

**AUTONOMISED GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION
THROUGH L1 USE: LEARNERS VOICED**

**Anadil Kullanımı İle Özerkleştirilmiş Dilbilgisi Öğretimi:
Öğrencilerin Sesinden¹**

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Abstract

Thanks to the technological innovations and the rapid diversification in the demography of its speakers, English has emerged as a lingua franca for a multilingual community worldwide, while centennial myths like the use of the students' native language (L1) in the EFL class have come under question with the increased interest in learner needs and learner autonomy. In this study, an exit survey consisting of three open-ended questions were given to 24 Turkish learners of English studying at the preparatory class (Dokuz Eylül University), after receiving contrastive grammar instruction for five weeks. During the form-focused instruction, the students were enabled to capitalize on the L1 concepts of modality as a resource for the restructuring of the target items with the help of the bilingual grammar activities. When their responses to the exit survey were subjected to descriptive analysis, the following results were obtained: the majority of the participants approved the use of the mother tongue during grammar instruction, as it not only facilitates and accelerates the learning process, but also results in a more meaningful, comprehensible and memorable kind of learning. They also indicated that native language use reduces their anxiety as well as promoting interest and confidence in their learning process.

Keywords: *Learner autonomy, L1 use, crosslingual strategy.*

Özet

Teknolojik yenilikler ve konuşucu nüfusundaki hızlı çeşitlenmeler sonucunda, İngilizce dünya çapındaki çokdilli bir topluluğun ortak iletişim dili haline gelirken, yabancı dil sınıfında öğrencilerin anadilinin kullanımı gibi yüzyıllık söylenceler öğrenci gereksinimleri ve öğrenci özerkliğine artan ilgi sayesinde sorgulanmaya başlamıştır. Bu çalışmada, hazırlık sınıfında İngilizce öğrenen 24 Türk öğrenciye beş haftalık karşılıklı dilbilgisi öğretimi verildikten sonra üç açık-uçlu sorudan oluşan bir çıkış anketi verilmiştir. Biçim-odaklı öğretim süresince, öğrencilerin ikidilli dilbilgisi etkinlikleri yardımıyla anadildeki kipsellik kavramlarından yararlanarak erek dilin birimlerini yeniden yapılandırmaları sağlanmıştır. Katılımcıların çıkış anketine verdikleri yanıtlar betimsel analize tabi tutulduğunda ise şu sonuçlar elde edilmiştir: katılımcıların çoğunluğu dilbilgisi öğretimi sırasında anadil kullanımını desteklemiştir, çünkü anadil kullanımını öğrenme sürecini kolaylaştırmak ve hızlandırmakla kalmaz, daha anlamlı, anlaşılır ve unutulmaz türde öğrenmeyle sonuçlanır. Ayrıca katılımcılar anadil kullanımının kaygıyı azaltıp öğrenme sürecinde ilgi ve güveni artırdığını belirtmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Öğrenci özerkliği, anadil kullanımı, dillerarası strateji.*

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1. Introduction

In the revised version of his plenary talk given at the 2007 meeting of the IATEFL Learner Autonomy SIG, Little (2009, p. 222) pointed out that his past prediction of learner autonomy becoming a buzz word has come true, and goes on to reiterate that as in the case of the term, “communicative”, it would soon be deprived of “any clearly agreed meaning”. Little’s (2009) concern may not be in vain, but the diversity of its definitions can be attributed to the fact that “autonomy is a multifaceted concept whose meaning has been discussed in the specialist language learning literature from many perspectives and in an increasingly academic fashion” (Smith, 2008, p. 395). While according to Dam et al. (1990, p. 102), learner autonomy is “a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person”, Little (1991, p. 4) defined it as “a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action”. The first definition came to be known as the Bergen definition, and entails individualistic notions of autonomy (Smith, 2008).

Whether learner autonomy is confused with self-instruction or not, there still seems to be a consensus over how it is to be practised, for “it requires insight, a positive attitude, a capacity for reflection, and a readiness to be proactive in self-management and in interaction with others” (Little, 2008, Definitions, ¶ 2). However, Holec’s (1981, p. 3) account, “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning”, remains to be the most widely used, and is acknowledged as “a working definition” (Little, 2006, Learner Autonomy: a working definition, ¶ 1). In Holec’s view (1981, p. 3), the autonomous learner is capable of making multiple decisions like “determining objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring procedures of acquisition and evaluating what has been acquired”, and such capacity can only be achieved either naturally or systematically through formal learning in most of the cases. Little (2006, Implications of this definition of learner autonomy, ¶ 1) noted that it is “this acceptance of responsibility” for one’s own learning that has put the concept of learner autonomy at the centre of the Council of Europe’s studies on language education since 1979.

All in all, it is hard to refute Gremmo’s (1998) claim on the definitions of learner autonomy that the clearest of all is Holec’s 1996 version (as cited in Gremmo, 1998, p. 144) as “the capacity of the learner to learn without being taught”, which also draws the line between participative teaching and self-directed learning. In participative teaching schemes, teachers function as experts both in the language being taught and in the transfer of knowledge, and are at the centre of the system, whereas in self-directed learning schemes, “learners interact autonomously and directly with intelligent linguistic resources made available to them and can make use of counselling procedures to develop their learning competence...” (Gremmo, 1998, pp. 145-147).

Consequently, in order to develop learner autonomy in the L2 classroom, teachers need to comply with three basic principles of pedagogy: the principle of learner involvement, which requires involving “learners fully in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning”; the principle of learner reflection, which refers to enabling learners “to reflect continuously on the process and content of their learning”, and the principle of target language use, which concerns the use of the target language as the principal medium and the goal of learning (Little, 2009, p. 224). However, as for the principle of target language use, there is a discrepancy between Dam’s and Little’s approaches: Dam (1995) identifies the use of the target language as the preferred medium of instruction from the very

beginning, while Little (2009, p. 224) is more concerned about the negotiation of meaning as beginner learners cannot actively participate in the autonomisation process if the teacher just talks to them in the target language.

Now that learning “involves an active reconstruction of the knowledge or skill that is presented, on the basis of the learner’s existing internal model of the world” (Wells, 2009, p. 131), it is no use searching for an ideal method unless it is compatible with the learner’s internal model (Gremmo, 1998). Since the enlightening findings of second language acquisition research has been pointing towards “the role of learners’ previous knowledge, and more specifically of their mother tongue (or other languages they know)” in the development of learner autonomy, the ban on the use of the student’s native language in the foreign language classroom is being reconsidered, and certain mental procedures like “translation, generalization and transfers from other languages”, which are met with the teachers’ long-known opposition, are now understood as “natural” (Gremmo, 1998, p. 154).

In his seminal article, entitled “Codeswitching in the L2 classroom: A communication and learning strategy”, Macaro (2005, p. 77) draws attention to the side effects of the ban on the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom: “... it narrows down the total range of classroom activities possible thus reducing learner strategy development in terms of range, combination and self-evaluation of strategy use”. Apparently, no matter how often teachers tell them not to do, “students do, and always will, translate into their L1” (Stoddart, 2000, ¶ 1), for translation is a “learner-preferred strategy”, and instead of working against this tendency, teachers had better take advantage of translation (Atkinson, 1987, p. 242). Likewise, O’Malley et al. (1995, p. 121) found translation to be a frequently used learning strategy (11.3%), together with the repetition strategy accounting for over 30% of all strategy uses. Rubin and Thompson (1982), too, identified the use of linguistic knowledge, more precisely, the knowledge of their first language as one of the fourteen characteristics of good language learners.

Consequently, translation is an “irrepressible” and “wholly natural tendency to establish equivalences between L1 & L2” that should be used constructively, and learners’ need for it should be channelled into broader areas of language awareness (Owen, 2002, 3. Bölüm, ¶ 4). For this reason, a contrastive instructional model was designed for the teaching of the English modal concepts on the basis of the students’ knowledge of their native language: bilingual grammar activities such as parallel sentences and bilingual texts, dual-language tasks, code-switching and consciousness-raising, lexicalisation/affixation, scaffolding, and translation session were employed following a seven-step procedure consisting of the quick-reminder, contextualization, noticing, discovery, elicitation and formulation, scaffolding, reinforcement, and free use stages (Şimşek, 2012).

During the form-focused instruction, where five basic concepts of modality (ability, necessity, permission, advisability, logical probability) were taught within five-hour sessions for five weeks, the students acted like field linguists: working on the bilingual activities, making crosslingual comparisons, solving discovery questions, developing and testing L2 hypotheses with the help of their L1 as well as sharing the outcomes of their contrastive analysis and summarizing them in the bilingual tables (Şimşek, 2012). Discovering the L2 grammar by using the L1 concepts and forming their own linguistic descriptions was considered to help learners to build up their own “mini-grammars”, and to become autonomous (Ellis, 2002, p. 161). The results of the experimental study also indicated that the contrastive grammar instruction was both more effective and more lasting than the monolingual teaching in increasing the learners’ achievement of English

modals (Şimşek, 2010). Because the autonomous student behaviour is described as one involving the use of strategies (Wenden, 1991, as cited in Cotterall, 2008, p. 114), an exit survey, the results of which are henceforth presented, was administered to 24 Turkish learners of English in the experimental group in order to determine their beliefs about the use of the mother tongue as a crosslingual strategy, and also to investigate their opinions on the L1-based practices during the process of contrastive grammar instruction.

2. Method

The current research, intended for the discovery of learner views on the use of the native language as a crosslingual strategy during L2 grammar instruction, was designed as an evaluative case study. Evaluative case studies, one of the three types of case studies among qualitative research methods, involve making inquiries in order to examine the “worthwhileness” of an attempted program, project or event, and can thus be “formative” by helping to develop the program or “summative” by evaluating it afterwards (Bassey, 1999, p. 63).

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 10 female and 14 male C-level students (as they were reported to have scored between 40-59 in the placement test) studying basic English at the School of Foreign Languages (Dokuz Eylul University) during the fall term of 2008-2009 academic year (n=24). The anonymity of the respondents were maintained by assigning each a case number to identify their data: e.g. R1 for the first respondent (Ciambrone, 2004).

2.2. Data Collection

The participants were given an exit survey at the end of the contrastive grammar instruction so that their ideas on the L1 use as a crosslingual strategy can be revealed and their views on the bilingual grammar activities can be evaluated. The exit survey consisted of three central questions, the first of which asked the participants to indicate their choice between the monolingual and bilingual modes of grammar instruction, and the reasons for their preferences, while the following open-ended questions in the exit survey focused on eliciting students’ evaluative responses on the effects of contrastive grammar pedagogy implemented.

Having been developed by the researcher and reviewed by ELT specialists and measurement experts, the exit survey was revised for increasing the validity and included the following questions: a. Should Turkish be used during grammar instruction? Why? b. What kind of effect do you think the use of Turkish has on your learning during grammar instruction? Explain its positive or negative effects by giving your reasons, c. In what other areas do you think the use of Turkish would be appropriate during the learning of English? Why?

2.3. Procedure

The researcher, also being the instructor and materials developer, used contrastive instructional techniques and bilingual activities to teach the concept of English modality through Turkish concepts in five five-hour sessions (in 25 hours). At the end of five-week treatment, the participants expressed their opinions on the effectiveness of the teaching of the L2 grammar via the L1 concepts.

2.4. Data Analysis

In the analysis of the qualitative data from the exit survey, the descriptive analysis method was adopted, where the data are either summarized and interpreted according to predetermined categories, or presented in line with the questions or dimensions used during the processes of interview or observation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). These four steps are followed in the descriptive analysis: a. first, a framework is formed out of the research questions or dimensions of the interview and observation, b. the data are then organized in a meaningful and logical way, and the direct quotations are selected for later use, c. the data are now presented in a comprehensible way, and supported by direct quotations, and d. the findings are finally explicated, related, and interpreted, which may also involve comparison between different situations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

In order to ensure reliability in the data analysis, the intact responses of the participants, given a case number and ordered from 1-24, were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and the frequency count was then realized for each dimension, which Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011) marked as one way of increasing reliability, decreasing bias, and enabling cross-categorical comparisons. As for the validity of the qualitative data, the participants were invited to check the researcher's tentative findings, and the results were then refined on the basis of their reactions (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Member checks were coupled with comprehensive data treatment, where the whole data set was thoroughly and repeatedly examined and deviant cases were eagerly searched out (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008).

3. Findings and Discussion

Firstly, the participants were asked if their first language should be used while learning the target grammar. All of them said "YES" to the use of Turkish during the learning of English grammar. When the students were asked why they agreed to the L1 use in the teaching of L2 grammar, three views were foregrounded: a. six of the 24 students stated that because their language of thought is Turkish, they conceptualize English grammar through Turkish; b. 16 of them argued that it is necessary to compare English with Turkish while learning grammar, as moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar eases their learning, and c. two participants told that while learning grammar concepts, the use of Turkish makes it more effective. Below are listed the selected comments of the participants for each respective dimension:

Dimension 1: *Since our language of thought is Turkish, we conceptualize English grammar through Turkish (6/24):*

- Because of our age we firstly build its Turkish in our brain while we speak a foreign language. In our heads, the objects, entities, actions have already been recorded in Turkish and in our daily life, not one of us would talk nonsense like saying "Şu food'ları table'a koy" or "Ne güzel furniture'lar". That's why, if a pattern like "used to" is presented with the Turkish "-ardım", "-erdim", the discussion will be over (R4).

- Because Turkish is our mother-tongue, we look for the Turkish equivalent while learning another language. We design its equivalent in our heads accordingly. This makes our learning easier (R10).

- If you make use of Turkish, the first learning becomes easy. We can understand what is used for what more easily. But if we don't practise English, the building up of the

concepts through Turkish won't be lasting and practical. For this reason, it is better to understand what it means when it is met for the first time (R22).

Dimension 2: *It is essential to compare English and Turkish while we learn grammar concepts because moving from the known to the unknown makes learning easier (16/24):*

- It becomes simpler when we learn by identifying with our mother tongue rather than learning something as if we didn't know it before (R6).

- Because I know Turkish very well, I can better understand the English meanings by linking them with Turkish (R8).

- Because seeing the English and Turkish versions of a sentence at the same time was good for me to compare both. ... I can learn what a Turkish word means by seeing it in English. Also you help us to see the English meanings by underlining and boldfacing them. If it were only in English, I wouldn't understand (R11).

- It's easier to make links. As a result, Turkish is the language that we know better and it is much easier to build connections as we know [Turkish] (R17).

- It becomes easier for me to fix it in mind. It is also easier for me to remember in the exam. For example, I read the sentence in the exam, and as I am trying to understand it, I find myself to have already translated it into Turkish. Because we see the Turkish equivalents in our lessons, it becomes easier for me to associate them. As a result, I can find the answer more easily (R20).

Dimension 3: *It makes learning more effective to make use of Turkish while we learn grammar concepts (2/24):*

- [In this way] we do not learn by memorization (R7).

- Because this type of learning is more lasting and simpler to remember (R13).

When asked what kind of effect the use of Turkish creates on their learning during grammar instruction, the respondents gave multiple answers: 22 of the 24 participants found it accelerating and facilitating; whereas 14 of them found it more memorable. Another nine reported that it reduced their anxiety, and increased their confidence as well as interest in the learning process. On the other hand, seven students pointed out that it would be difficult to learn the grammar concepts that do not have an exact counterpart in Turkish. The salient examples from the students' answers are as follows:

Dimension 1: *The use of Turkish during grammar instruction makes the learning of English faster and easier (22/24):*

- Thinking first in Turkish and relating it to the rules of the language we already know makes our learning easier. ... Thinking in Turkish and interpreting in this way enables us to understand where we should use which structure more comfortably (R2).

- The meaning is better understood when there is a Turkish equivalent for the expression. Compared to my past learning experience, I learn English faster now. ... Of course these methods used (English together with Turkish makes it more useful), increased the quality of my language learning and knowledge. (R9)

- Most of the English grammar rules can be compared with the Turkish grammar. This means that English grammar has a counterpart in Turkish. ... It is good to explain and compare with Turkish. Because it is certain that I know Turkish grammar better than English. For this reason, it is logical moving from what I know better. ... Comparisons with Turkish increases the speed of learning and eases comprehension (R15).

- After asking "How do we say this in Turkish?", we say: "Its English equivalent is this". The only problem is that Turkish and English do not always have the same formal characteristics and this makes our task more difficult. But the best teaching method is to begin with tables and Turkish equivalents. The grammar topics we have studied here were already taught to us at high school, but we have achieved to learn without any problems here. ... I cannot think of an English [lesson] without Turkish (R18).

Dimension 2: The use of Turkish during grammar instruction makes the learning of English more lasting (14/24):

- I can understand by relating it to Turkish and it becomes more lasting in my memory (R3).

- Because Turkish is our mother tongue, comparison in all areas helps me to fix it in my mind. ... The more interesting the lesson, the better for retention. The benefits of the worksheets we have used in this course cannot be ignored (R12).

- When English and Turkish overlaps, I can recall more easily. Even after a while, I can remember the English topics by recalling Turkish concepts. From my point of view, retention can be enhanced by means of Turkish. In this respect, I can best understand grammar in your lessons (R15).

Dimension 3: The use of Turkish during grammar instruction reduces my anxiety and increases my confidence as well as my interest in the lesson (9/24):

- When I was at the prep class of the high school, I lost my enthusiasm because of the "English only!" method. They told us that the meanings of the words would be explained in English and the bilingual dictionary was banned. I don't know the word itself and to make matters worse, I don't know the words used in its explanation. If I were to look them up in a dictionary, then it would turn into "Pascal's triangle". Prohibitions in class freeze us out of education and learning. English has certainly differences from Turkish but I don't think the use of Turkish in lessons has shortcomings or a negative effect (R4).

- In classes where English is continuously used, I get fed up with struggling and become uninterested after a while. In addition, since I don't understand the lesson, I decide that I don't like English. The reason why I have not been able to learn English well is this in my opinion ... (R12).

- It is relaxing to make use of Turkish while learning grammar. I feel more confident and better. ... I feel happier and competent when I try to build up sentences [by making use of Turkish]. In classes where only English is spoken and even the use of Turkish is banned, the students don't understand anything; they lose track of the lesson and the English class turns into torture. But in classes where Turkish is used, the student wants to learn more and more, tries to contribute to the conversation and make sentences, and when he is stuck, he can use Turkish and the teacher's support here makes it more memorable and the student regains his confidence. One no longer worries that he will be embarrassed or the teacher will punish if I speak Turkish (R16).

Dimension 4: *It may be difficult to learn the grammar concepts that do not have an exact equivalent in Turkish (7/24):*

- The meaning of what we say in Turkish may have many equivalents in English. At times, I find myself wondering about which one should be used, but I know I can't learn in any other way... (R5).

- It becomes difficult in situations where there is no exact equivalent. Though it happens rarely, I find it complicated to understand those topics that are bilingually taught, when I try to identify them with the mother-tongue (R19).

Ultimately, when they were asked in what other areas the mother tongue can be used while learning a foreign language, one of the participants (R23) didn't respond, and 18 of them identified four different skill areas, whereas five respondents argued that the use of Turkish is especially useful for grammar instruction but not in any other area. Among those 18 students that thought native language use can be helpful in other areas of foreign language learning, twelve stated that the use of Turkish can be good in vocabulary learning, while four of them found it functional in writing. There was, however, only one student that supported L1 use in the teaching of listening and speaking. Some of the representative samples from the participants' responses can be found below:

Dimension 1: *It is good to make use of Turkish in vocabulary learning (12/23):*

- For example; at high school, we used to explain the words in English and I found it too difficult. I couldn't learn anything. It is very good to see the Turkish equivalents of the words (R21).

- While the new words are explained, they should be associated with Turkish so that they are stored in my head; I can shape them by myself and they become fixed in my mind (R24).

Dimension 2: *It is good to make use of Turkish in writing (4/23):*

- As I write, there are times that I cannot translate into English, because conjunctions make it harder. ... It is necessary to think in Turkish in order to learn English. Although it may have difficulties, it is the same in writing, speaking and also in grammar (R10).

- In writing classes, not only paragraph writing but also translation can be done or short texts about a topic can be prepared and translated into English (R15).

Dimension 3: *It is good to make use of Turkish in listening (1/23):*

- If it is especially used in listening, it will be very useful for me. We can translate what we listen into Turkish (R9).

Dimension 4: *It is good to make use of Turkish in speaking (1/23):*

- ... For example, we have got fixed sentences in patterns like Turkish idioms etc. We should translate them into English. We should know the English equivalents of daily expressions. In my opinion, while learning a language you must compare the properties, traditions, patterns of that language with your mother tongue and associate them with

one another. English-speaking countries have certain fixed sentences and words in speaking. We should translate them into Turkish and learn what they mean (R7).

Dimension 5: *It is good to make use of Turkish not in other areas but especially in grammar* (5/23):

- It is good to make use of Turkish only in grammar because the use of Turkish in speaking makes us feel too relaxed. It is very good to use it in grammar topics (R4).

- For me, Turkish should be used more in grammar. In speaking classes, we should pay attention to use English generally but to an extent that would bore the student or make him feel guilty (R8).

The unanimous consent of the participants to the use of the mother tongue in grammar instruction is also in line with the findings of the previous studies in the literature. For instance, in Rell's (2005) study, 77% of the students stated that they preferred instruction in the L1 or a combination of L1 and L2; whereas in Viakinnou-Brinson's (2006) research, many of the students told that if they were French teachers, they would mostly use the target language (French) and spare the mother tongue (English) for grammar explanations. This can be related to the fact that L1 use, when used as a crosslingual strategy, helps to enhance understanding and increase accuracy especially in the teaching of grammar. As the native language provides "the only possible reference point" for most of the learners who grow up in a monolingual environment, they should be helped to form "a correct idea of how the foreign language works, notably how it relates to mother tongue..." (Luc, 1992, as cited in Hawkins, 1999, p. 130). Similarly, Meyer (2008) recommended using loan words, translation activities and codeswitching to anchor L2 concepts through L1 because "using the students' L1 is possibly the best way to make new material relatable to the learner's structure of knowledge, especially at low levels" (Meyer, 2008, p. 152).

Atkinson (1987), too, touched upon the benefits of translation in both the presentation of new language items and reinforcement of the previously-learned structures. However, the many uses of the mother tongue are not limited to accuracy improvement. As has been pointed out by the majority of the students in the present study, besides its value as a communicative strategy, the native language use can also help the development of fluency in the teaching of language skills. In another study in Taiwan, translation was found to positively influence language learning experiences, and to help to acquire L2 skills like reading, writing, speaking, vocabulary, idioms, and phrases (Liao, 2006). As a result of the interviews with ten participants, Liao (2006) determined similar learning benefits of translation: understanding English, checking comprehension, memorizing more words, grammar and sentence structures, developing and expressing ideas in another language, reducing learning anxiety and enhancing learner motivation.

As has been evidenced by some of the participants' remarks on their past learning experiences at high school, robbing learners of a very mighty weapon as their native language is not only a negligent but also an ignorant teacher behaviour. Also, because the instructors do not have enough time to deal with all the problems they have, learners must be led to become "independent analysts of the language they are learning" (Odlin, 1994, p. 12). In the same vein, Allford (1999, p. 248) argued that if the lesson was merely conducted in the target language, the students would be deprived of the insights L1 use could offer and stressed the importance of L1 use as a crosslingual strategy as in the following: "Crosslingual strategies, including translation, provide an opportunity to

examine how the two languages deploy their different resources to realise very similar though not identical meanings". In summary, it seems to be the fact that the two frequently-used strategies of good language learners, judicious amount of back-reference to mother tongue (translation) and making effective crosslingual comparisons, continue to preserve their instructional values in foreign language education (Naiman et al., 1996).

5. Conclusion

The descriptive analysis of their responses to the exit survey has shown that in view of the overwhelming majority of the participants, the use of the mother tongue makes the learning process faster, easier and more practical, and the learning itself more meaningful, more comprehensible and more memorable; as well as reducing the anxiety and promoting the interest and confidence of the students in the learning process. This might be explained by the compatibility of the L1-based practices with the concept-based view of grammar teaching. According to Hill (2007, pp. 3-4), in order for L2 learners to easily grasp the target grammatical forms, "underlying cognitive schemata" should be activated; that is, they must be enabled "to link the L2 morphology with their existing L1 conceptual system or reconceive the schema to the L2 and then make the link". Lam (2003) also emphasized the natural tendency of the students to pair up the L2 lexicon with L1 concepts.

Perhaps the earliest support for a contrastive pedagogy in grammar instruction can be found in Vygotsky's (1998, p. 159) views of language development: "Success in learning a foreign language depends on the attainment of a certain level of maturity in the mother tongue. The child is able to transfer the system of meanings he has already acquired in his own language to the new language". From the perspectives of Lightbown and Spada (2003), it is common knowledge among most researchers and teachers that learners make use of their knowledge of other languages, while they are struggling with the complexities of a new language. During such transfer, learners' metacognition and metalanguage from their mother tongue are evoked to help them to describe, compare and explain the target language, and thus, foster greater awareness of L2 patterns as well as better understanding of its structures and uses (Cunningham, 2000). Therefore, instead of pressurizing L2 learners' innate urge to make comparisons between the familiar and unfamiliar systems of languages, educationists had better alert them to the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 by stimulating their existing schema.

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