and 71% female students. The participants in both groups received the same duration of treatment for two weeks with sixteen hours for each group. Grammar areas covered were nouns, articles, pronouns, verbs, adjectives and subordination. As tools of instruction, grammar explanation and exercises were used. After the grammar instruction, both groups were given this post-writing assessment task: "The most memorable thing in my life." Some of the above types of errors found are as follows:

#### SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT ERRORS

She **say**; The doctor **say**.

These are certainly a case of Transfer of Chinese, the learners' mother tongue, which lacks verb conjugation.

#### SUBJECT OMISSION

"He **says** he forgot to prepare the gift. Till evening. **Say** his ring drops in the sand heap. Call me to find."

The above telegraphic text is in fact a topic-comment structure which is adhered to in some languages including Mandarin. Such a sentence, therefore, is acceptable in Mandarin, and as an L1 habit it found its way into English. In English, to the contrary, the subject, especially in formal or written English, is mandatory. Hindi is another language where such a split is allowed and may be transferred to English: "The plane reached Detroit. Later stopped for an hour" (Syed, 2016, p.73). Syed observes that this sentence is acceptable to a Hindi speaker of English because the co-reference subject deletion rule is acceptable in Hindi. In Bengali, such splits occur in a complex sentence like: "I will not go with you. Because you treat me very badly." The reason is simple: Such structures are commonplace in Bengali, so they are transferred to English writing.

### PREPOSITION ERRORS

"At last I went the market." Such an omission of prepositions is certainly because of the influence of Mandarin Chinese in which prepositions are not present or not necessary. Other examples of prepositional errors found were:

- A. I am listening music.
- B. I am going to abroad
- C. They discussed about the matter.

### MISCELLANEOUS ERRORS (3): WORD ORDER ERRORS, SUBJECT DROP, ADVERB POSITION ERRORS, AND TENSE ERRORS

#### TRANSFER OF WORD ORDER, AND SUBJECT DROP

Unlike Russian, Italian, Arabic or Bengali (to some extent), English is a fixed word order language having the S+V+O basic word order. These sentences translated from Russian into English would make sense in Russian but not in English (except for sentence "A")

- A. A boy is reading a newspaper: S+V+O
- B. A newspaper is reading a boy: O+V+S
- C. Is reading a boy a newspaper: V+S+O
- D. A boy a newspaper is reading: S+O+V (From Isurin, 2005)

No surprise, a Russian learner of English may be allowed to write any of the above sentences and will be considered correct. Accordingly, Isurin observes that though pattern 'A' above is dominant in Russian as in English, Russian speakers are free to produce patterns B-D after their L1. As in Russian, in Italian too, sentence structures enjoy free word orders. As Chapeto'n, C. M. (2008) observes, in Italian, SVO, VOS and OVS orders are found in speech whereas VSO is permitted in the written language. Vigliocco et al (1995) presents these examples of the free word order in Italian:

- A. SVO: John has eaten the apple
- B. VOS: Has eaten the apple John
- C. OVS: The apple has eaten John
- D. VSO: Eaten John the apple

Except for 'A', 'B' to 'D' are wrong English sentences but correct in Italian.

Research literature abounds with such examples of L1 transfer at the level of word order. In fact, word order transfer has been one of most intensively studied syntactic properties in SLA research (Odlin, 1989). Not surprisingly, all of the above structures at par with those in Italian would be acceptable sentences produced by an Italian learner of English. The following report on L1 word order transfer by Mede et al (2014, p. 77) would suffice. 19 students, 13 male and 6 female, from the preparatory programme at a private university in Istanbul, Turkey, participated in the study. They were aged 17-26. A grammaticality judgment test was administered to the subjects to find out whether Turkish had an influence on the placement of verbs in the English sentences the learners produced. The participants were given 20 sentences out of which 10 contained wrong verb placements. Five of the ten sentences appear below as examples:

- A. He four hundred Turkish Lira earns.
- B. Some people very slowly speak.
- C. My granddad alone lives.
- D. She homework hardly ever does.
- E. We every day TV watch.

Interestingly, all five sentences above were considered correct. The reason for the wrong grammaticality judgment, as the researchers correctly pointed out, is the influence of Turkish word order in which the verb is usually at the end of the sentence (S + O + V).

Another study on L1 word order transfer carried out by Chapeto'n (2008) involving an Italian learner is reported below. The learner did not learn English through interaction but received formal instruction in English at school. He was asked to write a

composition titled “My favourite movie” in 15 minutes’ time. The assignment was analyzed for syntactic transfer of word order, subject use and use of tenses. As for word order transfer from Italian, the following were found:

- A. Eat the apple I (VOS)
- B. The film (-) like it. (OV) (Subject dropped)

Clearly, these sentences are the transfer of the flexible word order of Italian to the interlanguage of the learner concerned. Another L1 feature which was transferred to English is **Subject Drop** in sentence ‘B’. One weakness of the study, however, is the number of subjects involved (only one). Nonetheless, it is very likely that the same result would be found if a larger number of subjects were involved from the same speech community.

#### TRANSFER OF SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Examples of deviation with regard to subject-verb agreement found in the same study were:

- A. My favourite film are much.....  
Correct English: My favourite films are many
- B. This village have many.....  
Correct: This village has many.....

The reason for such subject-verb disagreement, as found by Vigliocco (1995), was that whereas plural nouns in English are generally morphologically marked, in Italian, to the contrary, both singular and plural forms have identical morphological forms. The same is true about Bengali plural nouns – most have the same form as their singular counterparts, causing morphological errors in English like the following:

- A. I have book.
- B. I eat mango
- C. The children are playing with toy. (From Syed, 2016, p. 76)

#### ADVERB POSITION ERRORS

The placement of adverbs in English varies according to adverb types; they are positioned at the front, in the middle or at the end of the sentence according to their types. In some languages, however, as in Bengali, the adverbs placement is fixed – they are always placed before the verb. In English sentences produced by Bengali speaking learners and users of English, adverb positions are influenced by the Bengali adverb placement rule, resulting in sentences like the following:

- A. He slowly walks. (Correct: He walks slowly.)
- B. She is beautifully dancing (Correct: She is dancing beautifully.)
- C. Have you yet not taken the TOEFL? (Correct: Have you not taken the TOEFL yet?)

Wrong adverb placements in English sentences because of L1 interference were found by Garnier (2012) who conducted a project for designing automatic correction strategies for syntactic errors in English made by French native speakers. A 10000-word English corpus composed of scientific texts written by French students and professionals, and personal emails written by French native speakers were examined. The following are a few examples (in sentence segments or full sentences) of adverb misplacement as found:

**Table 1 (Adapted from Garnier, ibid, p. 60): Types of adverb placement errors found in French speaking users of English**

Type	Examples	% in corpus	Remark
Manner, means or Instrument	To index efficiently the distribution	35.5%	Highest among the types
Degree	His father resembles strongly his own character	12.9%	
Temporal location	The TextCorp is now evolving to become shortly a software component	6.5%	
Connectives	They exhibit nevertheless the dependency relationship	16.1%	Ranks third
Evaluation	The input documents can be a priori any type of Web page	3.2%	
Additive	The treatment of this official day Exemplifies also an answer to the associations	22.6%	Second among the types
Restrictive	In order to hand down exclusively family memories (?)		The placement of exclusively seems all right. The “?” indicates correct placement

Except for the last item, all of the six placements are wrong being syntactically influenced by French in which adverbs have fixed position in the ‘S + V + ADV + O’ word order whereas English adverbs are rarely found between a verb and its object, the researcher observed. What is interesting is that the largest percentage of adverb misplacement concerns adverbs of manner “due to negative transfer of French”, the researcher claimed. The truth is, the consistency of the error pattern concerning all the adverb types in English clearly points the finger at French (L1) as the reason for erroneous placement of not only English adverbs of manner but also the rest of the types.

### TRANSFER OF TENSES

Celaya and Torras (2001) analyzed data on the acquisition of English tenses by Catalan Spanish speakers. The data revealed that present simple was used in cases where the present continuous would be more appropriate in English. The reason is, in Spanish, the present continuous and the present simple can be used for a sentence like: “I’m eating now” or “I eat now”. In English, however, only the present continuous is suitable for an action happening at the time of speaking. This is also true about some other languages including Bengali where the past tense verb sometimes is not morphologically distinct from its present simple counterpart. In Bengali, the past form of verbs like *eat, see, go, lie, run* and a host of others are the same as their present tense form.

### MISCELLANEOUS SYNTACTIC ERRORS (4)

Meriläinen (2010) investigated frequent grammatical errors in the writing of Finnish learners of English caused by the influence of Finnish. The researcher observed (ibid, p. 53) that Swedish is a Germanic Indo-European language having typological similarities with English whereas Finnish is a Fenno-Ugric language, distant from both Swedish and English. Meriläinen points out: “Differences between these two learner groups in their acquisition and use of English can, thus, be reliably attributed to L1 influence.” The researcher collected materials consisting of a 96,787 word corpus from 500 Written compositions by Finnish Upper Secondary School students as part of the Finnish national Matriculation Examination in three successive years: 1990, 2000, and 2005. The syntactic categories examined for L1 influence were the passive, expletive pronouns, subordinate clauses, future time, and propositions. The corpus collected numbered 28225 words. The following patterns of transfer were found indicating difference in transfer of Swedish and Finnish to the acquisition of English being learnt as the target language. The following table adapted from Meriläinen (ibid) shows the difference in transfer of the syntactic items from the two first languages, i.e. Finnish and Swedish in the acquisition of English syntax by the respective learners:

**Table 2: Difference in transfer from Finnish and Swedish**

Syntactic categories	Finnish-speaking students		Swedish-speaking students	
	Number of errors	% of errors /10000 words	Number of errors	% of errors/10000 words
The passive	69	7.1	1	0.36
Expletive pronouns	93	9.6	2	0.7
Subordinate clauses	88	9.1	7	2.5
Future time	63	6.5	6	2.1
Propositions	358	37.0	33	11.7
TOTAL	671	69.3	49	17.4

The errors committed by the Swedish students were outnumbered by the Finnish students in the categories examined because of the dissimilarity in the syntactic features between Finnish and English. Swedish being similar to English, Swedish-speaking learners of English made a lot fewer errors in the syntactic categories in question. The results also attest to the fact that the more similar the L2 is to the L1, the easier it will be to learn it. It follows that because Swedish syntactic features are similar to those of English they had a positive influence on its learning whereas Finnish had a negative transfer effect because of differences. Areas where most of the errors occurred were:

### THE PASSIVE

- A. There is a lot of animals in the world which **use** in an awful way.
- B. There **need** help very much.
- C. Pets can't **leave** or **free** because they need people.
- D. Now nature is so polluted that something **have to do**.

These sentences are the result of direct influence of Finnish which does not have the passive form as in English.

### EXPLETIVE PRONOUNS

- A. In our culture is unusual if a twenty-year old woman is married.
- B. Nowadays are only few places where is possible to swim.
- C. Almost every home is a pet.
- D. But are people who don't care about animals.

The researcher pointed out that Finnish lacks the anticipatory pronoun *it* and *there*, so in sentence (A) *it* was omitted and in (B) both *there* and *it* were omitted. In sentence (C), on the other hand, the learner changed the word order by beginning the sentence with an introductory adverbial *Almost* followed by a verb and the subject was placed sentence-finally without *There* because of Finnish influence. With the inclusion of *there*, the sentence would read: "There is a pet in almost every home." Sentence "D" lacks *there* after "But" for the same reason. Direct translation of all of these sentences into Finnish would be correct.

### SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

- A. It is never easy to divorce so it's same to you are you married or not.
- B. I do not know I have enough courage and skills.
- C. Now-a-days the main reason why people kill animals is usually it, that it is fun.

In (A) and (B) above, *if/whether* is omitted because of Finnish influence, the researcher pointed out. In (C), on the other hand, *it* is used as a supporting pronoun represented by *se* at clause boundaries in Finnish. The above three examples clearly show L1 syntactic transfer in the acquisition of a second language.

### FUTURE TIME

- A. In my opinion, wars *are* wars also in future.
- B. So Nokia's collapsing *doesn't* affect Finnish unemployment.
- C. I don't shut out the thought that *I live* my life alone.

The omission of the grammatical constructions expressing future time resulted from the use of the present simple tense in Finnish which has no equivalent for *will + infinitive* and *going to* as available in English.

### ERRORS OF PREPOSITIONS

- A. Watching news from (Instead of *on*) television. . . .
- B. Instead of being good *in* (for *at*) math, I am pretty good in foreign languages.
- C. The whole life I have dreamed (*of* is dropped) being a rich man.
- D. I will go (*to* is dropped) that country.

The researchers pointed out that prepositions are difficult for Finnish students of English because Finnish has a rich inflectional system which renders English prepositions redundant; as a result, often wrong preposition choices are made or they are omitted. The prepositional errors in (A) and (B) were caused by the abstract locative cases, and in (C) and (D) omissions of preposition occurred with respect to verb complementation and adverbial phrases respectively. Prepositions are equally problematic for Bengali speakers of English who are often confused about which preposition to use when or when to drop one. Bengali, like Finnish, is an inflectional language in which sentences usually do not require prepositions as separate elements unlike English. The following are examples from Syed (2016, p. 76) of wrong prepositions used in English sentences by Bengali speaking learners of English:

- A. I am sitting *into* (correct: *in*) the classroom.
- B. The plane flew *on* (correct: *over*) my head.
- C. The cat is sitting *in* (correct: *on*) the table.
- D. The woman walked *on* (correct: *across*) the road to the bank opposite.
- E. The cat climbed on (correct: *up/down*) the tree.

The above literature review interspersed with appropriate examples of L1 syntactic interference in the acquisition of English syntax is evidence enough for mother tongue influence in SLA. Besides L1 syntactic negative transfer, the transfer of L1 lexical items in English learners' interlanguage is no less prevalent. The following literature survey proves that transfer of L1 lexis, along with L1 syntactic properties, is widespread. Ringbom (2001) proposes these five categories of lexical transfer: (1) Borrowing (2) coinage, (3) misspelling, (4) calques (literal translation from L1), and (5) semantic extensions. James (1998), on the other hand classifies lexical transfer into these four categories: (1) misspelling (2) borrowing, (3) coinage, and (4) calque. Transfer of L1 lexis in terms of form and meaning is examined with reference to a survey of research literature and illustrations in the next section.

## L1 LEXICAL TRANSFER

Scott (1999) investigated L1-based concepts interfering with L2 lexical concepts. He examined the semantico-conceptual aspects of the L1 influence on word choice by Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking learners of English of different age groups and proficiency levels. The experimental groups were tested in their native languages. An additional group of English native speakers was also tested. The participants performed three tasks: i) retelling of a silent film ii) listing of nouns and verbs appropriate to specific objects and events iii) judge whether the preselected nouns and verbs (task two) related to the aforementioned objects and events. The result showed strong word-choice patterns based on the Learners' L1 backgrounds which differed significantly from that of the native speakers of English and thus confirmed the pervasiveness of L1 influence in L2 lexical processing.

Chapeto'n (2008) investigated L1 lexical transfer using Ringbom's (2001) distinction between transfer of form and transfer of meaning as misspelling, borrowing, coinages and calques. The subject was a fourteen-year old native speaker of Italian, learning English as a foreign language at school. He was to write a composition "My favorite movie." The lexical errors categorized as above were as on the following table:

**Table 3: Lexical transfer of form and meaning**

Transfer of form	Transfer of meaning
<p>One instance of <b>misspelling</b>: <i>villag</i> instead of <i>village</i> (from Italian <i>villaggio</i>)</p> <p>Five instances of <b>borrowing</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Namico</i> instead of <i>enemy</i></li> <li>2. <i>Antica</i> instead of <i>antique</i></li> <li>3. <i>Conquistare</i> instead of <i>conquer</i></li> <li>4. <i>Colonie</i> instead of <i>colonies</i></li> <li>5. <i>Quale</i> instead of <i>which</i></li> </ol> <p>Two instances of <b>coinage</b>:</p> <p><i>Record</i> from Italian <i>recordare</i> instead of <i>remember</i> <i>Conquis</i> from Italian <i>conquistare</i> instead of <i>conquer</i></p>	<p>One instance of <b>calque</b>:</p> <p><i>Protagonist</i> from Italian <i>protagonista</i> instead of <i>character</i></p>

The researcher provided the following explanation regarding the above examples of L1 lexical transfer found in his study:

### BORROWING OF INTACT L1 WORDS

The subject tried to fill the gap between the required L2 lexical items by relying on his L1 resource. Notice the five examples of borrowing above.

### USE OF CALQUE.

In English, the word *character* is used when referring to films whereas the word *protagonist* is used to refer to the main character in literature. In Italian, on the other hand, this word is used to refer to both films and literature. The subject thus used *protagonist* from *protagonista* (Italian) a word he is familiar with but is unaware of the semantic restriction to refer to a character in literature.

All of the errors illustrated above are justified as L1 induced because they share the respective morphological and semantic properties of the first language of the learners in question.

Meriläinen (2008) classified lexical transfer into the following three categories based on Nation (2001), Ringbom (1987), and Meriläinen (2006):

### WORD FORM

- A. Substitution: Substitution of TL words with F1 words
- B. Relexification: L1 words are modified in the target language context.
- C. Orthographic transfer: L1 spelling conventions are used in L2 context.
- D. Phonetic transfer: L1 phonetics affects L2 words (Spellingwise).
- E. Morphological transfer: L1 morphemes are used as L2 morphemes.

## WORD MEANING

- A. Loan transfer: L1 words are literally transferred to L2 words.
- B. Semantic extensions: L1 semantic features are transferred to L2 words but the meanings are extended.

## WORD USE

- A. Collocation: Wrong L1 collocation is used for L2 words.
- B. Functional transfer: L1 function words are transferred to L2 assuming that the former have the same function as the latter. (Meriläinen 2008, p. 260)

To find out how the above types of transfer work out in SLA, Meriläinen examined Finnish students' five hundred compositions of 150-200 words each written as part of the matriculation examination in three successive years of 1990, 2000, and 2005. Table 4 below records the frequencies of transfer (per 10000 words):

**Table 4: Frequencies of lexical transfer**

No of categories	Categories of transfer	1990		2000		2005	
		N/10000 Words	%	N/100 00	%	N/10000 Words	%
<b>Word form</b>							
1	Substitution	3	0.9	6	2.12	3	0.85
2	Relexification	7	2.11	4	1.41	1	0.28
3	Orthographic transfer	41	12.34	51	17.99	58	16.47
4	Phonetic transfer	6	1.81	13	4.59	33	9.37
5	Morphological transfer	11	3.31	11	3.88	10	2.84
<b>Word meaning</b>							
6	Loan translation	31	9.33	26	9.17	23	6.53
7	Semantic extension	68	20.46	28	9.88	42	11.93
<b>Word choice</b>							
8	Collocation	24	7.22	11	3.88	7	1.99
9	Functional transfer	78	23.47	49	17.28	58	16.47
<b>TOTAL NO OF ERRORS</b>		269	--	199	--	235	--

The findings indicate that of all the three types, word form transfer stood at the top numbering 105 in 2005 whereas it was 68 and 85 in 1990 and 2000 respectively. The researcher holds that this might be attributed to the use of CLT (Communicative language

teaching) and availability of English input as the internet, films and English TV programmes and the stress on informal spoken English instead of focusing on written/formal English and orthographic and grammatical accuracy.

Tang (2006) conducted research on lexical mismatching in Chinese students' EFL writing caused by direct translation from Chinese. 125 Chinese college students attended a language testing training programme in Beijing. They were asked to write 63 expositions, 104 narratives and the rest on argumentation in 120-150 words. The subcategories observed in their writing were nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverb mismatches in terms of meaning and form. The following are some of the errors found in the learners' English sentences resulting from transfer from Chinese, the learners' mother tongue:

### NOUN MISMATCHES

*In the rainy weather, the 'cases' (road accidents) are especially terrible.*

Note: It was observed that the intended meaning was not conveyed because "qíngkuàng" in Chinese, which was the word used, has these equivalents in English: 'case', 'thing', 'circumstance', 'condition' and 'occasion', etc. By adopting 'case' the learner made a wrong choice because it was out of context whereas 'condition' would have been appropriate, the researcher observed.

*The teacher said, "Classmates in 99-4 are better than us".*

Note: It was observed that 'classmates' was the direct translation of 'tóngxue', meaning 'classmates' in Chinese which is used by the teacher when addressing his/her students. Instead of 'my students' the Chinese word was directly translated into English rendering it semantically inappropriate.

### ADJECTIVE MISMATCHES

A. *The fire was coming to them (ants), so they were very 'dangerous.'*

B. *After this incident, I was very 'painful' and did not want to go to school.*

In 'A', 'dangerous' is a translation of the Chinese word 'wēixiǎn(de)' which means 'filled with danger'; once again it is a case of direct translation from Chinese. In b, on the other hand, 'painful' corresponds to 'tòngkǔ(de)', a polysemic, which may mean to 'feel pain' or 'cause pains'. In this instance, the learner picked up the wrong choice from the two available.

### VERB MISMATCHES

A. She was very angry that she 'doubted' that I cheated in the exam.

B. I hate people who 'make show' before the others...

The researcher justifies them as Chinese-induced in that the Chinese word *huáiyí* corresponds to both 'doubt' and 'suspect' in English but as the learner was not aware of the semantic differences between the English equivalents, 'doubt' was wrongly used in sentence 'A'. In sentence 'B', on the other hand, 'make show' (for 'pretend') originates from the Chinese word *zuòxiù* the second character 'xiù' being a translation based on the English pronunciation 'show' and the first character being translated as 'make.' So the deviance is the literal back translation of 'zuo'(make) and 'xiù' (show) but the combination failed to convey the expected meaning. "Students tended to resort to their mother tongue for literal translation at lexical level," the researcher concluded. The following expressions are translated directly from Chinese into English and are reported in Syed (2016, p.77). How strange and ludicrous such word-for-word translation from L1 into L2 is evident in these expressions.

### WEIRD ENGLISH: CHINGLISH

A. Erection in progress (Construction in progress)

B. F...k the potatoes. (Bake the potatoes)

C. Beware of missing foot. (Beware of falling)

D. Public toilet tourism. (Public toilet for tourists)

E. Keep table clean after dying (Keep the table clean after dining)

(Collected from the Internet)

A point worth making at this point is that morphosyntactic accuracy and lexical appropriateness is essential for successful and effective communication. Morphological accuracy of English words is not acquired automatically. Because of the inherent mismatch between English spelling and pronunciation, many native-speaking English speakers are seen making silly spelling mistakes. Non-native speakers of English too suffer serious spelling errors caused by the mismatch between English spelling system and the pronunciation of English words. Therefore, if form is not consciously taught to native – and non-native speakers of English alike, they are likely to make such morphosyntactic and lexical errors.

Sometimes, however, lexical influence may arise from the cultural beliefs and practices of the native language community affecting not only the interlanguage of the L2 learner but generally adopted by the community's repertoire as a whole. Following are some examples of such interlanguage influence at lexical levels as evident in varied English speaking contexts.

## CULTURALLY BIASED WORDS, PHRASES AND IDIOMS

### WORDS AND PHRASES

In Sub-continental English, for example, some L1 words and phrases like *bungalow*, *Jodhpur*, *avator*, *dinghy*, *jungle*, *khaki*, *lathicharge* (to charge with a baton), *cousin brother/sister*, *eve-teasing* (sexual harassment), *prepone* (opposite of postpone), *love-marriage* (opposite of arranged-marriage), and *advocate* (for “lawyer”) etc. have been assimilated into English (Kachru and Smith, 2008). However, these expressions are likely to pose comprehension difficulty for speakers of Standard English.

### COLLECTIVE NOUNS AS COUNTABLE NOUNS

In African, Philippine, Singapore, South Asian and Southeast Asian English it is commonplace for the following uncountable nouns to be used as countable nouns, so each of them is allowed to have plural forms:

A. furnitures B. equipments C. informations D. evidences (ibid, p. 106). Also available are *advices*, and *aircrafts*.

### LOAN TRANSLATION FROM AFRICAN ENGLISH AND INDIAN ENGLISH

The following examples indicate such a phenomenon:

A. AE (African English): a) *chewing stick*: It means a twig that is chewed up at one end to be used as a tooth brush. b) *Small room*: for a “toilet”. c) *Bush meat* for “game meat”

B. IE (Indian English): a) *Sacred thread*: Thread worn diagonally across the chest to signify a higher caste. b) *Dining leaf*: banana (or any other) leaves used as disposable plates. c) *Communal dining*: People of different religious communities eating together. d) *Pin drop silence*: Silence so profound that a pin dropping can be heard. (Source: ibid, p. 107)

### IDIOMATIC AND METAPHORIC EXPRESSIONS

1. SA (South Asian English): a) *blackening one's face*: to “suffer disgrace”

2. SAFE (South African English): a) *snakes started playing mini soccer in my spine*: “I became very excited.” b) *I wrote it down in my head*: “I made a mental note of it.” (Source: As above)

Lexical interference of the above types is the direct influence of the mother tongues of individuals from South Asia and South Africa. Interference of this nature is more problematic because it does not constitute the “emerging language” or the interlanguage of English learners but it represents unique speech habits of specific speech communities which other people from other speech communities may find incomprehensible as Syed (2016) observes:

These expressions and a host of others like them are non-native idiosyncratic English expressions moulded out of L1 cultural beliefs and traditions which might cause difficulty in comprehension [ and communication for that matter].

### IMPLICATIONS OF L1 TRANSFER

Though L1 influence permeates all levels of a second language, i.e. phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, this paper deals only with L1 syntactic and lexical interference because the rest are simply not within its scope. The data confirms two interesting truths. One is that similarities between the mother tongue of the learner and the second language s/he is learning facilitates learning of the second language, whereas differences between them preclude it. The second truth is that the absence of certain forms in either the first language or the second language is also responsible for erroneous acquisition of L2 linguistic forms.

The research evidence and examples of first language interference in the acquisition of English syntax and lexis as reported in this paper has serious implications for its teaching as a foreign- or second language. Though the die-hard proponents of the communicative approach to second language teaching are in favour of communicative fluency even at the expense of linguistic accuracy, a revival of interest seems to be in the offing in teaching language function in unison with form. It is accepted now that instead of assigning grammar a mere monitor role, it is not unhelpful to teach grammar more actively. Now it is believed that with communicative competence being the focus of second language teaching, a focus on form is still important. The situation, however, is somewhat complicated by trying to distinguish ‘Form’ from ‘Forms’. As some consider the former as indirect or implicit teaching of grammar in the process of second language teaching, the latter means the overt teaching of the discrete components of grammar deemed necessary for learners to achieve communicative fluency. The debate is eased off and the confusion is dispelled in the next section.

## FORM-FOCUSED INSTRUCTION VERSUS FOCUS ON FORM

Long (1999) views the above notions as oppositional. **Focus on forms** is teaching linguistic forms discretely, explicitly, preemptively, directly or intentionally while **Focus on form** means intervening incidentally, indirectly, or reactively. This unnecessary debate can be avoided if the matter is seen as just one: teaching linguistic forms. As Prabhu (1987, p.27) puts it, form-focused activities facilitate assimilation of the form which helps the use of the L2 become automatic. As Ellis (2015, p. 9) sees it, performing communicative tasks can contribute to linguistic development but that does not occur automatically; it requires focus on form, preemptively and reactively. As he sees it, communicative activities should have a dual purpose. He adds that learners can benefit from intentional as well as from incidental learning. Drawing learner attention to linguistic forms is necessary besides equipping learners with communicative competence. Thus, by diluting the dichotomies between *form* and *forms*, it is easy to understand the truth that in the remediation of erroneous L2 output, the teaching of both linguistic forms and their meanings should be under consideration.

## WHY FORM-FOCUSED INSTRUCTION

The teaching of meaning is not enough when problems arise with respect to L1 interference or transfer at the level of syntax and lexis or all other levels for that matter. Merely communicative activities make interlanguage reach a development plateau in terms of accuracy. To push interlanguage development above the plateau and enable learners to proceduralize their knowledge of L2 forms, form-focused options including noticing and language awareness activities are required (Lyster, 2004, p. 337). Instruction which is primarily based on communication strategies, may lead learners to bypass target forms and use unanalyzed non-target representation of the TL to achieve mutual comprehensibility at the expense of accuracy as Skehan (1998) claims. Form-focused teaching is inherently remedial as Ellis (2015) puts it. He adds, it helps learners and teachers alike to address issues which are problematic by way of learner utterances or by the teacher or the learner's wish to clarify understanding of a linguistic feature, so it is pedagogically efficient; however, Ellis does not make any distinction between **form** and **forms**. Focus on form does not negate focus on meaning; on the contrary, learners simultaneously attend to both form and meaning during a cognitive event (Doughty, 2001, p. 211). Form-focus teaching helps learners notice TL forms and thus raises awareness of them by providing sufficient practice in the linguistic features in question. The progress, however, should not be unidirectional but move along a continuum as Lyster (2004, p. 334) proposes:

Noticing ←-----→ Awareness ←-----→ Practice

The above can be materialized through the use of the PPP (Presentation←-----→practice←-----→production) approach, but unlike the traditional PPP approach which adopts a fixed unidirectional movement from presentation through practice to production, a pragmatic one should consider moving to and from any of the three stages keeping in mind the specific learning needs of the learners involved. Thus, true form-focused instruction should be underpinned by not a fixed pedagogical principle but by one that is flexible and adaptable.

## FORM-FOCUSED ACTIVITY TYPES

It follows from the above that instead of wholly relying on communicative activities which focus on fluency alone, conscious and overt grammatical activities can be used followed by direct teacher feedback (supported by Ellis, 2000, pp223-236; Ellis, 2001, pp1-46) and also by contrastive analysis of L1 and L2 otherwise known as CLI (Contrastive Analysis Input). Thornbury (1997) proposes reformulation, reconstruction and dictogloss, among other things as awareness raising activities. He (ibid, p. 333) includes the following as awareness building activities: 1) Providing opportunities for reflection; 2) Teaching the use of words in different contexts; 3) Playing the tape with words in focus and asking students to count the occurrence of each word; 4) Training learners to find the differences between two similar texts; 5) Developing proof-reading skills of learners, 6) Asking them to compare drafts of texts; and 7) Supplying them with dictionaries and grammar books to find differences between their versions of a syntactic or lexical item and that in the dictionary. He also finds 8) direct teacher feedback, and 9) Explanation of a word or syntactic feature even in the mother tongue in case of an extreme necessity. Metalinguistic explanation and contrastive analysis to increase L2 learners' language awareness are some other teacher directed activities which can be added to the list. Instead of relying heavily on communication practice, form-focused activities like the above and many more may be used with L2 learners to help them produce not only fluent but also error-free English sentences and utterances.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed relevant research literature and cited examples of the influence of various first languages in the learning of English as a foreign or a second language by English language learners representing diverse non-native English speaking cultures. The convincing evidence and clear examples of L1 syntactic and lexical influence in the acquisition and the use of English syntax and lexis strongly support the claim that interlanguage errors or deviant L2 linguistic features across cultures (English being the case in point) are overwhelmingly L1 driven notwithstanding the developmental factors within English itself. Thus, the paper has been able to establish the truth that the overwhelming evidence of first language interference marginalizes, if does not demean, the L2 developmental factors in SLA. The overall significance of the paper lies in the fact that it has very strongly established the worth of teaching L2 forms either overtly, explicitly, preemptively, and directly or covertly, implicitly, incidentally and indirectly while teaching language for communication.

The overwhelming presence of L1 induced L2 syntactic and lexical errors or deviations in research data as presented and analyzed in this paper clearly testify to the fact that L2 errors are indeed L1 driven. The significance of the paper also lies in the fact that alongside providing evidence for L1 interference in L2 learning, it also addresses the pedagogical impact of such

influence. It has tried to answer a pertinent question of whether or not grammar should be taught in a L2 learning programme which is primarily communication or meaning-focused. It has been argued that communication focused activities alone may not automatically equip learners with linguistic accuracy needed for functional- or communicative fluency. A point has been made that too much attention to communicative fluency at the expense of linguistic accuracy may be counterproductive developing in learners a tendency to avoid certain L2 forms and may cause learner interlanguage to plateau.

The alternative suggested, therefore, is the teaching of linguistic forms along with the teaching of language functions. The paper, however, challenges the unwarranted debate between 'form-focused' and 'forms-focused' instruction and successfully makes it clear that these two notions are not oppositional as claimed by some but are complementary. Underpinned by this proposition, this paper recommends a methodology which can be implemented through both communicative and form-focused activities. The major linguistically- or form-focused activities suggested for this purpose are: 1. Overt grammar instruction; 2. Metalinguistic explanation; 3. Contrasting forms; 4. Giving direct teacher feedback; 5. Using the mother tongue in extreme necessity, among others. '2' and '5' among these activities may irk die-hard proponents of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) but the truth notwithstanding is that whatever materials and methods are helpful for specific groups of learners may be adopted or adapted to their needs.

The paper's strength may also be attributed to the creation of the possibility of inducing some change in language policy makers' outlook in differing contexts on second language teaching (English in Bangladesh, for example) and any other L2 teaching and learning contexts elsewhere. Whereas language teaching policy makers have so far been preoccupied with the idea of a rigid, and uncompromising communicative approach to second language teaching by relegating grammar teaching to a less important position or, worse, to no position at all, they may now wake up to the call for adherence to a mixed method of L2 instruction, i.e. blending grammar- or form-focused instruction with meaning-focused instruction as proposed and justified in this treatise.

One weakness of this paper is the lack of primary research data from the author's own English language teaching and learning context although sporadic examples of syntactic and lexical deviations have been cited from his context alongside secondary research data. An answer to this criticism could be that the research evidence for L1 syntactic and lexical transfer or influence presented in the paper has been picked up from a variety of SLA contexts which may be found in any other similar contexts as Sinha et al (2009, p. 121) observe, "...first language interference in the acquisition of the second language is applicable universally." Having said that, there is no denying that the need for primary research involving the author's own context on negative interference of his L1 in the learning of English as a second language would have been more interesting and useful and it would have been a feather in the cap of the argument and evidence that L1 influence in SLA is indeed a force to be reckoned with. Finally, the secondary data presented from diverse non-English speaking contexts as evidence for first language interference in the acquisition of English syntax and lexis could have been more diverse and would have added more strength to the claim that linguistic interference that SLA suffers is overwhelmingly L1 driven.

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Syed Mazharul Islam  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Independent University, Bangladesh  
Plot 16, Block B, Aftabuddin Ahmed Road, Bashundhara Residential Area  
Dhaka 1229, Bangladesh  
Email: mazhar@iub.edu.bd