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Access to UG in the Acquisition of Wh-Questions by Pashto-Speaking L2 Learners of English in Pakistan

Sultan Muhammad
Salma Khatoon
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Abstract

One of the central issues in the field of SLA has been the study of the unconscious mental representations in the interlanguage grammars of L2 learners and the availability of UG to adult L2 learners in the acquisition of certain abstract and complex properties of language, including complex bi-clausal wh-questions. Although the question concerning L2 learners' acquisition of unconscious knowledge like that of the native speakers and the availability of UG in L2 acquisition has widely been studied, there is still no agreement among researchers regarding the precise nature of the representation and the availability of UG. This paper reports results of the study that investigated the acquisition of English wh-questions, both simple and complex, by Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English in Pakistan and the issue of access to UG in the acquisition of wh-questions as well as their knowledge about UG constraints (Subjacency and Island constraints) on wh-movement. The study is cross-sectional and data were collected using a Grammaticality Judgment Task and an Elicitation Task. Results of the study indicate that Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English have (a) greater knowledge about UG constraints on wh-movement in terms of comprehension, but not the same level of knowledge in the production of wh-questions and (b) partial access to UG in the acquisition of wh-questions as indicated by their intuitive judgments on GJT and their production of simple and complex wh-questions, though with varying degree. Some findings of this study suggest that language use of Pashto-speaking L2 learners of English is based on some abstract linguistic system which in turn is systematic and rule-governed. Results of the present study confirm findings of those studies that advocate partial availability of UG in L2 acquisition and support assumption of generative SLA researchers but do not support Full Access/Transfer and No Access hypotheses.

Keywords: UG Access, Acquisition, Wh-questions, Pashto, L2 English learners.

1. Introduction

Language acquisition is an incredibly complex phenomenon as it involves subtle operations of various mechanisms and interactions of many factors. Many theories and hypotheses have been proposed to account for the complexities involved in language acquisition. Having Universal Grammar (UG) as one of its constructs, one such theory (i.e., linguistic theory or Generative linguistics theory) claims that an innate linguistic knowledge, known as Universal Grammar (UG), helps in language acquisition. At least this claim is largely believed to be true in the case of first language (L1) acquisition as the language use (i.e., both comprehension and production) of native speakers or L1 acquirers show that they know more about their language than what they learn from the environment or input. This observation that the input underdetermines the output is known as the logical problem of language acquisition or the problem of the poverty of the stimulus. It is important to note here that UG was actually proposed as an explanation of this

observation. Going back to the unconscious linguistic knowledge of the native speakers, it is believed that much of this knowledge does not have to be learned during the process of acquisition; rather, it is derived from the UG and L1 acquirers represent this unconscious linguistic knowledge by means of a mental representation of grammar (White, 2007). According to some researchers! UG is a theory in its own right which accounts for the nature of native speakers' mental representations and suggests that native speaker grammars are constrained by built-in universal linguistic principles. Whether we take UG as one of the main constructs of Generative linguistic theory or a theory in itself, the centrality of its role in L1 acquisition is more than obvious, especially in explaining how native speakers are able to acquire certain abstract and complex properties of language and come to know that certain expressions or forms are possible and others are not possible without being taught.

Adopting the generative linguistic perspective on second language (L2) acquisition, attempts have been made to account for the nature and acquisition of the linguistic competence of L2 learners, known as interlanguage or interlanguage grammar or interlanguage competence, in order to understand whether L2 acquisition is the same as L1 acquisition or L2 and L1 acquisitions are fundamentally different. Generative SLA researchers assume that (1) if Generative linguistic theory provides a characterization of the linguistic competence of native speakers and explains how it is possible for L1 acquirers to achieve that competence, it can also account for the nature of linguistic competence of L2 learners and (2) if the unconscious knowledge of native speakers is UG driven and if L2 learners are able to acquire certain abstract and complex properties of language the way native speakers do (i.e., L2 learners also have access to UG in L2 acquisition), then the mental representations or interlanguage grammars of L2 learners will not be fundamentally different from those of L1 acquirers. This assumption is motivated by the claim that the errors produced by L2 learners are not random mistakes. They, rather, suggest a rule-governed behavior and that L2 learners' language is systematic. Such claims led to the proposal that L2 learners, like native speakers, also represent the language that they are acquiring by means of a complex linguistic system (White, 2003, p. 1; White, 2007, p. 39).

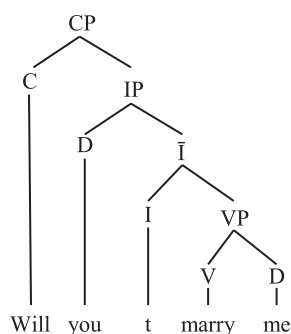
In current generative SLA research, the issue that has prompted a considerable debate is the question whether adult L2 learners have access to the principles and parameters in constructing their interlanguage grammars, especially in the acquisition of certain complex and abstract properties of language, including +/- *wh*-movement in *wh*-questions, which are not inducible from L2 input or L1 transfer alone. Although the current generative linguistic focus on the nature of linguistic competence of L2 learners has its origins in the original interlanguage hypothesis, proposed by Selinker (1972), this quest largely suggests that interlanguage grammars of L2 learners are constrained by principles and parameters of UG as UG sets limits within which human languages can vary. In other words, UG has invariant principles and parameters that allow for variation (Hulin & Na, 2014; White, 2003; Cook, 1985, p. 2). Despite some obvious differences between L1 and L2 acquisition, researchers working within the generative SLA paradigm assume that the interlanguage grammars of L2 learners also involve unconscious mental representations like the linguistic competence of L1 acquirers and that the language of L2 learners is as systematic and rule-governed as the language of native speakers. These assumptions led to the proposal that L2 learners might have access to UG principles in L2 acquisition.

Taking cross-linguistic variation as test cases, studies have been carried out to see whether or not L2 acquisition (child and adult) is the same as L1 acquisition (child and adult), what and how L2 learners acquire, how and do L1 and L2 learners acquire certain abstract properties of language that are not inducible from input and is there any difference, do UG principles and parameters settings or resetting operate the same way or differently in L1 and L2 acquisition, and whether or not L2 learners observe UG principles and constraints. Though these studies provided some useful insights into the nature and structure of the linguistic competence of native speakers and L2 learners, the inconsistent findings and alternate explanations yielded terminological confusions and disagreements. One of the main flaws with such kind of studies seems to be that these researchers asked more UG-specific questions while investigating the issue pertaining to the logical problem of language acquisition and assuming that there is a logical problem of L2 acquisition as pointed out by White (1998).

Most of the generative SLA studies within the UG framework focused on the issue of access to UG principles and parameters settings/resetting in L2 acquisition. In addition to the study of operation of the binding principles, the principles of subadjacency and structure-dependency and the pro-drop, opacity, and head parameters have widely been studied cross-linguistically. However, it has been the issue of +/- *wh*-movement and access to UG in the acquisition of English *wh*-questions, especially by English L2 learners of *wh-in-situ* languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Korean, Russian, Mongolian, Hindi, and Urdu, that received considerable research interest. The present study investigated the acquisition of English *wh*-questions by Pashto-speaking (Pashto being a *wh-in-situ* language) L2 learners of English and their access to UG in *wh*-question acquisition. The following section presents a brief overview of the syntactic structure of *wh*-questions in English, constraints on *wh*-movement (Subadjacency and Island constraints) in English, and interrogatives in Pashto (like *wh*-questions in English).

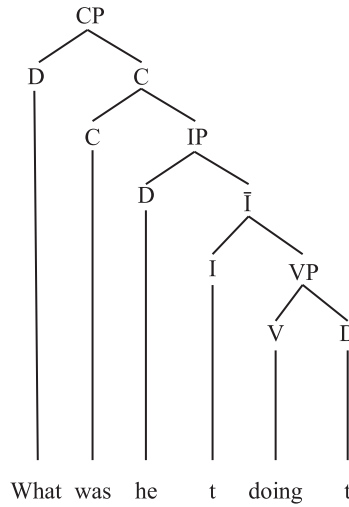
1.1 Syntactic Structure of Questions in English and Pashto

English has two types of interrogatives, called yes-no interrogatives and *wh*-questions (what, who, where, when, why, which, and whom). These two types of questions involve movement operations. As illustrated by Radford (1997, pp. 106-147) and Poole (2002, pp. 140-160), yes-no interrogatives involve head movement (I-to-C movement), especially auxiliary inversion; and *wh*-questions (simple and complex or bi-clausal) involve operator movement or *wh*-movement. For example:



In yes-no interrogatives, auxiliaries are moved from postsubject positions to the presubject positions. In other words, the inverted auxiliary moves from the head I position in IP (leaving

behind a trace—*t*) into the head *C* position in *CP*, because an interrogative *COMP* is strong and a strong head position must be filled. In case of *wh*-interrogatives, the operator movement (*O*-movement) or *wh*-movement involves movement of the preposed operator or *wh*-phrases into the specifier position within *CP* (*spec-CP*) because of checking the interrogative specifier-feature carried by *COMP* requirement. For example:



In multiple *wh*-questions, only one of the *wh*-phrases is moved to *spec-CP* position, determined by the shortest movement principle and in structures where *wh*-operators have complements, the complements are pied-piped along with the *wh*-operators in view of the chain uniformity principle. Moreover, because of the economy principle, only the minimal material necessary is pied-piped. This shows that head and operator movements are subject to strict locality constraints/conditions (a head can only move into the next highest head position in the structure containing it, a single instance of *wh*-movement can cross only one bounding node, where *IP* and *NP* are bounding nodes, and long-distance *wh*-movement must proceed via all intermediate *spec-CP* positions). For example:

[_{CP} Who_i does [_{IP} Alice think [_{CP} that [_{IP} Mary said [_{CP} that [_{IP} Bill liked *t_i*]]]]]]?

In addition to these constraints, Island constraints also constrain *wh*-movement (because of *wh*-island effect, certain *wh*-phrases cannot be extracted from embedded interrogative clauses). For example:

*What_i did Bill wonder when John ate an apple *t_i*?

Thus, *wh*-movement in English *wh*-questions is constrained by the Subjacency condition and Island constraints. Any violation of the above-stated principles and conditions results in the ungrammaticality of expressions.

According to Tegey and Robson (1996, p. 168) and Azami (2009, pp. 10-22), questions in Pashto are marked by interrogative (question words) or intonation. There is no difference in Pashto word

order for statements and yes-no type questions. They are differentiated from statements solely by the rise of the voice at the end of the sentence, which is the only way to form questions with yes-no answers. For example:

da kitáb day.	دا کتاب دے.
This book is.	This is a book.
da kitáb day?	دا کتاب دے؟
This book is?	Is this a book?

Question-word questions (those with words parallel to English who-څوک, what-څه, when-کله, where-چرته/چرے, which-کوم, why-لے و, and how-څنگه) are differentiated from statements by positioning the appropriate question word in its ordinary position in the sentence. For example:

asad kár kawi	يکوکارسد.
Asad work does.	Asad is working.
asad tsá kawi?	يکوکړهاسد؟
Asad what does?	What is Asad doing?
táso tsok yáy?	ي؟څوکتاسو / څه؟کڅوته
you who are?	Who are you?

This shows that apart from the differences in the natural word order (SOV and SVO), Pashto and English also differ from each other with respect to question formation and syntactic structure. Pashto question-word questions, like Urdu *k*-word questions, do not have overt *wh*-movement and the position of *wh*-like-question-words into the spec-CP cannot be ascertained clearly as *wh*-words in South Asian languages are argued to remain in situ (Roberts, 1997; Ishaq, 2010, 2011).

Motivated by this syntactic variation and differences in structural configuration of interrogatives, especially in English *wh*-questions and Pashto question-word questions, the present study investigated whether or not Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English observe UG principles and constraints on *wh*-movement in *wh*-questions which do not operate in their L1 and they have access to UG in the acquisition of English *wh*-questions. L2 English learners' *wh*-question acquisition from many different L1 backgrounds has widely been studied. With the exception of Ishaq (2010, 2011), no empirical research study was found related to the acquisition of English *wh*-questions and the issue of access to UG in L2 acquisition by L2 learners in Pakistan, especially Pashto-speaking L2 learners of English.

1.2 Research Questions

This study had the following three research questions:

1. Do Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English observe UG principles and constraints on *wh*-movement in *wh*-questions, particularly Subadjacency condition and Island constraints, which do not operate in their L1?
2. Does their performance on grammaticality judgment and elicitation tasks suggest that Pashto-speaking adult L2 English learners have access to UG in the acquisition of *wh*-questions in English?
3. Is there any difference in the performance of participants on grammaticality judgment task and elicitation task? In particular, what does the difference or no difference suggest?

In addition, the present study aimed at finding out whether or not (1) Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English have knowledge about the *wh*-movement rules and the subjacency and Island constraints on *wh*-movement, (2) their response data show native-like mental representation of *wh*-questions, not inducible from L2 input and attributable to the L1 only, and (3) there is any evidence in their performance data which show that L2 learners' have access to UG in the acquisition of English *wh*-questions.

2. Review of Literature

The acquisition of *wh*-questions and access to the UG in L2 acquisition has been one of the main issues in SLA for a long time. The main questions in the 1990s for SLA concerning *wh*-questions were (1) whether or not L2 learners obeyed the principles of Universal Grammar, in particular, Subjacency (2) whether or not +/- *wh*-movement parameters were able to be reset, (3) to what extent L1 affected interlanguage grammars of L2 learners, and (4) whether or not certain abstract and complex properties which are underdetermined by the L2 input are available in learners' interlanguage grammars. The inconsistent findings of those studies can be summarized as follows: (1) L2 learners have knowledge of UG principles but they cannot reset parameters, (2) L2 learners start with L1 settings and acquire other values later, and (3) L2 learners acquire L2 settings without prior L1 settings (White, 1998, 2003).

As suggested by these findings, some researchers focused their attention on finding out whether or not and to what extent learners' L1 affects the development of their interlanguage grammars and explaining L2-L1 differences from a UG perspective. Studies concerning L2-L1 differences from UG perspective represented real progress in understanding the nature of L2 acquisition as well as the structure and organization of the innate language faculty (Hawkins, 2001). Influenced by *No Access Hypothesis*, researchers such as Bley-Vroman (1990), Clahsen and Muysken (1986), and Schachter (1990) claim that L2 learners are not guided by the UG as is the case with L1 acquisition, rather any access to UG would be through the L1 grammar. The second group of researchers such as Epstein, Flynn, and Martohardjono (1996), Schwartz and Sprouse (1996), and Hawkins and Chan (1997, working under *Full Access* and its variants *Full Access/Full Transfer*, *Full Access/Partial Transfer* and *Partial Access/Full Transfer* hypotheses, claims that L2 learners have access to UG and it entirely constrains L2 acquisition and that both UG and L1 transfer play a vital role in L2 acquisition. A related hypothesis (i.e., *Failed Functional Features Hypothesis*) assigns divergence from native-speakers' representations to the effect of the inaccessibility of features of functional categories in second language acquisition (Hawkins & Chan, 1997). *Full Access* for some (Epstein, Flynn, & Martohardjono, 1996) is restricted to the position that UG operates independently of the L1 representation, whereas for others (e.g. Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996), it means access via L1 but not restricted to L1.

Examining a peculiar L3 error in the production of long-distance (LD) *wh*-questions in English by L1 Mongolian learners, having working knowledge of Russian as L2, which does not seem to arise out of L1 Mongolian or L2 Russian; Lee (2014) found that L1 Mongolian learners employed the L2 Russian grammar in the production of LD *wh*-questions in L3 English and selected the linguistic option (different *wh*-expletive *what*, not *how* as in L2 Russian) that is available in natural languages, but not available in their L1 Mongolian and L2 Russian. Investigating adult Urdu-speaking L2 learners' access to the principles of universal grammar (UG) in the acquisition of English *wh*-interrogatives, Ishaq (2010, 2011) found that L2 learners have partial access to UG

principles with growing age. Hawkins and Hattori (2006) argued that uninterpretable *wh*-features disappear in L2 acquisition of adult Japanese learners in the case where those features have not been selected from UG inventory during the critical period in their study that investigated the sensitivity of high proficiency Japanese learners of English to the Attract Closest Principle.

According to Hawkins and Chan (1997), speakers of Chinese (a language without *wh*-operator movement in overt syntax) learning second language English (a language with *wh*-operator movement in overt syntax) establish mental representations for English which involve pronominal binding rather than operator movement. They associated this divergence from native-speaker representations to inaccessibility of features of functional categories in second language acquisition or the '*failed functional features hypothesis*'. Though these studies seem to have attempted to explain findings with respect to alternate strategies and syntactic options, none of them took the issue of successive and cyclic *wh*-movement or the existing developmental stages of the learners into consideration to explain the nature of the participants' errors and intuitions about the grammaticality or ungrammaticality of the questions under analysis.

From its very beginning, the notion of interlanguage (Selinker, 1972; Lakshmanan & Selinker, 2001) has been characterized as reflecting the interactions of many sources of different types of knowledge of the L1 and the L2 (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2006). A large body of SLA research shows that the interlanguage of English L2 learners emerges in predictable sequences or stages and that there is a remarkable consistency in the acquisition of a given structure, including question formation (VanPatten & Williams, 2007; Widiatmoko, 2008). This more or less fixed order of the universal sequences is another central issue that has been very helpful in understanding the complex phenomena of L2 acquisition. Researchers working within this framework have been concerned with the question of whether and to what extent the predictable universal developmental stages in the acquisition of morphosyntactic properties (inflectional morphemes, negations, and *wh*-questions) can be identified and accounted for regardless of learners' L1s! settings! and characteristics.

Before 1990s, the work of Meisel, Clahsen, and Pienemann (1981), Pienemann and Johnston (1986), and Pienemann, Johnston, and Brindley (1988) shifted the focus from the analysis of linguistic structures alone to more on the process of learning, showing that there are developmental sequences which can be defined by the appearance in a strict order of certain linguistic features (Meisel et al., 1981). Another contribution of these researchers was the development of an observation procedure, based on the multidimensional model of second language acquisition! for assessing the developmental stages in L2 learners' syntactic and morphological development (Pienemann et al., 1988). Based on the early work of Pienemann and colleagues, research studies in SLA after 1990s (Dyson, 2008; Makey, 1999; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Makey & Philp, 1998) have mapped a well-charted developmental path for English question formation and the sequence of development in question formation in L2 has been regarded similar to that of the native speakers (Ortega, 2009).

As this brief review of literature indicates, there is no other empirical study except that of Ishaq (2010, 2011) in the field of SLA related to the acquisition of English *wh*-questions and access to UG in the acquisition of English *wh*-questions by L2 learners of English in Pakistan. This study aimed at filling in the wide gap in research by investigating the issue of *wh*-question acquisition

by Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English and their access to UG in the acquisition of *wh*-questions.

3. Methodology

The study was cross-sectional and data was collected at one particular time. The reasons for using the cross-sectional method instead of the longitudinal design were (1) time constraints and (2) its wide-spread use in most of the SLA studies within the UG framework. A Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT) and an Elicitation Task (ET) were administered by the researchers to obtain performance data. Using SPSS (IBM 23), descriptive statistics were calculated and used for the analysis of the response data from both tasks.

3.1 Participants

The target population for the present study was L1 Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English, enrolled in the undergraduate level English degree program at Hazara University Mansehra. Using non-random, purposive, and convenience sampling procedures, eight proficient volunteer L2 learners of English, whose L1 was Pashto, were selected. The participants were compensated for their time by sharing with them main ideas related to the Chomsky's approach to the study of language and the Universal Grammar after they completed both tasks.

3.2 Materials and Procedures

Adopted from Ishaq (2010), two tasks were developed for collecting the data. For the Grammaticality Judgment Task for Pashto-Speaking L2 Learners of English (Attached as Appendix-A), forty (40) questions out of the total 80 were selected and few changes were made to some items. This task included 19 simple and 21 complex (bi-clausal) questions in English. The Wh-question Elicitation Task for Pashto-speaking L2 Learners of English (ET) consisted of 20 target sentences with underlined word(s), phrase(s), and clause(s), requiring students to form *wh*-questions about the underlined parts of the sentences (Attached as Appendix-B). Out of 20 sentences, 13 sentences were simple and 7 were complex.

The responses of participants from GJT and ET were assessed by the researchers and an expert student. Values were assigned to correct and incorrect answers (1 value for correct response and 0 for incorrect). All data were entered in MS Excel. All items were coded. Using SPSS (IBM 23), different variables were labeled and computed. Mean scores, sums, and minimum and maximum scores were obtained from descriptive statistics for the analysis of data from various aspects in order to answer different research questions. The research questions were discussed in the light of overall mean scores of all the eight participants' performance on both tasks. The mean scores for GJT and ET simple and complex items as a whole and GJT simple and GJT complex items as well as ET simple and ET complex items separately were calculated, using SPSS (IBM 23).

4. Results and Discussion

The present study had three research questions to find out whether or not (1) Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English observe UG principles and constraints (Subjacency condition and Island constraints) on *wh*-movement in *wh*-questions which do not operate in their L1, (2) participants' performance on grammaticality judgment and elicitation tasks suggest that Pashto-speaking adult L2 English learners' have access to UG in the acquisition of *wh*-questions in English, and (3) there is any difference in the performance of participants on grammaticality

judgment task and elicitation task. Students' responses were analyzed in the light of these research questions, using descriptive statistics. Results will be reported in the following sections, followed by discussion.

The first question of this study asked whether or not Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English observe UG principles and constraints on wh-movement in wh-questions, especially Subjacency and Island constraints, which do not operate in their L1. In order to answer this question, descriptive statistics was run and mean scores of participants' responses on 40 items of Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT), 20 items of Elicitation Task (ET), and 60 items of both GJT and ET were computed as shown in Table 1. Results in Table 1 show that all the participants as a group on both tasks together did not perform well. As a group, their mean score on both the tasks was found to be .36 (less than even .50). As their higher than .50 mean scores individually (with the exception of one participant with .42 mean score) and as a group indicate,

Table 4.1: Individual and group mean scores on GJT, ET, and GJTET

Variable	Participant	N	Mean
GJTSCMean	1	1	.55
	2	1	.67
	3	1	.42
	4	1	.50
	5	1	.55

Table 4.2: Individual and group mean scores on GJT, ET, and GJTET

Variable	Participant	N	Mean
GJTOverall	6	1	.57
	7	1	.55
	8	1	.70
	8	8	.56
ETSCMean	1	1	.05
	2	1	.35
	3	1	.05
	4	1	.10
	5	1	.20
	6	1	.20
	7	1	.05
	8	1	.30
ETOverall	8	8	.16
GJTETMean	8	8	.36

They performed much better on the GJT. However, their performance as a group on the ET was not very good as their overall mean score (i.e., .16) on the ET shows. Moreover, their individual performance was worse on the ET than their performance on the GJT as their less than .35 mean score shows.

These results indicate that Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English observe UG principles and Subjacency and Island constraints on wh-movement in English wh-questions to some extent. Moreover, they show greater knowledge of constraints on wh-movement in English wh-questions as far as their comprehension (performance on GJT) is concerned. However, they cannot represent the same level of knowledge in their production of wh-questions in English. This discrepancy seems to be either because of their learning limitations in the acquisition of wh-questions (i.e., 'inaccessibility of features of functional categories' in L2) as suggested by Hawkins and Chan (1997) or partial L1 transfer effects as almost all the participants know about fronting the wh-operator but without auxiliary inversion.

The second research question asked whether or not participants' performance on grammaticality judgment and elicitation tasks suggest that Pashto-speaking adult L2 English learners have access to UG in the acquisition of wh-questions in English. In order to answer this question, mean scores for participants' performance on the GJT (both simple and complex together and simple as well as complex separately) and ET (both simple and complex together and simple and complex separately) were computed and used to answer this question. As the mean scores of all the participants' responses in Table 2 and Table 3 show that they performed

Table 4.3: Mean scores of participants' performance on Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT)

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
GJTSCMean	8	.43	.70	4.53	.56	.08858
GJTSMean	8	.37	.74	4.16	.51	.14736
GJTCMean	8	.43	.71	4.86	.60	.10417

Table 4.4: Mean scores of participants' performance on Elicitation Task (ET)

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ETSCMean	8	.05	.35	1.30	.16	.11877
ETSMean	8	.08	.46	1.92	.24	.16670
ETCMean	8	.00	.14	.14	.01	.05051

Almost equally well on GJT simple and complex structures as a whole and simple and complex questions separately (GJTSCMean .56, GJTSMean .52, and GJTCMean .60). The mean scores also show that the participants performed slightly better on complex structures as compared to their performance on simple structures and simple and complex structures together. As far their performance on ET (simple and complex as a whole and simple as well as complex separately) is concerned, it was found to be worse as their lower than .25 mean scores show (ETSCMean .16,

ETSMean .24, and ETCMean .01). Moreover, the participants performed worst on complex structures in ET (ETCMean .01).

All these results indicate that Pashto-speaking L2 learners of English have partial access to UG in the acquisition of wh-questions (simple and complex) to a great extent as far as their intuitive judgments are concerned, to a lesser extent in terms of their production of simple wh-questions, and to a least extent in their production of complex (bi-clausal) English wh-questions. These findings confirm findings of the studies of Epstein, Flynn, and Martohardjono (1996), Schwartz and Sprouse (1996), and Ishaq (2010) about partial access to UG in L2 acquisition (independent of L1 or via L1), especially in the acquisition of certain abstract and complex properties of language, including complex wh-questions. Moreover, the findings do not support Full Access and Full Transfer hypotheses and findings of the studies of Bley-Vroman (1990), Clahsen and Muysken (1986) and Schachter (1990) about *No Access*.

The third question of the present study attempted to see if there was any difference in the performance of participants on grammaticality judgment task and elicitation task, especially what difference or no difference would suggest. Mean scores for the performance of all participants were computed on both tasks (complex and simple structures together) and analyzed to answer this question. As results in Table 4 show, the whole group performed better on the GJT as compared to the participants' performance on ET. A simple comparison of the mean scores (GJTSCMean .56 and ETSCMean .16) on both the tasks shows significant difference in the participants' performance on both tasks.

Table 4.5: Comparison of mean scores of participants' performance on GJT and ET

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
GJTSCMean	8	.43	.70	4.53	.56	.08858
ETSCMean	8	.05	.35	1.30	.16	.11877

Surprisingly, the greater mean score of participants on GJT indicate that there is something that is guiding their intuitions to judge both the simple and complex correct wh-questions as grammatical and incorrect ones as ungrammatical. One cannot resist to say that it is their knowledge of UG principles and constraints on wh-movement and their partial access to UG in the acquisition of wh-questions that are guiding them. This suggests that the language use, especially comprehension though not production too much, of Pashto-speaking L2 learners of English is also based on some abstract linguistic system which in turn is systematic and rule-governed. These findings confirm the claim of generative SLA researchers that the interlanguage competence of L2 learners is also based on an abstract mental representation system which is as systematic and rule-governed as the linguistic competence of native speakers.

5. Conclusion

The present study aimed at investigating whether or not Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English observe UG principles constraints on wh-movement in the acquisition of wh-questions, especially the Subjacency condition and Island constraints, which are not operative in their L1 and

have access to UG in the acquisition of wh-questions. In addition, it also attempted to find out whether or not there was any difference in their performance on the two tasks and what it would suggest. As discussed already, analysis of results for all the three research questions indicate that Pashto-speaking adult L2 learners of English observe principles of UG and Subjacency and Island constraints on wh-movement in wh-questions to some extent. They have greater knowledge of constraints on wh-movement in terms of comprehension but cannot represent the same level of knowledge in their production of wh-questions in English. This may be because of the inaccessibility of features of functional categories in their L2 acquisition, as suggested by Hawkins and Chan (1997), or partial L1 transfer effects as almost all the participants know about fronting the wh-operator but without auxiliary inversion.

Moreover, results also suggest that Pashto-speaking L2 learners of English have partial access to UG in the acquisition of wh-questions (simple and complex) to a great extent as far as their intuitive judgments on GJT are concerned, to a lesser extent in terms of their production of simple wh-questions, and to a least extent in their production of complex (bi-clausal) English wh-questions. Surprisingly, as the great difference between the participants' responses on the two tasks show there is something that is guiding their intuitions to judge both the simple and complex correct and incorrect wh-questions as grammatical and ungrammatical respectively. This evidence is hard to reject and one cannot but has to say that it is their knowledge of UG principles and constraints on wh-movement and their partial access to UG in the acquisition of wh-questions that are guiding them. This also suggests that the language use, especially comprehension though not production too much, of Pashto-speaking L2 learners of English is also based on some abstract linguistic system which in turn is systematic and rule-governed. These findings confirm findings of the studies of Epstein, Flynn, and Martohardjono (1996), Schwartz and Sprouse (1996), and Ishaq (2010) about partial access to UG in L2 acquisition (independent of L1 or via L1) and partial L1 transfer effects. The findings of the present study also support the *Failed Features of Functional Categories Hypothesis* and the assumption of generative SLA researchers about the systematic and rule-governed nature of L2 learners' errors and that the interlanguage competence of L2 learners is also based on an abstract mental representation system like the linguistic competence of native speakers. Moreover, the findings do not support *Full Access/ Full Transfer Hypothesis* and findings of Bley-Vroman (1990), Clahsen and Muysken (1986) and Schachter (1990) about *No Access*.

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APPENDIX-A

Grammaticality Judgment Task for Pashto-Speaking L2 Learners of English

Name: _____
 Mother Tongue: _____
 Institution: _____
 Program of Study: _____
 Current Semester: _____

The purpose of this task is to collect information for a research study that aims finding out whether or not Pashto-speaking learners of English have to access to the Universal Grammar in the acquisition of English interrogatives that formed with wh.

Instructions: Below you have been given a three-point scale, followed by 50 questions with wh-word. Read each question carefully. Then give your opinion about the grammatical correctness of each question. If you think that a question is grammatically correct then tick (✓) 1! if grammatically incorrect then tick 3, and if you do not know if a question is correct or incorrect then tick 2.

Grammatical	I don't know	□ gramm □ a □
1	2	3

Who he was angry with?	1	2	3✓
Who w □ □ unish □ ?	1✓	2	3

Two hav □ b □ n don □ for you b □ ow.

	□ amm □ □ a □	I don't know	□ gramm □ □ a □
□ Who is taking music classes?	1	2	3
2. What did the man hit?	1	2	3
3. How he died?	1	2	3
4. Who does enjoy teaching?	1	2	3
5. When you are taking trip?	1	2	3
6. Who will he marry?	1	2	3
7. Which ball did the player kicked?	1	2	3
8. Whom did she call for help?	1	2	3
9. What you ask him to lend you?	1	2	3
10. What did you think what John had already bought?	1	2	3
11. How often does she visit you?	1	2	3
12. Who you expected to be smart?	1	2	3
13. Where the toys are?	1	2	3
14. Who Anne did seem to get married with?	1	2	3
15. Why did he steal the jewels?	1	2	3
16. Where are my glasses?	1	2	3

17. What do you think does John claim?	1	2	3
	Grammatical	I don't know	Ungrammatical
18. Who do you believe John will marry?	1	2	3
19. Where I left the keys?	1	2	3
20. How I look in this dress?	1	2	3
21. Why did you ask him to help you?	1	2	3
22. Who you do think that everyone loves?	1	2	3
23. Why did not Mary like the party?	1	2	3
24. What do you believe that John will do?	1	2	3
25. Who do you believe will leave the job?	1	2	3
26. When I did not answer you?	1	2	3
27. What you may expect him to do?	1	2	3
28. Which languages do you claim that you can speak?	1	2	3
29. When John may expect Anne to come?	1	2	3
30. What did the news shock the students?	1	2	3
31. To whom he resembles?	1	2	3
32. What she has decided?	1	2	3
33. Whose pictures they believe are on sale?	1	2	3
34. Where did Marry believe will Tom go?	1	2	3
35. Where Mary does seem to stay?	1	2	3
36. Which painting did Anne wonder to change?	1	2	3
37. Who does Anne say need help?	1	2	3
38. Whose car she does believe that Tom is going to buy?	1	2	3
39. What is she claiming that will change the situation?	1	2	3
40. Who he believes that the fault with his car surprised?	1	2	3

Appendix-B

Wh-question Elicitation Task for Pashto-speaking L2 Learners of English

Instructions: Below you have been sentences/statements, followed by blank space. Each sentence/statement has an underlined word. Read the each sentence/statement carefully and then ask/make a question about the underlined word. The question should start with a wh-word (i.e., who, how, when, whom, which, when, where, how etc). The first one has been done for you to show you how to go about the task.

Flavia Pennetta won the US Open 2015 Tennis Tournament.

Who won the US Open 2015 Tennis Tournament?

1. John called the police? _____
2. I will see you tomorrow? _____
3. Mary did not like the movie she watched with John. _____
4. He was taking tea with his friends in the garden when I reached? _____
5. I hope that John will help me. _____
6. I put the trash in the wastebin. _____
7. He completed the task carefully. _____
8. He was taking picture of the gardener. _____
9. Mary thinks that John will leave the job. _____
10. Serena Williams could not qualify for the final because of her poor performance. _____
11. A bull came charging into the field. _____
12. I just saw the girl smashing the glass. _____
13. I believe the player behaved rudely in the ground. _____
14. John was attacked in the street yesterday. _____
15. I asked him to give me the book he borrowed last week. _____
16. John did not know that his friends went home. _____
17. Jessica thinks that Freddy likes her. _____
18. The police believe that the criminal has been shot. _____
19. John expects Mary to write a book about Linguistics. _____
20. Harry thanks Jennifer. _____

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