The impact of Persian transfer on Kurd learners' idiom comprehension: parts of body in focus

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Abstract

The present study aims to consider the linguistic influence of official standard Persian language on idiom comprehension focusing on parts of body comprehension of Kurdish EFL learners. Most of the Kurds have studied in schools in which the language spoken or written has been different from their mother tongue. The present study is based on data from 92 EFL learners whom Kurdish is their first language and Persian is their second language. The participants were females and males studying English as a foreign language at two universities; Azad and Kurdistan universities of Sanandaj in Iran. The informants were exposed to three idiom tests and a questionnaire. English language proficiency, educational background, gender, age and type of university were controlled. They outperformed their second language idioms. The findings show that transfer from L1 was not always dominant in non-native comprehension due to lack of academic instruction of L1. The role of exposure and academic instruction as factors were found to affect transfer from L2 in L3 comprehension while participants were more exposed to L2 at school and via media. The study confirmed our assumption that Kurd learners' L2 has a significant role in transfer of concepts to L3.

KEY WORDS: idiom; second language; third language; heritage language;transfer

Introduction

During the last decade there has been rising interest in a respectively under–investigated field, namely, third language acquisition. Cenoze (2003) holds that learners who come into contact with a foreign language, are not always monolinguals. Especially, for learners who are members of linguistic minorities in their countries, the acquisition of a language like English may take place in a multilingual situation which is linguistically more complex than the L1-L2 situation that has usually been considered in the SLA literature. Iran is a real example of those countries in which a good number of English learners especially in second and third academic settings- are members of linguistic minorities like Arabic, Turkish, and Kurdish. These learners acquire English as a third language. This reality along with the growing awareness that come into contact

with language learning through the study of L2 alone seems to make a deficient image of language learning activated the commencement of this study.

Theoretical framework

Trilingualism

In contrast to the traditional approach to second language acquisition transfer theory which considers only the native language (L1) and the target language, third language acquisition researchers advocates the involvement of previously learned non-native languages when they claim that a broad theory of transfer must include prior knowledge of non-native languages. After all, the research indicates that those learning a third language (L3), transfer from their second language (L2), and it is the preferred source of transfer. Trilingualism has been mostly taken into account within the general context of cross linguistic influence. Cook (1992) argues multi competence model in which there is no reason why that existing knowledge should not include previously learned non-native languages, in addition to the native language.

Following the conventional literature, the term L3 in this thesis will be used as any non-native language being learned after previously learned L2. This was originally proposed by Hammarberg (2001, 2010): We will here use the term L3 for the language that is currently being learned and L2 for any other language that the person has acquired after L1. It has been pointed out by many that the acquisition of a true L2 and an L3 is not the same. Two bidirectional relationships can take place in third language acquisition: the L3 can influence the L1 and be influenced by the L1 (L1__L3) and cross-linguistic influence can also take place between the L2 and the L3 (L2__L3)" (Cenoz. 2003). Research on the existence or lack of transfer in L2 acquisition has been come up with two challenging views: the idea that learners to some extent depend on their L1 and transfer features of the L1 into the L2 (transfer hypotheses), and the opposite idea that they do not depend on their L1 (non-transfer hypotheses). Schwartz (1998) argues on the side of a full transfer model, i.e. the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis (FT/FA), according to which all syntactic properties of the L1 initially constitute a base for the new developing grammar, which is constructed with the involvement of Universal Grammar (UG). Other transfer hypotheses do not predict a complete transfer of the L1 grammar. These weaker views all suggest different levels of involvement of the L1 grammar.

The non-transfer hypotheses suggest that the learner's L1 is of minor importance in the acquisition process. Proponents – for instance Clahsen and Muysken (1989) argue that neither the L1, nor UG are involved; there are only general (cognitive) learning strategies that guide the learner in the development of a new grammar. Opponents, for instance Epstein (1996; 1998), suggest that UG alone is involved, and thus the learner will initially create an ILG drawing on UG options.

In the L3 literature, the discussion of transfer has derived around a number of factors that seem to play an important role that the background languages will be activated and possibly transferred when using an L3. The most important of these factors seems to be typology, L2 status and proficiency level. Other factors that have been suggested in L3 studies are, for instance, recent use of a background language and age of acquisition. Williams & Hammarberg (2009, 1998) in their case study proposed that the interaction of the factors typology, L2 status, proficiency determined the activation of a language in L3 oral production. The authors suggested that the language that reached the highest value for all these factors together would best qualify to serve as a supplier and in fact the background language that scored highest on all these factors was also the language that was most used as a supplier by the learner in that study.

In this study the role of L2 proficiency, recency, and also effect of language literacy on transfer is concentrated. Some studies have proved the significant role of background languages' literacy in transfer of back ground languages to the third language. Wojtowicz,S.(2006) argues that the term "heritage language" distinguishes itself from the first, mother, or native language as it is applied to the individual whose speaker community and educational institution is a majority language but who is in constant contact with a minority language (usually spoken in the home). Heritage speakers have varied levels of proficiency in the minority language.

The majority of the research concludes that L1 literacy helps in L2 and L3 acquisition. In *The Power of Reading,* Krashen (1993) maintains that reading in and of itself is almost powerful enough to result in language acquisition. He promotes the theory that reading is the foundation of language education and the most powerful tool for increasing vocabulary and the abilities to read, write, spell, and comprehend. Much of the research on L2 reading suggests that readers' awareness of their reading processes and strategies improves proficiency. In writing about the benefits of L1 literacy, Hudleson (1987) noted "it develops in children an understanding of what reading and writing are for" and "native language literacy provided the children with resources to use as they moved into second language reading and writing." (1987, as cited in Swain et al., 1990:67).

Swain, Lapkin, Rowen and Hart (1990) applied Hudelson's theory to third language acquisition to see if, by extension, L2 literacy would help in L3 literacy. They studied children whose L1 was not French or English in a French and English bilingual immersion program in Toronto, Canada. Based on a variety of tests and measurements Swain et al. showed that "literacy knowledge in the heritage language, regardless of whether learners are currently making use of those literacy skills, has a strong positive impact on the learning of a third language." (1990:73). They also found that "…heritage language use without literacy has little effect." (1990:65). Based on their research, they concluded that the "positive effect on third language learning is a generalized one and is not limited to literacy-based activities…" (1990:65) and that "even when two languages use different writing systems, readers are able to apply the visual, linguistic and cognitive strategies they use in first language reading to reading in the second language." (1990:67). One of the most important results found in these studies is that

literacy in the heritage language is related to a generalized higher level of proficiency in the third language beyond literacy. This supports the claim that students learning a third language that are literate in previous languages have advantages over those who aren't. Likewise, Cenoz and Valencia (1994) conducted research which concluded that literacy in L1 helps in L3 acquisition. They compared Basque students who spoke Basque and Spanish and were learning English as a third language, with their peers who only spoke Spanish and were learning English as a second language in the Basque country. Swain et al. (1990) showed that literacy in the heritage language is the key element when determining the positive impact that being bilingual has on subsequent language acquisition. They found that bilinguals who were not literate in their first language did not have the same advantages in third language acquisition as those who were literate. They cite Troike (1981, cited by Swain et al. 1990:66) who believed that children who are educated (i.e. literate) in their heritage language learn a second language better and are more academically successful than those who are not. Furthermore, the researchers determined that the level of proficiency in third language acquisition was affected more by the ability to read and write in the heritage language than by the oral level of proficiency to the extent that those heritage speakers who could not read or write in the heritage language had no advantage over the monolinguals. In the conducted study it is believed that Kurd EFL learners have influenced by their L2 for they have been literate in it.

Idiom

Most native speakers use idioms in their everyday life. Idioms are fixed expressions which have different meaning from the meaning of its separate components. By using idioms we animate and give a sense of life to the language. Cooper (1999) reported that the work of Pollio et al. (1997) showed that "most English speakers utter about 10 million novel metaphors per lifetime and 20 million idioms per lifetime, and this works out to about 3,000 novel metaphors and 7,000 idioms per week. According to The American Heritage Dictionary (2000:1) the word idiom comes from Greek root idio which means a unique signature. So any language consists of its unique expressions and for foreign language learners are nonsense unless they know what they mean. Abdulwehab (2005:5) on Kurdish idioms states that "In idiom a word or a sentence has two meanings one of them is a real meaning of a word or a sentence, and the second one is a figurative meaning which is called an idiom". Xazi (1982:59) states that idioms are defined as "words, sequences and interpretations of which follow grammatical rules while their meanings are not obvious in the individual words". Iroju (1986) argues that an idiom is conventionalized expression whose meaning cannot be determined from the meaning of its parts. Even though understanding and producing any new language idioms are very difficult, every language learner must be prepared to meet the challenge because idiom occurs so frequently in spoken and written English. We simply assume that they are some kind of an oddity in language, which is nonetheless colorful and we therefore tend to use idiomatic expressions at times when we feel that ordinary language is not sufficient to express our thoughts. In other word English idiom

learning is very essential to EFL learners. Idioms containing body parts are predictable from the meanings of their constituent parts.

the purpose of my presentation is to investigate that idioms of what languages(L1 or L2) are the most transferable for kurd English learners' idiom comprehension, and whether third language learners use knowledge of their first language or their second language for English idiom comprehension as a third language. Most of idioms are motivated by metaphors. A traditional definition of metaphor can be found in Halliday: Metaphor is ' a word that is used for something resembling that which it usually refers to; for example, flood…poured in, in a flood of protesters poured in following the announcement(a large quantity came in)' Our everyday experience and the ways in which we perceive ourselves and others in our environment, as well as the ways in which we relate to other people, make us retain specifically structured concepts of our own behavior and the state of the world around us. Thus conceptual metaphors are possible.

Conceptual metaphors connect two areas of knowledge. One is the physical, concrete area of the well-known outside world, and the other one is the abstract, not so well defined area in our mind. The former is called the source domain and the latter the target domain of the conceptual metaphor determines the general meaning of an idiom. Because metaphor is based on human experience, we can easily find many cross cultural similarities, although some differences also exist. This also brings us to the cognitive linguists' persuasive argument that language is partially motivated by the conceptual frame work we have in our minds. Gibbs (1995:104)claims, one of the advantages of not simply looking at isolated examples but instead examining groups of idioms, especially those referring to similar concepts, is that it is easier to uncover the active presence of conceptual metaphors (i.e., metaphors that actively structure the way we think about different domains of experience). Conceptual metaphors are understood as cognitive devices which provide a link between the concrete knowledge of the world people hold in their memory and abstract area in our mind which is not defined so well. Conventional knowledge is understood as all the information people have about the world. It is not conscious, i.e. people don't consciously remember it when speaking.

Let's examine conventional knowledge that motivates idioms. When we take the English idiom *to put their heads together* which means to take another person's advice to solve a problem, we know from our everyday experience that when we want to solve a problem, we usually consult others to know their idea about a special issue.in doing this we should get close to other people and while talking to them we lean our heads forward to hear them. Moreover, when we imagine a typical problem solving discussion, we imagine a group of people who are sitting in a circle bring their heads close to each other. In Persian idiom *fekraro ru ham bezarin*, which means to put heads together carries the same meaning and is motivated by the same conventional knowledge. Another example is the English idiom from head to toe which in Persian and kurdish has the equivalent of sar ta pa, which shows the conventional knowledge. When we look at somebody, we usually look into their eyes first. If we want to examine their body with our eyes, our gaze starts at the person is head and continues down towards person's

feet. Kövecses and Szabó (1996) and Kövecses (2002) suggested that a major pitfall in the traditional view of idioms is that linguistic meaning is separate from the human conceptual system and the encyclopedic knowledge that speakers of a language share. Being independent of the idioms from any conceptual system and isolation of them from each other at the conceptual level is one of the major stumbling blocks in understanding the nature of idioms as well as teaching and learning of idioms in an L2 context. Although there may have been very few historical contacts between the Persian and Kurdish , the fact that both cultures have grown in the Iranian tradition, and have shared so many historical experiences, means that both the Persian and Kurdish people are likely to relate to very similar social, moral, and perhaps even political values. All these values are likely to be projected to the language of a particular speech community. Cultural connotations are likely to be highly specific to each speech community. However, there are also general social, moral and political values which will not find a common ground with both the Kurdish -Persian and British cultures, such as, for example, the relation of both communities to women, impaired people, or marital relations, which certainly are viewed from a different perspective in some western cultures. However a great number of parts of body idioms are motivated by similar conventional knowledge which enhance cross linguistic transfer among these three languages.

Statement of the Problem

Kurdish (Kirmanci and Sorani) is a member of the Iranian branch of the Indo- European language family. During the twentieth century, it experienced great changes, when it was inundated by borrowings from the dominant languages of the region. Iranian kurds mostly speak sorani. Kurdish is spoken by some 25 million Kurds, who live in Kurdistan, a contiguous territory that was divided in 1918 among Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. There is also a sizeable Kurdish diaspora stretching from Central Asia to North America. Some Kurdish communities were dispersed in the Caucasus between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Others were moved, often forcibly, to Central Asia, the Khorasan province in northeast Iran, Pakistan and Lebanon. Since the 1960s, no fewer than half a million Kurds resettled as "guest workers," refugees, and immigrants in Europe, North America, and Australia. Under these conditions, Kurdish has experienced intensive contact with numerous languages.

As a speaker and writer of Kurdish, I have been under the pressure of making difficult choices in the use of words, and in finding enough lexical resources in order to translate a text from Persian or English. The language, especially its spoken variety, is invaded by borrowings on all levels of structure and use. The question "What is the Kurdish word for …?" is often raised in diverse contexts. They have not had any academic instruction in their heritage language. Most of Kurdish learners of EFL learners have encountered such a chaotic situation and almost always have had a negative view about the borrowing issue and influence of the dominant language (Persian). In the present study with regard to the significance of the problem, I am going to examine the effect of Persian in idiom with focus on parts of body comprehension of Kurdish

EFL learners, and the impact of academic instruction of the previous languages on Kurd learners' English idiom comprehension.

Significance and Purpose of the Study

Cenoze (2003) hold that learners who come into contact with a foreign language, are not always monolinguals. Especially, for learners who are members of linguistic minorities in their countries, the acquisition of a language like English may take place in a multilingual setting which is linguistically more complicated than the L1-L2 setting that has usually been considered in the SLA literature. Iran sets a real example of those countries in which a good number of English learners especially in second and third academic settings- are members of linguistic minorities like Arabic, Turkish, and Kurdish. These learners are bilinguals who acquire English as a third language. This reality along with the growing awareness that come into contact with language learning through the study of L2 alone seems to make a deficient picture of language learning activated the initiation of this study. While the typologically L2 is distant from L3, the recency and academic instruction of L2 in relation to the L3 as a reason for transfer is greatly emphasized. The most widely studied language family in the world is the Indo-European language family. The Iranian languages are a branch of the Indo-European language family. With the Indo-Aryan language they form the Indo-Iranian language group. Avestân and Old Persian are the oldest recorded Iranian. De Angelis (2005) mentions the possibility of transfer occurring from an L2 source that is typologically distant from the L3. To date, little is known about this issue. An additional consideration is that the majority of the languages used in the studies were Western European. A wider variety of languages were needed to be tested.

The contention was that idioms which make use of parts of the human body are more predictable than other idioms, simply because as human beings we are completely familiar with our perceptions of the shape, size, and functions of individual parts of our own bodies, because we experience them every day. This is why it is easier for us to interpret the meaning of idiomatic expressions containing parts of the human body than, for example, idioms which contain names of animals (e.g. to call off the dogs). This study will not be concerned with the grammatical features of idiomatic expressions.

Another important reason for choosing to compare idioms in the KURDISH PERSIAN and English languages is that KURDISH is a minority language spoken by roughly 40-50 million people around the world, whereas the English language has long been the lingua franca of global communication. It is therefore interesting to see how much these three languages have in common. Also, as English seems to be developing much faster than PERSIAN OR KURDISH, it must be said that as this study is coming into existence, some idioms used in it may already be becoming bookish or slipping out of use. This, however, should not be a hindrance to their exploration.

Kurmanji and Sorani that are Kurdish dialects have written forms, and they have been written both in Arabic and Latin alphabet. The Kurds can not necessarily read or write their own mother tongue, because it has not always been possible to study it everywhere. Most of the Kurds have gone to a school in which the language has been some other than their mother tongue, so the impact of official standard Persian that is school and media language is considered on their idiomatic comprehension.

A further reason is that examination of idioms across languages helps us to understand the way people think and gives us an invaluable insight into human psychology. This has wider implications than may at first appear. Languages are much more easily learnt and studied when the most obvious similarities between them are pointed out. When we want to learn a new language, we are encountered with a truly remarkable task. For it is not just the language we want to acquire, but also the culture, history, conventions and customs which we need to get to know in order to be able to get as close as possible to the level of a native speaker of that particular language.

We not only make use of a newly acquired language in conversational exchanges, but also want to be able to use that language creatively. Here again, idiomatic language plays an important role, as some of us use the new language to translate or interpret. It is not only precision which is required of interpreters or translators, but also their ability to capture the spirit of the target language.

If people are made aware of the conceptual metaphors which underlie most of language, and idiomatic language in particular, they will be able to make much better use of it, whether as a native speaker or second-language learner. Moreover, since parts of body are the same in all human beings all over the world, idioms that are based on them seem to be predictable for people from different countries with different languages for they have similar conceptual metaphors .It is hoped that this study will make a modest contribution to these goals.

Research Questions of the Study

The present study attempts to answer the following research question:

1. Does similarity of Persian-Kurdish idioms influence English idiom learning of Kurds?
2. Does proficiency level of learners affect the English idiom learning of Kurds?
3. Does proficiency of recent language used has a positive role in understanding English idioms of Kurds?
4. Do Kurd learners remember their mother tongue (Kurdish) or their second language (Persian) equivalent of the English idioms?
5. Does academic instruction of previous languages play the role of a facilitator or an inhibitor in English idiom comprehension of learners?

The Design of the Study
The format has been chosen with example sentences, which allows the meanings to be inferred from the surrounding context. The students are notified, however, that "the sentences are provided to show how these words may be used", which means that they should consider other possible occurrences as well because the meanings of some words can be highly dependent on the context.

Selection of items
Items were chosen randomly from the reference books and the researcher utilized the dictionaries examples for contextualizing English idioms. The English test comprised twenty eight multiple choice items, in which seven of them were similar idioms of Kurdish English which don't exist in Persian; seven idioms are similar idioms of Persian English which are not available in Kurdish; seven idioms are similar idioms of Persian, Kurdish and English and seven of them are English idioms which don't exist in Persian and Kurdish. All the items have been dispersed by chance and randomly. All the example sentences originated from the dictionaries.

Persian test included 30 multiple choice items. The idioms are contextualized and have been used in examples. The researcher has written all the stems and choices. Idioms are about different parts of body, parts of body idioms have been chosen purposelessly. All items have been dispersed randomly

Kurdish tests included 30 multiples choice items. The idioms are contextualized and have been used in examples. The researcher has written all the stems and choices. Idioms are about different parts of body, parts of body idioms have been chosen purposelessly. All items have been dispersed accidently.

Why not a parallel corpus?
The preference has not been given to identical idioms of English, Kurdish, and Persian for two main reasons. The back wash effect could be presented in such performing tests, particularly in the direction Persian- Kurdish English. secondly, it is problematic to find and gain access to a sufficiently large corpus, which would provide many examples of identical idioms to choose from.

Form description
The study is composed of three tests, and a questionnaire which are briefly described below. The forms can be found in appendix.
Test 1 comprises twenty eight items, divided in to four parts such as similar idioms of Persian English, similar idioms of Kurdish English, similar idioms of Persian Kurdish English, and idioms which are just available in English. Each part contained seven items
Test 2 consists of 30 multiple choice questions of Persian idioms. Persian should be considered their second language is quite clear as it has been asked in their questionnaire, So Persian is their L2 but of a very high proficiency level.The students were presented with a Persian sentence, in

which one word is underlined, and are asked to choose from 4 alternatives an appropriate choice. Stem and all choices have been constructed by the author. In this way, a hypothesis that the students tend to assume semantic similarity when encountered with formally similar idioms is tested. However, language proficiency of recently studied foreign language was indicated.

Test 3 provides information about the students' mother tongue estimation of their proficiency in their first language. Due to the fact that they haven't learnt their first language academically and know very little about Kurdish writing system, the researcher has read all the items and their choices loudly for the participants.

More about questionnaire included 7 general questions about participants and their attitude to parts of body idioms that are available at appendix.

Participants

Choosing appropriate participants for a study is truly important. I assumed that students with different proficiency levels of English as non-native language could not be fitted in my study. Since I had to keep in mind the L1 status, I decided that it is appropriate to ask students Of English teaching major with the same mother tongue take part in the study. The participants of this study were one hundred junior, sophomore, and senior students majoring ELT at Sanandaj Azad university and Kurdistan university. The age range of participants ranged from twenty to thirty and three quarters of participants were female learners. All the participants spoke Persian as their second language and English as their third language and Surani dialect of Kurdish was the first language of all of them. None of them had received academic instruction in their mother tongue. They learned Persian when they attended schools and started their formal education, since Persian is the official language of the country, the language of media, and language of instruction.

Materials

In this section, the instrument used for the practical part of the paper is described. Justifications are provided for the format and the selection of items with respect to aims.

A test of English proficiency was given to the participants, as a result of the test 92 out of 100 students were chosen to take part in the study.

Three tests of idiom, one as English test, containing 28 English idioms were given to the participants, in order to check their idiom comprehension, seven out of the twenty eight were similar idioms between Kurdish and English, seven out of twenty eight were similar idioms of Persian English, seven out of twenty eight were similar idioms of Persian, English, and Kurdish, and it also contained seven idioms which were not similar to Kurdish and Persian idioms. The other one as Kurdish idiom test, consisting of 30 items in order to check knowledge of their first language was has been given to the participants. The last test was Persian idiom tests which contained 30 Persian idioms items in order to test their knowledge of their second language idioms has been given to the participants. They were selected from different English, Kurdish, and Persian idiom books. Focus of the study was on parts of body idioms. For instance, (*dil*

şikaw) which means (*del shekaste*) in Persian will facilitate learning of (*heartbroken*) in English. In this idiom, 'heart' is a part of the mankind**.**

Procedure

Before carrying out the tests I visited the university classes once in order to establish good relationship with the students, most of whom were rather nervous and suspicious: they were worried that the tests could affect their final grades. As soon as I succeeded in ensuring them that the only person whose final grade would be affected by their answers was I, it was time to proceed with the tests. The professors agreed willingly to participate in my study and co-operated as much as their schedule allowed them to. In this study each test was given a number. Numbers were the same in the four tests. Finally, a questionnaire consisting of three general questions about the participants' age, gender, first language and four more specific questions was given to the testees that is available in the appendix.

To obtain information about their vocabulary knowledge of English and homogenizing them the general proficiency knowledge, Michigan vocabulary test was given to participants. Eight out of one hundred students who were extremely weak in English and were acted poorly in the proficiency knowledge test were asked to leave the study, so ninety two participants were asked to take part in the study. We had three tests including English idioms, Kurdish idioms, and Persian idioms. All the items in the tests were contextualized.

For the English sentences, the preference was given to NTC's American idioms dictionary by Richard A.Spears and the dictionary of Persian English idioms by Dr.Shapoor Ardeshir Jey among other English language idiom books. The Kurdish idioms originated from a dictionary of kenning by Ebrahim Ahmadi and Kurdish Persian dictionary by Majed Mardookh Roohani; they have been chosen for ease of access on the one hand. On the other hand, its content is appropriate. The Persian idioms were chosen from Amid dictionary by Hasan Amid. Focus of the study was on parts of body idioms. For instance, (*dil şikaw*) which means (*del shekaste*) in Persian will facilitate learning of (*heartbroken*) in English or (tu dahani) facilitates learning of (a kick in the teeth) in English. In these idioms, 'heart' and 'teeth' are parts of the mankind**.** Participants have taken tests in three different sessions in three weeks. In the first session they took the English test which contained 28 multiple choice items and the questionnaire. In the second week they took the Kurdish test which consisted of 30 multiple choice Kurdish idiom tests. In the third week they took Persian test.

Methods of Analyzing Data

In this study the following tests were run to answer the research questions:

Independent sample T-test for the first hypothesis, correlation coefficient and the linear regression by having in mind that Persian proficiency level of kurd learners is considered as the independent variable, and comprehension of English idioms is considered as dependent variable. For the third hypothesis gender variable has a moderator role, vocabulary proficiency test has a predictor role, and English test acts as the criterion variable role and correlation coefficient test was run. for the fourth and fifth research questions the correlation test was conducted.

Data analysis and findings

We are going to consider the results of conducted tests and questionnaires on participants in two descriptive and inferential sections.

In the descriptive section, we take a general glance at the results via Central Tendency and Dispersion Tendency, and in the inferential section, the most suitable analysis method will be chosen, and the hypothesis would be rejected or accepted according to the hypotheses and the data type.

Descriptive Analysis of Data

The screened participants for the conducted study have been 92 people that around 36 percent of them are boys and rest of them are girls. The age range of participants has been 20 to 30 years and their age mean is 23/48 years. About 35 percent of participants have been sophomore students, 27 percent of them have been junior students, about 11 percent have been the senior students, and 27 percent of them have not given any information in the same case. Now we are going to argue the percentage of true and false responses:

Common English idioms in English and Kurdish

Table :proportion

	Correct	No correct
KEIT1	51.1	48.9
KEIT2	17.4	82.6
KEIT3	64.1	35.9
KEIT4	35.9	64.1
KEIT5	38	62
KEIT6	62	38
KEIT7	66.3	33.7

This test included 7 tests of English idioms that were identical in English and Kurdish in which the percentage of true and false responses were presented in order at the above table.

In the first item, 51/1 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 48/9 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the second item, 17/4 per cent of participants have chosen the correct response and 82/6 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the third item 64/1 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 35/9 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the fourth item, 35/9 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 64/1 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the fifth item,38 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 62 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the sixth item, 62 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 38 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the seventh item, 66/3percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 33/7 percent have chosen the incorrect response

Common English idioms in English and Persian

Table :proportion

	Correct	No correct
PEIT1	75	25
PEIT2	43.5	56.5
PEIT3	46.7	52.2
PEIT4	84.8	15.2
PEIT5	45.7	54.3
PEIT6	80	20
PEIT7	25	75

This test included 7 tests of English idioms that were identical between English and Persian in which the percentage of true and false responses were presented in order at the above table.

In the first item, 75 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 25 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the second item, 43/5 per cent of participants have chosen the correct response and 56/5 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the third item, 46/7 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 52/2 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the fourth item, 84/8 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 15/2 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the fifth item, 45/7 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 54/3 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the sixth item, 80 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 20 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

In the seventh item, 25 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 75 percent have chosen the incorrect response.

The table of Persian idioms tests of Kurdish idioms and test of proficiency test table is as the following:

Statistics

		FARSI	KURDISH	PT
N	Valid	92	92	92
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		24.21	17.50	20.45
Std. Deviation		3.845	4.254	4.992

92 participants took the Persian idioms test. It has the mean of 24/21 with standard deviation of 3/85. Standard deviation is an index of dispersion, and the less the depression, the more homogeneous will be the participants. Due to the fact that the amount of standard deviation in the study is less than the mean, we can conclude that the Persian proficiency level of participants in responding to the test items is close to each other.

The mean of Kurdish idiom tests with standard deviation of 4/25 shows that participants' proficiency in answering the Kurdish idioms is less than their proficiency of Persian idioms; moreover the standard deviation of Kurdish idioms test is more than the Persian standard deviation and indicates the participants' proficiency in responding these types of tests is distinctive. The mean of proficiency test is 20/45 with standard deviation of 4/99.

common English idioms in Kurdish, Persian and English

Table :proportion

	Correct	No correct
KPEIT1	60.9	39.1

KPEIT2	68.5	31.5
KPEIT3	87	13
KPEIT4	66.3	33.7
KPEIT5	70.7	29.3
KPEIT6	56	44
KPEIT7	60	40

This test included 7 tests of English idioms that are identical in English and Persian and Kurdish in which the percentage of true and false responses were presented in order at the above table. In the first item, 60/9 percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 39/1 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the second item, 68/5 per cent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 31/5 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the third item, 87percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 13 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the fourth item, 66/3 percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 33/7 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the fifth item, 70/7 percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 29/3 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the sixth item, 56 percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 44 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the seventh item, 60 percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 40 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response.

English idiom tests that do not exist in Persian and Kurdish

Table :proportion

	Correct	No correct
EIT1	42.4	57.6
EIT2	57.6	42.4
EIT3	39.1	56.5
EIT4	21.7	75
EIT5	39.1	60.9
EIT6	23.9	76.1
EIT7	13	87

This test included 7 tests of English idioms that do not exist in Persian and Kurdish in which the percentage of true and false responses were presented in order at the above table. In the first item, 42/4 percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 57/6 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the second item, 57/6 per cent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 42/4 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the third item, 39/1 percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 56/5 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the fourth item, 21/7 percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 75 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the fifth item, 39/1 percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 60/9 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response. In the sixth item, 23/9percent of participants have chosen the correct response, and 76/1 percent have chosen the incorrect response. In the seventh item, 13 percent of participants have chosen the correct response and 81 percent of them have chosen the incorrect response.

Inferential Analysis of Data

In this section we are going to compare the results of Kurdish parts of body idiom tests of Kurd students to their Persian parts of body idioms test. Due to studying two groups of scores, the statistical hypothesis will be written in this way:

$$H_0 : \mu_K \leq \mu_F$$
$$H_1 : \mu_K \succ \mu_F$$

The state of dependency or independency of two groups taken tests influences determination of an appropriate statistical method. So, if participants are from two different groups, independent sample T-test will be run; if participants are identical, paired sample t-test will be used and since we had just one group of participants in the present study, the paired sample t-test will be used. The statistics is as the following formula.

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{s_d / \sqrt{n}}$$

It has the probable distribution of t-student with n-1 degree of freedom; *SD* is the standard deviation of difference between means and *d* is the difference between means; Results of the described tests are presented in the following table.

Table1: Paired samples t-test

	N	mean	SD	t-statistic	p-value	result
Farsi	92	24.21	3.84	11.22	0.00	reject H0
Kurdish	92	17.5	4.25			

Note: SD=Standard Deviation, n=Number of Sample

It's required to explain that in statistical soft wares, the statistics or criteria value(t-test in the above table) will be computed. Moreover, the significance level or p -value will be demonstrated according to that criteria dispersion. Furthermore, it would be compared to the researcher's supposed One type Error (Alpha) that is 05 . If the p- value or significance level equals to 0/05, or is more than that, the null hypothesis would be confirmed, Whereas, if the p- value or significance level less than 0/05, the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis will be confirmed. The mean of participants' Persian test is 24/21 and the mean of Kurdish test has been computed as 17/5 and since its p- value is less than 0/05, the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis will be confirmed. The results indicate that the Kurd students' mean of Persian idiom test is more than the mean of their Kurdish idiom test.

Results of Hypothesis Testing

The first hypothesis:

Common idioms of Kurdish and Persian, affects the comprehension of English parts of body idioms of Kurd learners

Three statistical hypothesis is written and tested for this statistical hypothesis

1. For common idioms of Kurdish and English
2. For common idioms of Persian and English
3. For common idioms of Kurdish Persian and English

Considering that the researcher has prepared a seven items test for each of the stated cases, we are going to compare the mean of participants' responses to 3/5 that is the mean of test grades, so the ideal hypothesis will be written in this way:

$$H_0 : \mu_K \leq 3.5$$
$$H_1 : \mu_K \succ 3.5$$

If the alternative hypothesis is confirmed, the research hypothesis will be confirmed. The ideal statistics for this hypothesis is as the following:

$$t = \frac{\overline{X} - 3.5}{s/\sqrt{n}}$$

It has the probable dispersion with n-1 degree of freedom.

Table2: One sample t-test for Kurdish-English test

	N	Mean	SD	t-statistic	p-value	result
Kurdish	92	3.35	1.35	-1.08	0.86	reject H1

Note: SD=Standard Deviation, n=Number of Sample

Considering that the test mean is 3/35, and it is less than 3/5 and also p-value is more than 0/05, it indicates the conformation of null hypothesis and in other words the alternative hypothesis is not confirmed. The result indicates the common idioms of Kurdish and English don't have any significant impact on English idiom comprehension of Kurd learners.

$$H_0 : \mu_F \leq 3.5$$
$$H_1 : \mu_F \succ 3.5$$

Table4.3: One sample t-test for Farsi-English test

	N	Mean	SD	t-statistic	p-value	result
Farsi	92	3.96	1.09	4.02	0.00	reject H0

Note: SD=Standard Deviation, n=Number of Sample

Considering that the test mean is 3/96 which is more than 3/5 and p-value is less than 0/05, we can conclude that the null hypothesis is rejected or in other words the alternative hypothesis is confirmed. This is to say, common idioms of Persian and English have significant impact on Kurd students' comprehension of parts of body idioms.

$$H_0 : \mu_{FK} \leq 3.5$$
$$H_1 : \mu_{FK} \succ 3.5$$

Table4.: One sample t-test for Farsi-Kurdish-English test

	N	mean	SD	t-statistic	p-value	Result
Farsi-Kurdish	92	4.53	1.2	8.26	0.00	reject H0

Note: SD=Standard Deviation, n=Number of Sample

Considering that the test mean is 4/53 which is more than 3/5, and p-value is less than 0/05, we can conclude that the null hypothesis is rejected and in other words the alternative hypothesis is confirmed. Therefore, it can be concluded that English parts of body idioms that are common in Persian and Kurdish have had a significant effect on parts of body idiom comprehension of Kurd English learners.

The results of recent three tests indicate that common idioms of _Kurdish, Persian, English_ and Persian, English have significant effect on comprehension of English idioms of Kurd learners. Moreover, we can conclude that the effect of Kurdish, Persian, English idioms is more than just effects Persian English idioms (because it has the highest test score), also Kurdish English idioms have not had a significant impact on comprehension and reminding of English idioms and we put them in the third rank.
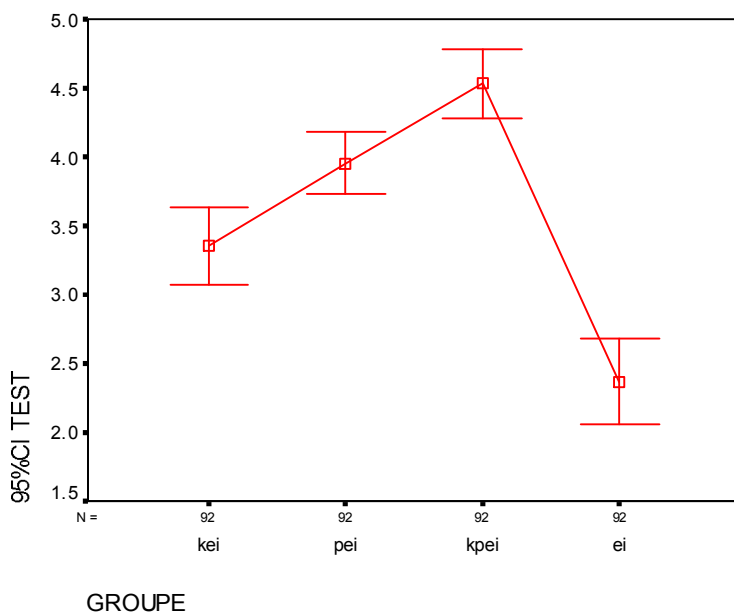
The above graph is known as Error Bar because mean and standard deviation are presented at the same time .this graph shows the contrast of means, for instance, it can be argued that English idiom mean is less than three others. We can conclude that the mean of Persian English idioms is

higher that kurdish English idioms, and also kurdish Persian English idioms have the highest mean.

The second hypothesis:

The Persian(second language) proficiency level of Kurd learners has positive effect(transfer)on their comprehension of English(third language) idioms. Persian proficiency level of Kurd learners is considered as the independent variable, and comprehension of English idioms is considered as dependent variable. We use the Correlation Coefficient and the Linear Regression for studying this hypothesis. The Multiple Linear Regression is as the following:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + ... + \beta_k X_k + \varepsilon$$

α stands for the constant quantity or intercept, β stands for regression coefficient and ε stand for the error sentence. Y stands for dependent variable and X stands for independent variable. The under study hypothesis for the significance of coefficient is as the following:

$$H_0 : \beta = 0$$
$$H_1 : \beta \neq 0$$

The significance test of regression coefficient will be done by t test which is shown as the following formula.

$$t = \frac{\hat{\beta}}{S_{\hat{\beta}}} \sim t_{(n-1)}$$

$S_{\hat{\beta}}$ is Standard deviation of predictor.

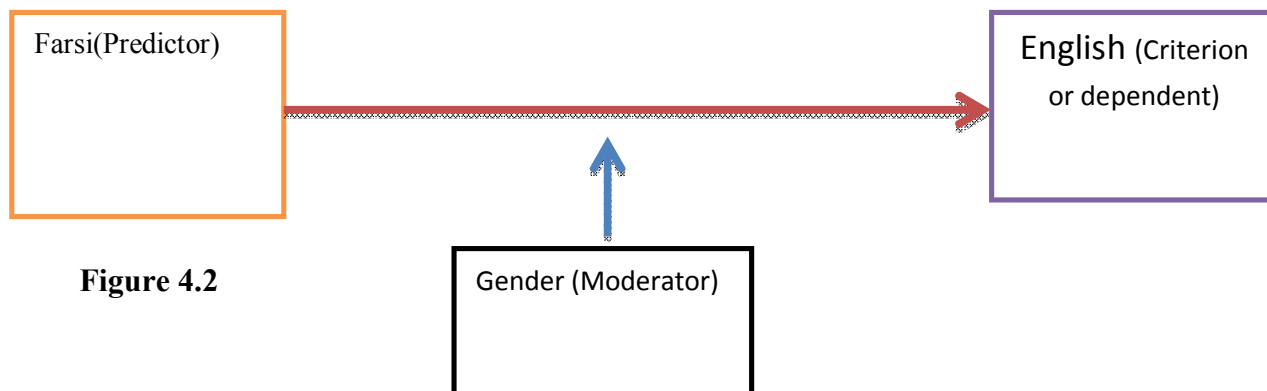Here, Gender variable acts as a moderator in the model.

Figure 4.2

Table5

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.27	2.68		1.22	0.22
	FARSI	0.34	0.11	0.36	3.11	0.00
	GENDER	2.92	4.60	0.40	0.63	0.53
	G*F	-0.03	0.19	-0.10	-0.16	0.87

a. Dependent Variable: English Test , Sig=P-value

B column displays regression coefficient of the variables. Constant is the constant model or the intercept. Farsi coefficient is 0/35 quantity with 0 significance level which indicates its significant. gender variable has been displayed at the table separately multipled in the Farsi variable as the moderator variable, but none of them are coefficient significance(because their significance level is more than 0/05). So The model will be written as the following one.

$$\hat{Y} = 3.27 + 0.34\,Farsi$$

This model indicates that second language proficiency level of males and female doesn't have a distinctive impact on comprehension of English idioms. However the coefficient variable of Persian proficiency level is significant.

The coefficient interpretation:

If Persian proficiency level as the second language increases for one point(نمره), 0/34 units will be added to the English idioms comprehension score. 3/27 interpretation : It means that if the Persian test score equals 0, English idioms comprehension will be about 3/27.

Table6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.440	0.194	0.166	3.24436

a. Predictors: (Constant), G*F, FARSI, GENDER

In the above table, the correlation coefficient (R=0.44) and Rsquare that is the second power of correlation coefficient (0.194), and moderator coefficient of determination (0.166) has been presented. Coefficient of determination shows the exposition rate of dependent variable changes by independent variable, and the closer to 1 the more appropriate the model will be. The low level of determination coefficient here is due to the fact that transformations of English idiom comprehension are not just related to their second language proficiency level and there are some other variables that are effective.

Third hypothesis:

Kurd learners' proficiency level of English vocabulary leads to better comprehension of English parts of body idioms. The model pertaining to this hypothesis is as the following in which gender variable has the moderator role, vocabulary proficiency test has a predictor role, and English test variable acts the criterion variable role.
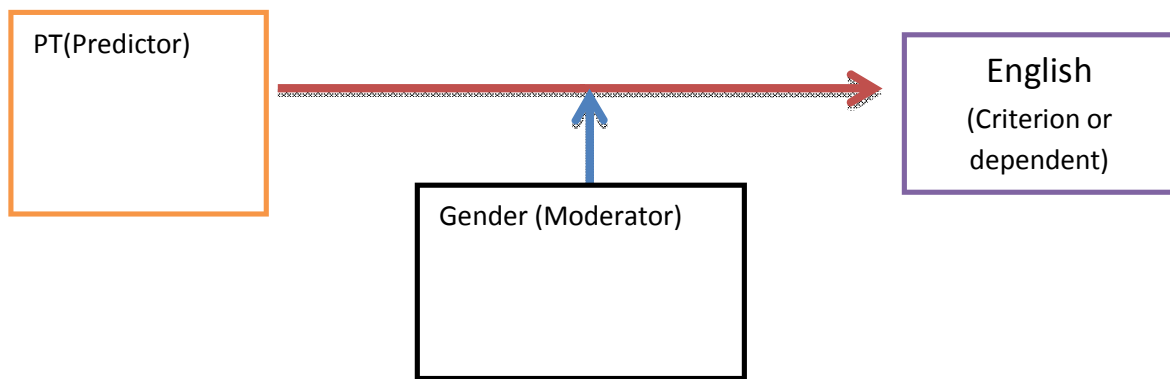
```
┌──────────────────┐                                      ┌──────────────────┐
│  PT(Predictor)   │──────────────────────────────────▶  │     English      │
│                  │                                      │  (Criterion or   │
│                  │            ┌──────────────┐          │   dependent)     │
└──────────────────┘           ▲               │          └──────────────────┘
                    ┌──────────┴───────────────┐
                    │  Gender (Moderator)       │
                    │                           │
                    └───────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 4

Table7 :Coefficients(a)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.57	1.86		4.07	0.00
	PT	0.191	0.09	0.253	2.12	0.038
	GENDER	1.5	0.91	0.196	1.64	0.105
	G*PT	0.05	0.19	0.07	0.26	0.80

a. Dependent Variable: English Test , Sig=P-value

b.

Pt coefficient is 0/191 with significant level of 0/038 that indicates its significant. Coefficient of Gender variable as a moderator variable is not significant(because their significant level is more than0/05), so the model is going to be as the following.

$$\hat{Y} = 7.57 + 0.19\,PT$$

This model means that vocabulary proficiency level of male and female student has not had any significant effect on their idiom comprehension, but coefficient of vocabulary proficiency of student is significant. Coefficient interpretation: if vocabulary proficiency level of learners increases for one sore, 0/19 units will be added to comprehension of English idioms score.

Table 8: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.348	0.121	0.094	3.5864

a. Predictors: (Constant), G*PT, PT, GENDER

Correlation coefficient (R=0.348) and modified coefficient of determination have been presented in the above table.
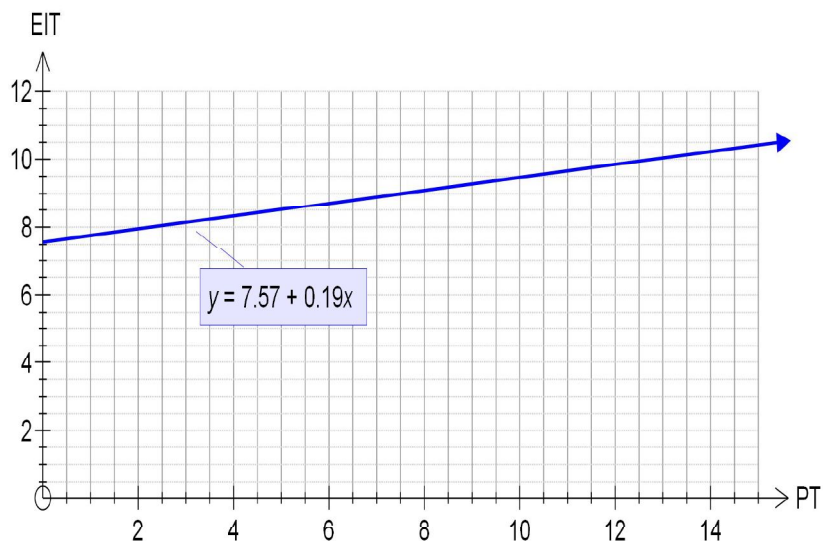
Figure 5

The fourth hypothesis:

Kurd learners remember Persian equivalent of English idioms better than their Kurdish equivalents. Studying this hypothesis is possible via the collected questionnaires of 63 participants. The sixth item of this questionnaire is a test with 2 response options. This item is as the following:

When facing an English idiom, which meaning or equivalent of the following options crosses your mind?

A: Kurdish equivalent   B: Persian equivalent

Due to the fact that the item has two options, we conducted the correlation test to study the hypothesis.

	N	P	z-statistic	p-value	result
			Table9		
Farsi	61	0.67	6.33	0	reject H1
Kurdish	61	0.18			

Note: p=proportion, n=Number of Sample

p column illustrates the correlation of those who have picked the Persian option or Kurdish option. According to the table, 0/67 of participants have stated that they can remember Persian equivalent of idioms better than their Kurdish equivalent. In addition, 0/18(18 percent)of participants have argued that they remember the Kurdish equivalent of idioms. In order to study the hypothesis we should test the following statistical hypothesis.

$$H_0 : P_K \leq P_F$$
$$H_1 : P_K \succ P_F$$

Moreover, Its appropriate test criteria is as the following:

$$z = \frac{(\bar{p}_K - \bar{p}_F)}{S_{(\bar{p}_K - \bar{p}_F)}}$$

It has probable normal and standard distribution and the gained quantity of this criterion will be compared to the quantity of normal table at error level of 0/05. The result of the above table shows that the 6.33 statistic quantity has the zero significant level which indicates the rejection of alternative hypothesis , so it can be concluded that Kurd learners remember the equivalent of Persian idioms better that their Kurdish equivalents.

General discussion
The findings show that transfer from L1 was not always dominant in non-native comprehension due to lack of academic instruction of L1. The role of exposure and academic instruction as factors were found to affect transfer from L2 in L3 idiom comprehension while participants were more exposed to L2 at school and via media. The study confirmed our assumption that Kurd learners' L2 has a significant role in transfer of concepts to L3.

Learners remember Persian equivalent of English idioms better than Kurdish idioms equivalents. Although vocabulary proficiency of student is significant, vocabulary proficiency level of male and female student has not had any significant effect on their idiom comprehension. In addition, it also showed that participants that were exposed to L2 were more likely to transfer from L2 rather than from L1 in L3 idiom comprehension. Furthermore, participants showed instances of both L1 and L2 transfer in L3 idiom comprehension. The fact that participants were exposed to L2 just in media and school, were also more proficient in L2 idioms than their L1 idioms and it could be attributed to the influence of both academic exposure and proficiency. Although second language and first languages were close to each other and to some extent distant from the third language, Perceived typological distance was confirmed as a factor influencing the direction of transfer in the study. Even though some instances of cross-

linguistic transfer could be related to the perception of inter-lingual similarities, The results of three English idiom tests indicate that common idioms of _Kurdish, Persian, English_ and Persian, English have significant effect on comprehension of English idioms of Kurd learners. Moreover, we can conclude that the effect of Kurdish, Persian, English idioms is more than just effects Persian English idioms (because it has the highest test score), also Kurdish English idioms have not had a significant impact on comprehension and reminding of English idioms and we put them in the third place.

We came to the conclusion that on the level of conceptual idiom transfer where non-native transfer is most likely to occur, it is the typological similarity, academic knowledge that influences the transfer or it is the perception of the amount of idioms across languages. Although the cross-linguistic similarity or lack thereof is thought to be a significant factor in L2/L3 transfer, in our study the frequency and direction of influence varied more according to the following factors: (1) recency or exposure to L1, L2, and L3, and (2) proficiency in L2 and L3 (3) the literacy knowledge of participant in their L1 and L2 could play a crucial role in the transfer process.

Learners use Persian as the supplier language when they face problems recalling the English idioms. The use of Persian seems to be influenced by the characteristics of the media context and could be influenced by the use of Persian as the studying language, the knowledge of Persian by the media or the relatively formal context in which the tests were taken. Persian could be the most appropriate language in the context but learners decide to use Kurdish in their oral language because it is easier to ask a question either in Kurdish than in Persian or English and because Kurdish is more appropriate than Persian in the social context. However as far as writing and written language goes they tend to use their second language because it has been the school and academic language.

Our results indicate that the immediate context of idiom tests (Kurdish-Persian-English in this study) does not avoid the activation of Persian, that is, the three languages are activated in a context in which we could expect only two languages to be activated.

Due to these results, Flege (1987a) suggested that CLI could be bidirectional. In our case, this would mean that, not only can the L2 be a source of influence for the L3, but it could have also had an impact on the L1. As one of test items which was an idiom with two different meaning in Persian and Kurdish, eighty five out of 95 student chose the Persian meaning.

The most important finding in the present study is that proficiency in the learners' L2, Persian, was a better predictor of their accuracy in learning minimally different English idioms than their proficiency in their L1, English. Here we address a number of possible explanations for this surprising result. One potential explanation why learners with advanced Persian proficiency performed better at the English idiom comprehension tests Specifically, if learners' average level of Kurdish proficiency was higher than their average level of Persian proficiency, this would explain proficiency in Kurdish had more influence than proficiency in Persian . Proficiency in Persian was higher than proficiency in Kurdish. Although Kurdish was their L1, they were more proficient in Persian than in Kurdish.

Consequently, a higher Persian proficiency could account for the fact this language was the best predictor of L3 idiom comprehension. General second language acquisition constraints such as the age factor, the order of acquisition and foreign language learning abilities (likely to have contributed to the present results. Specifically, the fact that the learners in this study had acquired Kurdish earlier in life than Persian should potentially account for the greater influence of Kurdish proficiency compared to Persian proficiency, while the results were totally against that.

Finally, the most likely explanation for the greater influence of Persian proficiency compared to Kurdish proficiency is that Persian has been the academic language. The results of this study also indicate that the academic instruction of previous languages has a crucial role in transfer of former languages to the new language.

These results confirm previous findings with Odlin(1989), This study also shows that it is necessary to distinguish the activation of these base languages. It also indicates that idioms that are common in three languages are activated more than those which are common between second or first languages.

Even though Persian and Kurdish idioms are not the same, this similarity in wide range of common idioms may be the key to the facilitative effect of Persian on the learning of English idioms. Possibly, the support of an L2 with a similar idiom system and cultural background is required for language proficiency to have an effect on idiom perception and idiom recognition. (Jessner, 1999) makes the silent processes in multilinguals known from natural language learning and uses Cross-Linguistic Transfer or Target Language, if embedded systematically, especially in earlier stages of life can influence learning of other languages later in life.

Implications of the Study

The present study can help the EFL teachers to obtain a clear understanding of trilingualism and its applicability in a pedagogical context.

The present study may also have implications for material developers and syllabus designers. They should develop materials and course books based on learners' mother tongue to improve the transfer process of the students' mother tongue.

When learners face an idiom in a foreign language, they should be able to go back to their native language and try to find a relevant conceptual domain in their mind, relate to it and try to decode the unknown expression analogically and that if people's attention is drawn to the fact that many parts of body expressions are similar in different languages, the decoding process will be facilitated more easily.

It is important to note, however, that not all figurative language can be dealt with in this way. Some idiomatic expressions are too opaque and it is difficult for the learners to imagine them. But even if only a small proportion of idiomatic expressions could be made more accessible to learners it would certainly be an achievement and a step forward in the teaching of idiom in third language learning in general.

On the whole, it can be said that teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions could be made more enjoyable if both teachers and students focused on the conceptual framework which motivates the figurative meaning of many idioms in different languages.

Kurd students have not had received any kind of academic instruction in their mother tongue while they have learned Persian via media and academic instruction at school they remember the Persian equivalent of English idioms better than the Kurdish equivalent of English idioms so we can come to the conclusion that academic language plays a significant role in transfer of previous languages to the third language. One possible way of resolving this situation is by teaching for transfer and introducing the intermediate degrees of similarity to students as potentially facilitative. Surprisingly, many of them have made many mistakes in cases where cues from their native tongue are present. This confirms the previous findings that what the students lack is not the sufficient knowledge – or competence – to establish similarities and engage in transfer, but the ability to use it accordingly. The knowledge of a foreign language, on the other hand, can compete very successfully with mother tongue for the place of the instrumental language.

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