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Acquisition of English Inflectional Phonology by Persian EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The recent study was carried out to investigate the acquisition of inflectional morphemes s-plural and singular and ed-past tense marker among Persian L2 learners and to explore whether or not the absence of some certain phonetic features in L1 required in L2 will impact the acquisition and production of these markers and it also tends to explore the ability of Persian subjects in production and acquisition of final consonant clusters in English in the light of the hypothesis that the acquisition and production of these inflections would be difficult even if learners enjoy a pleasant proficiency level. To fulfill the purpose of this study, 50 subjects, Upper Intermediate and Advanced, of Safir Language Academy were chosen through administering the Oxford Quick Placement Test. The subjects were assigned production tasks (movie and nonsense word prosodification) plus reception task (nonsense word recognition) and their performances on each task were recorded and analyzed and the means of their performances were calculated. The analysis of the data was done through the between group – within group repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA). Consequently, it was concluded that subjects suffered inability in production of /t/ and they mistakenly confused it with /d/, and in the case of consonant clusters they had to aspirate, epenthesize or laboriously produce the consonant cluster in final coda position. It was also concluded that it was the phonetic awareness that facilitate the production and acquisition of these morphemes not the proficiency level of the individuals.

Keywords: *Inflectional Phonology, Inflectional Morphemes, Phonetic Features, Production, Acquisition, Consonant Cluster*

INTRODUCTION

Preliminaries

One of the areas of concerns which has been plunged into the spotlight after the introduction of Contrastive Analysis (CA) has been the issue of Prosodic Transfer. The development of contrastive analysis and the further enhancements which occurred after the introduction of the different versions of contrastive analysis gained its foothold when the persistent need for prognosticating the major sources of error crept itself into the surface and prompted the linguists to track down the source of error. They implemented whatever countermeasures indispensably required to ameliorate the situation and to predict the sources for these error sources, in order to proceed without recourse to the error producing source which ultimately crippled the speaker's performance.

In this regard, the rise of contrastive analysis fertilized the ground for the concept of transfer. As Brown (2000, p.187) looks at it, transfer is a "*general term describing the carryover of previous performance or knowledge to subsequent learning* ". The matter is self evident and clearly transparent that the negative transfer or what Brown (1995) refers to it as interference may run counter on the ultimate attainment of the individual and doom the end state product of the individual afflicted with such anomaly into failure.

In line with this trend, the relationship between the mother tongue (L1) and the second language (L2) has always been grist to innumerable studies in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). A great chunk of the discussion and the previously conducted researches or term papers has initially capitalized of so-called transfer phenomena that are generally defined as *"the incorporation of features of the L1 into the knowledge system of the L2 which the learner is trying to build"* (Ellis, 1994, p. 28).

After a period in the 1950s-1960s when transfer was deemed as the launching pad of learning difficulties and a period in the 1970s when it was denied any place in the L2 acquisition process, we have now reached a point in the transfer debate where most authors acknowledge that "*despite its sometimes irritatingly elusive character, transfer is one of the major factors shaping the learners interlanguage competence and performance*" (Kohn 1986, p 21).

According to the Contrastive Analysis (CA) hypothesis espoused by Weinreich (1953) and Lado (1957), all L2 learner's substitutions are due to the absence of a particular sound in the speaker's native language, as the learner ought to select the native language sound which is closest to the target language. Not all errors, however, can be attributed to L1 transfer. Non-transfer phonology errors, which cannot be attributed to L1 transfer, are often linked to two factors: developmental (changes that are argued to show the same phenomena we see in L1 acquisition) or universal effects (e.g. stop segments are universally unmarked).

Research Question

The research question formulated for the purpose of this study is:

1. Do L2 Persian EFL learners' ultimate attainments of acquisition of English inflectional phonology tend to be constrained due to the lack of certain features not present in his L1 but of invaluable importance in L2?

Significance of the Study

The study of transfer appears to be indispensably mandatory to understand the nature of the mistakes made by learners in addition to the root of the problem which serves as a compelling factor in compounding the mystifying nature of the transfer phenomenon .The matter is self explanatory that numerous studies were carried out in to exploring the issue of transfer and the possibility to exhaust every loop hole and as a preventative measure to control the flow of undesirable transfers which insidiously creeps in to the (IL) of the individuals and run counter on the production or yields prosodically anomalous speech productions. Following Benson (2002, p. 68), it can be concluded from the above that *"transfer does occur, but is a far more complex phenomenon than hitherto believed"*. In order to take this complexity into account, transfer will be defined here in very general terms, as the cross-linguistic influence, within an individual's linguistic system, of one (or more) language(s) over another. Despite intensive research efforts, many questions regarding the exact nature of transfer, the circumstances in which it occurs, and the psychological processes it relies on are still, to a large extent, left unsolved.

To give but one example, instances of L1 influence on L2 performance are well-documented in the area of phonology where a so-called "*foreign accent*" is probably the clearest manifestation of the learner's L1 in L2 speech.

Purpose of the Study

In fact, this study builds on earlier researches by investigating inflectional morphologies of plural, past, and present tense marker among Persian EFL learners through careful analysis of troublesome areas while delving and speculating as to why they occur. In other words, students' acquisition and production of inflectional morphology has been addressed in this thesis with respect to production and acquisition of morphological instances absent in L1 though required for native like production of L2 coupled with the prosodic constraints that affect IL representation with consequences for the production inflectional morphology in the endstate. In this regard the ability of Persian EFL learners has been assessed in terms of correct if not native like perception and production of tense markers in English, besides, this study also is determined to investigate the absence of an L2 feature in L1 and students' inability to adapt their language to redress for this imbalance. The incidence of Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis along with Deficit Hypothesis will be exhaustively pursued in chapters to come.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Fifty Persian speaking students were carefully chosen out of a body of student made up of a hundred EFL students learning English at Safir Language Academy. Participants were chosen from fifty males and fifty females and after the preliminary analysis they became the subjects of this study as twenty-five males and twenty-five females. The backbone behind the stratification was to account for any possible intervening variable resulting from inequality in number between males and females; in addition, this approach was implemented to ensure the chance is equally distributed among participants and consequently cement the tangibility of the

results. Subjects ran the gamut of three age groups, under 20, 20 to 40, and over 40, with 17 as the youngest and 40 as the oldest participants and the mean of 27.30. Another variable which was of a paramount importance in this study was the prior phonetic background i.e., whether individual received prior phonetic awareness courses prior or during the experiment. It is worth mentioning that subject were not directly asked for such back ground information, the information was pulled up from the questionnaire they filled out after the experiment was carried out.

Since heterogeneity of the subjects in terms of proficiency and phonetic awareness could have compounded the predicament, therefore, a Quick Oxford Placement Test was administered to 100 participants under the normal testing conditions. Subjects were labelled *Upper Intermediate* and *Advanced*, with those falling between 40 to 44 as Upper Intermediate , and 45 to 50 as advanced ,despite all careful consideration concerning the equality in number, the number of advanced students exceeded the upper intermediated with fifteen students as upper intermediate and thirty five advanced. Out of the fifty subjects chosen for the study fifteen enjoyed prior phonetic back grounding.

Instruments

Initially, as mentioned above, a detailed Quick Oxford Placement test comprising of 50 questions was administered to subjects and their scores were recorded as Upper Intermediate running the gamut of 40 to 44, and advanced running from 45 to 50.

Generally, a huge chunk of data was gleaned by audio taping subjects' utterances at production level; what served as an impetus to this production of certain inflectional morphemes was the presence of a Holly Wood Move named *'Speed'*. Besides, these days films are often chosen as an authentic material, since we can expect that authentic materials increase learners' motivation. Movies in English class and testing environment supply 'concrete basis for conceptual thinking ‘plus they create high degree of interest for learners. Therefore, students were required to watch the movie and generate some certain production which mandated them to read sixty-seven sentences each as an isolated incident but quite commensurate with the events they were watching in the movie; there were seventy-five instances of ed-past tense marker and single s-present tense marker in total. An example has been drawn from the pamphlet for a better picture of what the task is going to look like:

(7): *'He pushed the door open and braked sharply'*

The example above has got two verbs *'push'* and *'brake'* each with the possibility of being investigated in terms of instances of s-simple present and ed-past tense marker which give*:/s/, /z/ and /iz/; /d/, /t/ and /it/.*

Furthermore, along with the use of a movie, to explore the s-singular and its phonological instances among subjects, four lists comprising of nonsense words were also given to the subjects in order to ensure that all required features mandatory for the subsequent description and analysis of data were elicited from the subjects, this was just in case since it was initially contended that the chosen movie could not indeed cover all the required features. The topic of nonsense words and their use tends to generate some indispensably required data not elicited by a movie. It is believed that the use of nonsense words offers an effective way to establish the alphabetic principle and to practice decoding and encoding. This belief is supported by researches. In fact, several highly researched reading programs with documented effectiveness incorporate the use of nonsense words into their reading instruction. Nonsense words were also used in circumstances in which researches tended to identify and discriminate speech sounds in monosyllabic meaningful words and nonsense words by children Obrebowski (2002). By the same token, the nonsense words used in this research were generated with maximum caution exercised while consulting closely with three Persian native speakers to ensure their practicality in eliciting the required features needed in this study, a list of nonsense words was given to subjects and asked to read each of the 30 nonsensical words out loud ; these nonsense words were primarily designed to elicit all possible productions of realizations of s-plural and ed-past tense marker ,i.e., *:/s/,/z/ and /iz/ ; /d/ , /t/ and /it/* .

Along with Appendix C, two other nonsense word lists were designed this time to probe subject’s perception of all possible productions of realizations of s-plural and ed-past tense marker, i.e., *:/s/, /z/ and /iz/; /d/, /t/ and /it/.* Coupled with the previously stated appendices came some English consonant clusters given to

subjects to read to assess their ability in production of consonant clusters both in English and Persian.

In order to be able to juxtapose instances of morphemes and consonant cluster permutation with respect to their prosodification in English to that of the Persian counterpart , some specification tables were designed which contained Persian alphabets and each Persian alphabet considering its prosodic and phonetic features was attached to by one of the six possible realizations of s-third person singular tense and ed-past tense marker ,i.e.,*/s/ , /z/ and /iz/* for s-third person singular tense and */d/ , /t/ and /it/* for ed-past tense marker. (See Appendix F)

A clear testimonial to this could be a Persian student saying:

(8):

a.' He freaks /fri:ks/ at the sight of the ghost '

'عکس '

b. 'He watched /wã:tchd or wã:tdhid / the game'

' نچید'

Pertinently , it becomes clear to us why *'freak'* is pronounced */ fri:ks/* not */ fri:kz/* ,and it could be partly a positive transfer of a prosodic feature like that of the *'*عکس *'* and the fact that we don't have any /س / in Persian ending in /z/ sound , quite relevantly in case of 'watch' , subject tended to pronounce it as */ wã:tchd or wã:tdhid /* due to the fact that we cant have */چ/* in Persian ending with */d/ or / t/* unless it is epenthesized like in *'*نچید*'* .

The above-mentioned table was rated for truthfulness and its faithfulness by three Persian speakers and they all generally agreed that this was such in Persian.

Needless to say, the speech generated and perceived by the participants to the research were carefully and faithfully documented and audiotaped for detailed analysis which was done using three Persian native speakers as raters.

Procedure

The test was adminsterd to 100 learners; out of these 100 candidates 50 learners met the necessary condition (i.e., upper intermediate and advanced competency) to enter the phase.

Production Phase

Participants from both levels of proficiency (upper intermediate and advanced) were given a three page pamphlet (see appendix A) and were asked to have a look at the pamphlet consisting of sixty seven sentences with seventy five instances of s-simple present tense and ed-past tense marker , later they were cordially required to watch a forty minute in length part of a movie named *'Speed'* and at the same time follow the sentences on the pamphlet which were thematically coordinated with the movie sequence, to control for any possible extraneous variables creeping into the result of the study such as on the spot learning of a morpheme pronunciation or a give a way example of the verb used in pamphlet, students viewed the movie in silent mode , this guaranteed that if any verb on the list turned to be used in the movie, at least this debilitating issue be controlled this way .

Immediately after the preliminary observation of the movie, students were called into an office and they were asked to read the sentences on the pamphlet and use their own discourse markers such as cohesive links or adverbs of time and frequency to punctuate the sentences which were based thematically on the events in the movie. Subjects were asked to narrate the movie once in present using present form of the verbs in the given sentences and later they were asked to do the same but this time in past ; subjects inadvertently produced certain verbs as extra ones to set the scene for the production of the included sentences , however , those verbs were later excluded due to the fact that they only served as a launching pad for students to produce the instructed sentences .These utterances were faithfully audio taped by the researcher and the student immediately left the office being replaced with the new one coming in , and this took place fifty times , each time with a new student. Here comes an example to clarify the procedure:

On the pamphlet the student sees:

(9):

a. He protected his face from the flame.

b. The terrorist buzzed him using his car phone.

c. He picked up the phone.

d. He talked to some one on the phone.

e. He Looked around.

f. He checked out his watch.

Later they are asked to narrate it once using present tense and later simple past. The student can cohesively glue the abovementioned sentences and say:

'Then he protected(s) his face from the flame, in the meantime the terrorist buzzed (es) him using his car phone, he picked(s) up the phone and talked(s) to someone on the phone, later he looked(s) around and checked(s) out his watch'.

In so doing his / her voice was recorded, and instances of inflectional morpheme's realizations were analyzed and mapped on to a chart for better and clearer analysis of realizations of morphemes (See Appendix G). It was initially assumed that since subjects were cohesively using the sentences in an interwoven tapestry of sentences glued together, the results might turn out to be obscure due to the fact that neighbouring words might leave their destructive effect on the analyses of morpheme's instances, therefore, each student was later asked to just utter the verbs as an isolated incident and so they did. (See appendix H)

For example, they were asked to produce verbs like *protect, buzz, pick, talk, look* and *check* in isolation and they were audiotaped, let's say a student pronounces */chekd/* so instance */d/* among possible manifestations of ed-past tense marker, i.e., */d/, /t / and /it/* is recorded for him.

Quite concomitantly to the assessment of their production, each subject was asked to read out loud the nonsense word list made up of 30 nonsensical words and their voices were recorded for further analysis, this was done just in case to make sure the research encapsulated all possible instances of s-plural, s-third person singular and ed-past tense marker.

Perception Phase

After a cooling off period of three days, participants were contacted and informed that their presence in a joint exam session would be highly appreciated and so they did. During the exam , sixty five nonsense words orally fed to students through the already taped record of researchers' voice , and subjects were required to put a check mark next to the manifestations of s-plural , s-third person singular and ed-past tense marker represented in their exam papers as : */s/,/z/ and /iz/ ; /d/ , /t/ and /it/*. For instance students hears *'solundrems'* and before him / her lays three alternatives */s/ , /z/ and /iz/* ; all they had to do was simply putting a check mark next to the perceives instance of s-plural. These data were later documented and used for arriving to sound empirical conclusions regarding the perception of inflectional morphemes.

In the third sitting scheduled three days after the second one, subjects were given two more lists assessing their ability to produce consonant clusters both in English and Persian.The first list was a combination of ten famous English sentences with the reputation of being quite tough for even native speakers to produce; an instance of this is being represented below:

(11):

"He twists his wrists and insists it doesn't hurt." (See Appendix D).

On the par with the complex consonant clusters presented to the in form of the print, a Persian counterpart was also given to them, this time nonsensical, (see Appendix E), assessing their ability in production of consonant clusters both in Persian and English. Students were asked to read the sentences or phrases (real in English), (nonsensical in Persian) and their productions were recorded by the researcher each student individually for further detailed analysis of their production. For example, the following phrase was presented in print to the subject and he / she was asked to read it out loud so that their voice could be recorded for further analysis as to check for subjects' ability to acquire and produce even arrangements disallowed in their L1:

(12):

تلخت بود

اعلاند کردن

مرد مستمندز

زیباستس

Since Persian didn't follow the same consonant cluster permutation as already stated this was merely done as a nonsense list to attest the claim of Representational Deficit Hypothesis and in this study to investigate the already stated hypothesis.

The last but not the least, a short story sporadically punctuated with verbs located in parentheses was presented to subjects and they were asked to read the story and supply the simple past form of the verb given in parentheses. The nature of the given verbs was irregular and ablaut, all they had to do was to read the story using what they thought was the correct form of the verb, and these encounters were audiotaped for detailed analysis as to the speculated discrepancy that exists between acquisition of regular verbs and their inflectional morphemes compared to that of the irregular or ablaut one.

Data Analysis and Discussion

A descriptive statistic was performed to schematically investigate the quality of subjects' ability in perception of the s-plural and third person which was in form of the nonsense word recognition (Table 1).

Based on the findings amassed through the descriptive statistics shown in Table 1, it is clearly emblematic of the fact that all subjects have acquired the inflectional morphemes of s-present and third person along with its realizations (i.e., /s/, /z/, /iz/) since the lowest mean score belongs to correct perception of /z/ with the standard deviation of 8.24 and the highest goes to correct reception of /iz/ with the standard deviation of 0.00 ; therefore we can conclude that the acquisition has taken place already and it obviates the need for further nuanced research.

Table1. *Descriptive Statistics of s-plural and third person reception*

Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Correct /s/	75	100	95.5%	9.70
Incorrect /s/ via /z/	0.00	25	4.5%	9.70
Incorrect /s/ via /iz/	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00
Correct /z/	71.42	100	93.71%	8.24
Incorrect /z/ via /s/	0.00	28.57	6.28%	8.24
Incorrect /z/ via /iz/	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00
Correct /iz/	100	100	100%	0.00
Incorrect /iz/ via /s/	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00
Incorrect /iz/ via /z/	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for reception of ed-past tense marker among subjects; as the results show the acquisition of reception of ed-past tense marker in many ways shared an overlapping similarity with its s-third person and plural counterpart, however, there is a more than slight slump in the correct reception of */t/* (Mean of 88.40%, Std. Deviation of 12.83) where subjects tend to have erroneously received it via */d/* (Mean of 11.60% with Std. Deviation of 12.83).

Table2. *Descriptive Statistics of ed-past tense marker reception*

Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Correct /d/	90.00	100.00	98.80%	3.28
Incorrect /d/ via /t/	0.00	10.00	60.00%	2.39
Incorrect /d/ via /id/	0.00	10.00	60.00%	2.39
Correct /t/	60.00	100.00	88.40%	12.83
Incorrect /t/ via /d/	0.00	40.00	11.60%	12.83
Incorrect /t/ via /id/	0.000	0.00	0.000%	0.000
Correct /id/	100.00	100.00	100.00%	0.000
Incorrect /id/ via /d/	0.00	0.00	0.000%	0.000
Incorrect /id/ via /t/	0.00	0.00	0.000%	0.000

To account for this idiosyncrasy and to satisfy the hypothesis that this lack of perfection is due to not having acquired the feature since it is assumed in this research to have been triggered due to non-existence of that feature in L1 even for those in acceptable proficiency level, a between group – within group repeated measure ANOVA was administered, where Upper Intermediate and Advanced subjects were scrutinized in terms of their share in correct production of */t/* (Table 3).

Table3. *Mean of correct reception of past tense marker between proficiency groups Upper Intermediate and Advanced.*

Mean of Correct Reception	Proficiency	Mean	Std. Deviation
Correct reception of /d/	Upper Intermediate	98.70	3.40
Correct reception of /d/	Advanced	98.94	3.15
Correct reception of /d/	Total	98.80	3.28
Correct reception of /t/	Upper Intermediate	85.80	12.85
Correct reception of /t/	Advanced	92.63	11.94
Correct reception of /t/	Total	88.40	12.83
Correct reception of /id/	Upper Intermediate	100.00	0.00
Correct reception of /id/	Advanced	100.00	0.00
Correct reception of /id/	Total	100.00	0.00

The results indicate that in correct reception of */t/* advanced subjects performed better since they enjoyed the mean of 92.63% whereas the upper intermediates yielded the mean up to 85.80% and the performance in /t/ among subjects wasn't significantly different from performance in */d/ and /id/* with respect to proficiency level with Wilks' lambda of *0.929* which exceeds *p<0.0005* therefore the *P* value is more than *0.05* and this suggests that this variance between these two proficiency level is not significant. (Figure 1) tangibly depicts this difference.

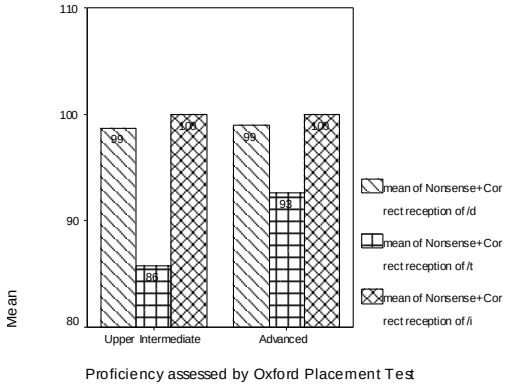

Figure1. *Difference in performance of /t/ in nonsense words between upper intermediate and advanced subjects*

There were only five nonsense words with /t/ requirement and the only two which have statistically proven to be problematic were *,'Cleffed'* and *'Frossed'* , surprisingly in Persian we tend to have instances where */s/ and /t/ and /f/ and /t/* are smoothly clustered like in *'است '* and *'رفت '* ,therefore, one can't say this is certainly due to the fact that this combination is an absent feature in L1 consequently flying in the face of the held hypothesis claiming that required feature in L2 which is absent in L1 will not be acquired if required in L2.

Table 4.4 shows the frequency with which these nonsense words were perceived by the subjects; however, it is noteworthy to point out that a sample of five words may not be an ironclad proof of a certain phenomenon, again it should be pointed out so far it hasn't been an all or nothing case, i.e., if a subject is able to perceive even *one* consonant cluster absent in his / her L1, consequently they *are* able to hear the others, even though absent in their L1.

Table4. *Frequency with which subjects perceived /t/ either correctly or incorrectly in nonsense words*

	blimped	**precked**	**cleffed**	**frossed**	**loxed**
Correct	46(92%)	48(96%)	48(96%)	32(64%)	47(94%)
Incorrect-/d/	4(8%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	18(36%)	3(6%)
Total	50	50	50	50	50

The data analysis along with the descriptive statistics presented above merely encapsulated the perceptive phase of this study, however, it is the solemn claim of this study, as previously stated in the research question and hypothesis, to verify this process through the productive dimensions of acquisition of inflectional morphemes and their prosodification between two levels of proficiency, therefore the data above just paves the ground for our further analysis of productive phase of the study

Table5. *Descriptive statistics of s-third person in movie* production

Mean of Movie	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Correct /s/	93.10	100	98.89%	1.90
Incorrect /s/ via /z/	0.00	6.90	1.10%	1.90
Incorrect /s/ via /iz/	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00
Correct /z/	86.95	100	96.78%	4.00
Incorrect /z/ via /s/	0.00	13.04	3.21%	4.00
Incorrect /z/ via /iz/	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00
Correct /iz/	70.58	100	91.41%	7.53
Incorrect /iz/ via /s/	0.00	11.76	2.00%	3.68
Incorrect /iz/ via /z/	0.00	17.65	6.58%	5.77

Table 5 demonstrates a tabulated exhibition of subjects' means in production of required instances of s-third person singular verb in the movie and gives way to a speculation on a surer footing that subject's means on correct production of s-singular manifestations are respectably identical ; /s/ production with the mean of 98.89% and Std.Deviation of 1.90, /z/ production with the mean of 96.78% and Std.Deviation of 4.00 and finally comes */iz/* production with the mean of 91.41% and Std. Deviation of 7.53

The same interpretation turns out to be applicable for the calculated means of s-plural singular instances produced by subjects uttering the nonsense words (Table 6), where the mean of correct */s/* production stands up to 99.50% with the Std. Deviation of 3.53, correct production of */z/* meaning up to 99% with Std. Deviation of 3.99 and finally mean of */iz/* correct production being calculated as 99.71% with the Std. Deviation of 2.02.

Table6. *Descriptive statistics of s-third person in nonsense word production*

Mean of nonsense words	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Correct /s/	75.00	100.00	99.50%	3.53
Incorrect /s/ via /z/	0.00	25.00	0.50%	3.53
Incorrect /s/ via /iz/	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00
Correct /z/	83.33	100.00	99.00%	3.99
Incorrect /z/ via /s/	0.00	16.67	0.33%	2.35
Incorrect /z/ via /iz/	0.00	16.67	0.66%	3.29
Correct /iz/	85.71	100.00	99.71%	2.02
Incorrect /iz/ via /s/	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00
Incorrect /iz/ via /z/	0.00	14.29	0.28%	2.02

Resultantly, considering the displayed descriptive outcome of tables 5 and 6, subjects' production of instances of s-plural and third person were significantly identical and since means of the performances were being scrutinized no significant alteration or sharp drop was observed in term of their performance means.

Yet a between group – within group repeated measure ANOVA was administered to investigate the obtained data between two proficiency levels of Upper Intermediate and Advanced and to make sure this is equally distributed between the two designated levels of proficiency. Since the production of s-plural (i.e., nonsense words) and s-third person singular (i.e., movie production) bore a tremendous affinity in terms of inflectional morphemes table 7 presents the correct means of s-production of both s-plural and s-third person.

Table7. *Means of absent yet correct s-plural and third person in nonsense words and movie*

Mean of Correct Reception	Proficiency	Mean	Std. Deviation
Correct reception of /s/	Upper Intermediate	98.66%	2.12
Correct reception of /s/	Advanced	99.27%	2.12
Correct reception of /s/	Total	98.89%	1.90
Correct reception of /z/	Upper Intermediate	96.35%	4.06
Correct reception of /z/	Advanced	97.48%	3.91
Correct reception of /z/	Total	96.78%	4.00
Correct reception of /iz/	Upper Intermediate	91.08%	8.01
Correct reception of /iz/	Advanced	91.95%	6.85
Correct reception of /iz/	Total	91.41%	7.53

Based on the data presented in table 7 it could be argued that subjects in both levels of proficiency have acquired inflectional morphemes and can ably prosodify them , however ,a one way repeated measure between groups – within groups ANOVA was employed to compare performance means of subjects located in two levels of proficiency (i.e., Upper Intermediate and Advanced) performing s-plural + third person on three different instances of s-plural + third person (i.e.,1.correct production of */s/* , 2 . correct production of */z/* and 3. correct production of */iz/*), the means and standard deviations are present in table 7, there was a rather significant difference in correct production of present and plural instances of morphemes with Wilks' lambda = *0.50*, *P<0.0005*, multivariate Eta square *0.49*.

Accordingly there was a mean difference of 7.45 which seems quite paltry since the means

of s-plural and third person production ran the gamut of 98.66% (correct */s/* production) and 91.41% (correct */iz/* production) are considerably large, therefore the difference that exists between means of */s/ and /iz/* (marked in table as 1 and 3) is not significant (See Appendix I) in this study because the acquisition has taken place.

The results also indicated that proficiency had no impact on the acquisition and production of inflectional morphemes, for no significant discrepancy was observed in performance of Upper Intermediates and Advanced and it was the phonetic awareness which enabled participants to correctly prosodify sounds even absent in L1.

The production of irregular verbs and ablauts corroborates this statement, since in this study majority of the subjects (96%) were able to produce the irregular verbs and prosodify them and out of this number some epenthesized (7%) the consonant cluster and only a few of the subjects (4%) used /ed/ to make a past tense out of the irregular verb , and it was observed that irregulars came in forms of consonant clusters absent in Persian even not licenses in L1 but subjects correctly produced them ; however some of these productions were partially not native like .This could easily be accounted for due to the existence of a negative transfer of prosodic features and shows how the negative prosodic transfer hypothesis can effect endstate production of EFL learners. In the case of ablauts 81% of the subjects correctly supplied the past tensed ablaut; that means the approach subjects took toward the acquisition and production of irregulars and ablauts even with consonant clusters absent in L1 was a total rote but conscious memorization of the past tense which was later translated into a correct and unconscious production of inflections ; this is the approach that learners need to take toward acquisition and production of inflectional morphemes and their prosodification in regular verbs.

CONCLUSION

The pool of obtained data along with the accumulating evidence of this research indicates the falsifiability of the hypothesis which states there is no phonetic parameter resetting in adult L2;consequently, speakers can never acquire phonological categories or features that are required by the L2 but absent in the L1 is farfetched.Therefore with the provision of the gleaned evidence, the hypothesis of Representational Deficit Hypothesis (RDH) which stipulates inability of learners in acquisition of features required in L1 but absent in L2 is rejected in this study. In other words, there are permanent effects of L1 prosodic representations on the IL phonology. Then it was argued that it could be in part due to the transfer of L1 prosodic constraints that affects IL representations, with consequences for the production of inflectional morphology and function words, particularly during the course of development but also in the endstate and in this study the effect turned out to be negative therefore in this study we have support for Prosodic Negative Transfer Hypothesis (PTH).

The outcome of the present study can then be interpreted in the light of what Beck, (1997), Goad and White (2004), Hawkins and Liszka (2003) and Tsimpli (2003) stated. They believed that the L1 prosodic constraints restrict the types of representations that can be built in the L2, hence limiting IL production of inflectional morphology and function words. Of course, it should not be forgotten that the awareness on phonetic features can serve to tackle this inevitable doom drop. However, the focus of this study was to prove that learners even enjoying a reasonable proficiency level will lack the ability to acquire the endstate native like acquisition of inflectional morphemes and this lack of features required in L2 but absent in L1 will restrict their type of representation in L2. In the case of */t/* production and acquisition this was proven but again in terms of other inflectional morphemes realized from s-plural and third person and the past this wasn't the case.

Finally, although there have been a lot of research studies in the literature regarding the prosodic constraints and the way they restrict the L2 production, the present study could be considered as an additional support for the fact that to say there is no phonetic parameter resetting in adult L2;consequently, speakers can never acquire phonological categories or features that are required by the L2 but absent in the L1 is farfetched and therefore Representational Deficit Hypothesis (RDH) was *rejected* in this study. In other words, there are permanent effects of L1 prosodic representations on the IL phonology. Then it was argued that it could be in part due to the negative transfer of L1 prosodic constraints that affects IL representations, with consequences for the production of inflectional morphology and function words, particularly during the

course of development but also in the endstate, consequently this study supports the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis (PTH). Therefore, in some cases subjects can reset their L1 parameters meeting the L2 requirements if they are phonetically aware and proficiency had no impact on acquisition and production of inflections.

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