Cross-Linguistic Influence and TBI

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Abstract. *Cross-linguistic influence (CLI) refers to the impact that a learner's native language (L1) has on their acquisition of a second language (L2). This study explores the interaction between CLI and Task-Based Instruction (TBI), focusing on how TBI can mediate the effects of CLI on learners' L2 acquisition. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative measures of language proficiency with qualitative data from learner feedback and classroom observations. The study investigates whether TBI can mitigate negative CLI effects and enhance language acquisition by providing contextualized and meaningful learning experiences. The results indicate that TBI can effectively address specific areas of CLI, leading to improved L2 proficiency and a more nuanced understanding of cross-linguistic interactions. This study contributes to the field of second language acquisition by demonstrating the potential of TBI to address CLI challenges and enhance language learning outcomes.*

Keywords: Cross-linguistic influence, Task-Based Instruction, second language acquisition, language proficiency, instructional design, language transfer.

Introduction

Cross-linguistic influence (CLI) is a well-documented phenomenon in second language acquisition (SLA), where features of a learner's native language (L1) impact their learning and use of a second language (L2). CLI can manifest as positive transfer, where similarities between L1 and L2 facilitate learning, or negative transfer, where differences cause errors and difficulties. Understanding and managing CLI is crucial for designing effective language instruction.

Task-Based Instruction (TBI) has emerged as an effective pedagogical approach that emphasizes the use of authentic tasks to promote language learning. TBI focuses on meaningful communication and interaction, which theoretically could influence the role of CLI by providing contexts that help learners use L2 more naturally. This study investigates the intersection between CLI and TBI, specifically examining whether TBI can mitigate the negative effects of CLI and facilitate more effective L2 acquisition.

The research aims to address the following questions:

- How does CLI affect learners' performance in a TBI context?

- Can TBI help reduce negative CLI effects and improve L2 proficiency?

- What are learners' perceptions of the role of TBI in managing CLI?

Methods

Research Design

This study uses a mixed-methods design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of TBI on CLI. The study was conducted over a 16-week period with intermediate-level EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners.

Participants

The study involved 150 intermediate-level EFL students from two language schools. Participants were randomly assigned to two groups: an experimental group that received TBI and a control group that followed a traditional language instruction approach.

Data Collection

Quantitative Data:

Proficiency Tests: Pre- and post-tests were administered to measure learners' L2 proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, and speaking. These tests included tasks that were designed to assess the impact of CLI on language use and the effectiveness of TBI in mitigating these effects.

Error Analysis: Learners' written and spoken outputs were analyzed for evidence of CLI, with a focus on common error types related to L1 transfer.

Qualitative Data:

Learner Feedback: Surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather learners' perceptions of how TBI impacted their experience with CLI. Questions addressed how TBI tasks influenced their understanding of L1-L2 differences and their confidence in using L2.

Classroom Observations: Observations were conducted to examine how TBI tasks were implemented and how learners interacted with these tasks. Notes were taken on instances where CLI was evident and how TBI tasks addressed these issues.

Procedure

TBI Implementation: The experimental group engaged in a series of TBI tasks designed to address common areas of CLI, such as grammatical structures and vocabulary usage. Tasks included role-plays, problem-solving activities, and simulations that required learners to use L2 in realistic contexts.

Traditional Instruction: The control group received traditional language instruction focused on grammar drills, vocabulary exercises, and isolated language practice without the contextualized tasks of TBI.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical methods to compare pre- and post-test results between the experimental and control groups. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify common themes in learner feedback and classroom observations.

Results

Quantitative Findings

Proficiency Improvement:

Experimental Group: The experimental group showed a significant improvement in L2 proficiency, with an average increase of 25% in grammar accuracy and 20% in vocabulary usage. Speaking proficiency improved by 30%, indicating that TBI tasks were effective in addressing CLI-related issues.

Control Group: The control group showed a smaller increase in proficiency, with an average improvement of 10% in grammar accuracy and 8% in vocabulary usage. Speaking proficiency increased by 12%, suggesting that traditional

instruction was less effective in mitigating CLI effects.

Error Analysis:

Experimental Group: Analysis of errors revealed a reduction in common CLI-related errors, such as incorrect verb forms and false cognates. The TBI tasks helped learners become more aware of L1-L2 differences and use L2 more accurately.

Control Group: The control group continued to exhibit high rates of CLI-related errors, indicating that traditional instruction did not effectively address these issues.

Qualitative Findings

Learner Feedback:

Perceptions of TBI: Learners in the experimental group reported that TBI tasks helped them understand and manage L1-L2 differences more effectively. They noted that the contextualized nature of the tasks made it easier to apply L2 rules and avoid errors related to L1 transfer.

Confidence and Motivation: Many learners expressed increased confidence in their L2 use and greater motivation to engage with the language. They appreciated the relevance and practicality of the tasks, which made language learning more engaging and less frustrating.

Classroom Observations:

Task Implementation: Observations indicated that TBI tasks facilitated meaningful language use and provided learners with opportunities to practice L2 in realistic contexts. Instances of CLI were addressed through task design, which encouraged learners to focus on L2-specific language features.

Interaction and Engagement: Learners in the experimental group were more actively involved in discussions and activities, showing improved interaction and engagement compared to the control group.

Discussion

The results of this study highlight the effectiveness of Task-Based Instruction (TBI) in managing cross-linguistic influence (CLI) and enhancing second language acquisition. TBI's focus on authentic, context-rich tasks provides learners with

practical opportunities to use L2, which helps mitigate the negative effects of CLI.

Mitigating CLI: The significant improvement in L2 proficiency among the experimental group suggests that TBI tasks effectively address CLI-related issues. By engaging learners in tasks that mirror real-world language use, TBI helps them become more aware of L1-L2 differences and apply L2 rules more accurately.

Enhanced Engagement: The increased confidence and motivation reported by learners in the experimental group underline the benefits of TBI in creating an engaging and meaningful learning environment. The relevance of the tasks enhances learners' investment in the language learning process and encourages more effective use of L2.

Pedagogical Implications: The findings support the integration of TBI into language curricula to address CLI challenges. Educators should design tasks that replicate real-world contexts and address specific areas of CLI, providing learners with opportunities to practice L2 in meaningful ways. This approach not only improves language proficiency but also fosters greater learner engagement and confidence.

Limitations: The study's limitations include its focus on intermediate-level learners and a relatively short duration of 16 weeks. Future research could explore the long-term effects of TBI on CLI and examine its impact on learners at different proficiency levels. Additionally, studies could investigate the effectiveness of TBI in addressing CLI in various language contexts and for different language pairs.

Conclusion

The investigation into the intersection of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) and Task-Based Instruction (TBI) reveals significant insights into how TBI can effectively address the challenges posed by CLI in second language acquisition. The study's findings highlight several key points regarding the efficacy of TBI in mitigating the negative effects of CLI and enhancing learners' language proficiency.

Effectiveness of TBI in Managing CLI: The substantial improvements in language proficiency observed in the experimental group underscore the effectiveness of TBI in addressing CLI. By engaging learners in authentic, context-

rich tasks, TBI provides opportunities for meaningful language use that helps learners navigate and overcome challenges related to L1-L2 transfer. The reduction in CLI-related errors, particularly in grammar and vocabulary, demonstrates that TBI tasks facilitate a more nuanced understanding of L2 rules and applications. This is crucial in reducing the negative impact of CLI and promoting more accurate and fluent language use.

Enhancement of Learner Engagement and Motivation: One of the notable outcomes of the study is the increased learner engagement and motivation observed in the experimental group. The contextual relevance of TBI tasks, which mirror real-world language use, fosters a more engaging and motivating learning environment. Learners reported greater confidence in their language abilities and a stronger connection to the learning material. This heightened engagement is likely to contribute to more sustained and effective language learning, as learners are more likely to invest effort and time into tasks that they perceive as relevant and useful.

Pedagogical Implications: The study's findings have significant implications for language teaching practices. Incorporating TBI into language curricula can offer a strategic approach to managing CLI and enhancing language proficiency. Educators are encouraged to design and implement tasks that reflect real-life language use and address specific areas of CLI. This approach not only helps learners develop more accurate language skills but also fosters a more dynamic and interactive learning environment.

Practical recommendations include:

In conclusion, Task-Based Instruction proves to be a powerful tool in mitigating the negative effects of cross-linguistic influence and improving second language acquisition.

By providing learners with authentic, meaningful tasks, TBI facilitates a more effective and engaging learning experience.

The study highlights the importance of integrating TBI into language teaching practices to address CLI challenges and enhance language proficiency.

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