



# **BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**

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**THE INFLUENCE OF THE L2 IN THE ACQUISITION OF THE L3**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF LANGUAGES**

**FOR THE DEGREE OF THE**

**LICENCIATURA EN ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS**

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## **DEDICACIÓN**

Antes que nada quiero dedicar este logro a Dios, ya que sin él no habría logrado lo que hasta ahora tengo. En especial dedico este trabajo a mis padres: JESUS HERNANDEZ MOZO y MARIA GUADALUPE RAMOS ROQUE, a mis hermanas: Mary chuy, Janeth y Teresita de Jesús (QEPD) ya que sin ellos no tendría el apoyo tanto moral como económicamente. A mis amigos los que me han brindado su valiosa amistad y apoyo. A mis maestros, por su tiempo y apoyo. De igual manera, les doy las gracias a todas aquellas personas que conocí y que de alguna manera influyeron en la realización de este trabajo.

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## ABSTRACT

The first language (L1) has been considered one of the main sources of transfer for the acquisition of a second language or third for a long time (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Koike, 1995). Transfer is defined by Ellis (2003) as the influence of the first language over the acquisition of a second language (L2). Using a more neutral concept, Brown (2007) describes it as the carryover of previous performance or knowledge to subsequent learning. This influence can be positive or negative. Positive transfer occurs when previous knowledge can facilitate the acquisition of the L2, that is, when previous structures are correctly applied to present structures in the L2. On the other hand, negative transfer also referred to as interference, takes place when previous knowledge disrupts the performance of a second task (Brown, 2007). However, recently studies (Angelovska and Hahn, 2012; Clevedon, 2000, 2001; Cenoz, and Hammarberg, 1998) have shown that in the case of third language (L3) learners, the influence of their L2 plays an important role in the acquisition of other foreign languages. The purpose of this study is to analyze the negative transfer of the second language (L2) English in the third language (L3) acquisition of German. In the present study, we set forth the possibility of negative transfer in L3 interlanguage based on the 'L2 status factor' and attempt to explain whether these occurrences of L2 negative transfer can be documented in the L3 written data from learners with different L2 proficiency levels.

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

Cross-linguistic influence is one of the fields that recently linguistics has been investigated. In fact, this area has showed important results which prove the role of the first and second language into the acquisition of the third language (Angelovska & Hahn, 2012). Principally, studies are about the language transfer. According to Odlin (1989) transfer is the manipulation among similarities and differences between mother tongue and other languages that have been studied before. In addition, there are two kinds of transfer: Positive and Negative. Positive type helps students to learn words which are always similar between L1 and other languages. On the other hand, negative type causes problems in the learning of certain words which orthographic seem similar but the meaning is completely distinct.

Angelovska & Hahn (2012) study (as cited Cenoz, 2001) reported that there is a stronger connection between L3 and L2 instead of L3 and L1. Many students are not successful in the acquisition of the third language because they mix L1 and L2 in order to understand L3. Learning a third language is sometimes complicated, but, students try to develop their abilities and skills in a language. Third language is sometimes considered to be related to the second one (Sanfont, 2005). In fact, Languages that are closed related together, they can share similarities in grammar, lexical, phonological, morphological level, and other linguistic areas and features, as the case of German and English. These languages



have the same origin Anglo-Saxon and many written words are similar but the meaning is completely different.

On the side, the words are written in the same way in both languages and the meaning is the same that is why it is necessary to analyze it. For these reasons, if students have a high level of second language domain, the third language can be easier to learn, and the process could be less complicated.

Therefore, learning any language is not easy. This action consists in the development of four skills as well grammar and vocabulary. Dr. Christina Gitsaky published by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Culture Organization; chair program (UNESCO, 2010), says that vocabulary is relevant and crucial for speaking, reading, writing and listening. Vocabulary plays an important role in a language, although learning vocabulary is an unfinished process. Some pupils who learn two foreign languages and use both in order to remember vocabulary, as well as some students relate words with their knowledge in mother tongue. As reported by Warwick (2012) one of the best ten tips to improve the use of vocabulary is to relate words, as an example families words, clearly, it is a good strategy, and students will be able to understand what they need to know in that language. In the point of McCarthy (1997), words which are related in languages “mean the same” but there are some cases in which words are located in a wrong position as grammatical as context or collocation, words that are being used in the wrong way are called ‘cognates’.

Moreover, as Odlin (1989) states, transfers influence in cognate vocabulary or words which are similar in mother tongue and foreign languages. As a result, the vocabulary which is transfer from one language to another, definitely modify the real message. It is necessary to take into account that vocabulary is essential to people who want to manage any language. In this study, the grammatical and lexical categories will be principally studied in order to identify transfers during the learning of third language; also it will be taken into account other linguistics areas.

## **1.2 Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study is to analyze the interference between intermediate L2 English learners and beginners L3 German learners in the CELE-BUAP, in order to identify types of errors due to language transfer they make during their learning in the L3.

## **1.3 Research question**

This paper addresses the following research questions:

1. Is there cross-linguistic transfer from the L2 (English) to the L3 (German)?
2. What are the possible causes of this cross-linguistic transfer?

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

The results of this paper will provide how cross-linguistic transfer occurs to some students who know English as a L2 and German as L3. Such transfer could affect the learning in different grammatical and lexical category. With this research, teachers and students could avoid using cognates and grammar errors in a wrong way. Also, this research could contribute to find new strategies and/or techniques that could be helpful in order to reduce transfers, and learn how to manage English and German language at the same time without transferring errors.

## 1.5 Key terms

**Anglo-Saxon:** It refers to settlers from the German regions of Angeln and Saxony, who made their way over to Britain after the fall of the Roman Empire around AD 410 (BBC, 2014).

**Cognate:** are often grammatical restrictions found in one language but not in another, and such restrictions can occasion difficulty (Odlin, 1989).

**Cross linguistic influence:** In the behaviourist the word transfer is interpreted as a habit formation and a matter of interference or of falling back on the native language. It is seen as the influence of the learner's native language. Smith and Kellerman (1986) prefer to use the term *cross linguistic influence*. This term includes aspects such as transfer, interference, avoidance, borrowing, and L2 related aspects of language loss. (Ortega, L. 2009)

**Interference:** implies no more than what another term, negative transfer, does, but there is an advantage in using the latter term since it can be contrasted with positive transfer, which is the facilitating influence of cognate vocabulary or any other similarities between the native and target language. (Odlin, 1989).

**L1:** This refers to the first language that a child learns. It is also known as the primary language, the mother tongue. (Gass & Selinker, 2001)

**Second language acquisition (SLA):** this is the common term used for the name of the discipline. In general, SLA refers to the process of learning another language after the native language has been learned. Sometimes the term refers to the learning of a third or

fourth languages. The important aspect is that SLA refers to the learning of a nonnative language after the learning of the native language. (Gass & Selinker, 2001)

**Third language acquisition:** it is a non -native language which is currently being used or acquired in a situation where the person already has knowledge of one or more L2s besides one or more L1s. (Peek, 2009)

**Transfer:** is a general term describing the carryover of previous performance or knowledge to subsequent learning. (Brown H. D., 2000).

## **1.6 Research content and organization**

This thesis will be organized in five chapters, as follows. In the first chapter, an introduction to the problem and an explanation of the many aspects about it will be presented. In addition, the purpose of the study and the research question it attempts to answer will be listed. Finally, the significance of the research will be also explained. In Chapter II, an overview of the main concepts and theoretical constructs around the negative transfer in both languages (English and German), also with a discussion of the main research has been performance in this field. The third chapter is about the methodology used for identifying the interference in some students who learn in the CELE-BUAP. In this way, the subjects, the materials, and the instruments utilized will be described deeply. The results of this work and with the descriptive statistics obtained will be presented in the fourth chapter, where the type of negative transfers will be explained. Finally, Chapter V presents the findings, the limitations of the study, and some suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER II: THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Second language acquisition**

In this section of the literature review, a brief overview of the main theories that are involved in second language acquisition are presented in order to understand the whole process of it into the third language. Theories have many aims which explain a crucial phenomenon of the study, and the process that exist when there is any change (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). In a few words, theories understand the importance of any facts that happen in any meaningful study. Linguists have been studying for many years, their experience help discover essential data that help others to learn and get new learning. According to McLaughlin (1987), one of the functions of the theories is ‘transformation’ in which changes into a theory are between laws and facts, and another function is ‘prediction’ that induce to research and create hypothesis from that. As can be seen, theories are constantly changing and new research appears and other disappears, however, it helps understand studies. Theories of the second language explain how people learn and acquire a language processes that are carrying out.

#### **2.1.1 Universal Grammar**

An important theory in second language acquisition is the Universal Grammar (UG) which is proposed by Chomsky. The principal goal of this theory is to describe the language as an essential part of human mind and also to give how the process is acquired (Cook & Newson 1996). Each language has specific rules that must be followed in order to

people domain any language nearly as a native person. Ellis (1985) (cited in Cook, 1996) reports that UG cannot have precise rules to understand languages, however, it has a set of principles that can be applied to all languages. The function of the basic principle is on syntax (word order); it helps to order words according to the rules of languages. Nowadays, people are learning new languages, and words which have different positions in a sentence depending on what the learner wants to express (Gass & Selinker, 2001). In addition, principles stipulate parameters that establish settings in which language is. In other words, the grammatical rules are different from one language to another. Consequently, with this theory, people are able to notice that learning grammar and using it at same time is hard. Also, learners are able to realize that acquiring a new language is a complex process, but, theories can help people understand any language deeply.

### **2.1.2 Lateralization**

Due to lateralization, the acquisition of second language is learned with any problem. The process of acquisition takes place in the brain. As well as, it is divided into two hemispheres: left and right. The left hemisphere has functions such as logical, intellectual, and analytic functions, whereas, the right hemisphere controls emotional and social needs (Brown, 2000). Moreover, it is mentioned that language is lateralized. Fromkin et al, (2003) says that the term “lateralized” is well used to talk about any cognitive function that is located into the brain. According to Eric Lenneberg (1967) (as cited in Brown, 2000), lateralization is a process that starts around the age of two and finish around puberty, child is gotten neurologically functions. In addition, it has been found a relationship between lateralization and second language because the brain permits to



acquire the first and second language before puberty (Tomas Scovel (1969) (as cited in Brown, 2000). Consequently, the age is a factor that contributes or not to the acquisition of a second language.

### **2.1.3 Interlanguage theory**

The word ‘interlanguage’ (IL) was coined by Selinker (1969, 1972) to explain how learners construct L2. Moreover, there are authors like Nemser (1971) who named the same theory as ‘approximative system’ and Corder (1967) as ‘transitional competence’ (McLaughlin, 1987). Nevertheless, each author use the theory differently with others words to express the information that they understand from IL. The main point of IL is to discover how L2 learners domain two languages in an independent way. According to Ellis (1997), the term interlanguage or ‘metal grammar’ involves many specific ideas about the development of grammar and how learners also comprehend and produce the grammatical structures during acquisition process of the L2. In addition, Ellis (1997) observes that students’ grammar is influenced by from new input. In other words, individuals are being exposed to new learning and their brain is capable to change, omit or keep grammar because everyday people are learning new things and their own knowledge is constantly changing. In sum, interlanguage or students’ grammar can be affected by rules and errors that they are adding and making.

### **2.1.3.1 Latent structures**

The main goal of this section is to comprehend the psychological structure that has a strong relation to interlanguage. Weinreich (1953) (cited in Selinker, 1972) declares that there is a phonetic, grammatical relationship or a semantic feature between two languages. In addition, Weinreich (1953) proposes grammatical structures and assumes the existence of ‘interlingual identifications’. It is assumed that psychological identification is the term “latent” in the brain. Latent is activated when someone attempts to learn a L2 (Selinker, 1972). Lennerberg (1967) (cited in Selinker (1972) defines the concept of latent language structure as a process and a capacity of modifying the universal grammar of target language (TL).

Selinker (1972) realizes that few adults are successful learners and acquire a native-speaker competence and the rest of them fail because they are not able to activate the ‘latent language structure’. This is their cognitive mechanism which is related to the latent psychological structure. In the point of De Prada Creo (1990) the latent language structure and latent psychological structures are completely different because there is not a guarantee that latent psychological structure will be activated at all, there is not a genetic timetable, and other characteristics. Accordingly to characteristics, Creo (1990) concludes that human brain has the latent language structure and the latent psychological structure. De Prada Creo (1990) assumes that the latent language structure conducts to proficiency and the latent psychological structure leads to fossilization. As a consequence, it is essential to know that students sometimes do not reach the competence in TL due to their psychological structure.

### 2.1.3.2 Fossilization

In previous section, was mentioned the concept of latent psychological structures has been defined and the term fossilization was mentioned because both have a connection.

Long (2003) Takes the most important information from Selinker's definition (1972):

*“Fossilization” is a mechanism which is assumed also to exist in the latent psychological structure... fossilizable linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules, and subsystems which speakers of a particular NL will tend to keep in their IL relative to a particular TL, no matter the age of the learner or the amount of explanation and instruction he receives in the TL... (Long, 2003 p.488)*

Selinker (1972) considers that “fossilization” principally results from language transfer. It does not take place in the L1 development. Put in this way, if learners receive rules, forms, expressions in L2, and they do not match L2 to the TL, the individual's interlanguage have a presence of “fossilization” (Yule, 2006). Thus, the knowledge of language learners in their native language (NL) is not seemed affected by the acquisition of L2, L3, or more languages because they maintain their own knowledge in the brain.

### **2.1.3.3 Five central processes**

Before describing fossilization, it is necessary to know how this 5 central processes that influences this phenomenon Selinker (1972). The first process is language transfer is also called “interference”, it is going to be explained in another section. The second is “transfer of training”. It explains the effects of bad teaching Lennon (2008). This mentions his experience in German classes when teachers do not explain certain rules in formal and informal way and it is noted the real use when Lennon (2008) is in a real context. That is because there is not a correct instruction in a classroom. The results of instruction are the transfer training. The third central process is “strategies of L2 learning”. It refers to that some errors are result of the material that is used in class (McLaughlin, 1987). The fourth is strategies of L2 communication. These strategies produce more fossilization than others (De Prada Creo, 1990). The last one is overgeneralization of the target language which is a known area by teachers. It is due to the overuse of a TL rule, they apply rules of the TL to situations that are not possible. They assume rules because of their IL in NL. For example, what did she worked yesterday? The past tense morpheme –ed is used in a wrong way, because learners know that the past tense of the regular verbs are with ending -ed (Selinker, 1972). In sum, the five central process marks how fossilization in IL become visible in this area.

## **2.2 Errors Analysis**

In this section, the errors are going to be taken into consideration to study the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH), source of errors, and understand errors that learners make when they are learning a new language. The following information may be helpful to teachers to know what type of errors students have and how to treat or correct them. Sometimes, errors are seemed to be the worst part of learning, but, it is incorrect because errors can help students to be best learners or improve their language level (Corder S. P., 1974).

### **2.2.1 Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis**

The necessity to compare distinct languages is originated by the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH); this idea is proposed by Lado (1957) who states that “individuals tend to transfer the forms and the meaning of their native language and culture to the foreign language and its culture” (Lado, 1957 p 2). The term *contrastive* suggest much more differences than resemblances between languages (James, 1980). This field of linguistics compares languages, not matter if the languages are related to or not. There are some authors who claim against CAH because there are languages in which exist more similarities than differences. According to Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991), if two languages are similar, positive transfer is presented, but, if two languages are different, the negative transfer or interference appears. As Wardhaugh (1983) states contrastive analysis

hypothesis actually have two versions: a strong and a weak. The strong version is impracticable and unrealistic that means the idea to contrast is completely difficult because there are areas of linguistics that are not easy to compare. On the other side, the weak version uses the linguistic knowledge that is the best and available to determine the difficulty in the learning of a second language. This version also introduces the term interference; it considers the similarities and differences between systems, moreover, it mentions that errors are due to differences. Therefore, learners and teachers may notice language learning has a high level of difficulty.

### **2.2.2 Errors vs mistakes**

It has mentioned a little bit the errors in CAH, but, the strong emphasis about them is here. It is typical to make errors and mistakes when learners are learning a language. There is a distinction between errors and mistakes. Errors are an act that is unintentional and not self-corrected. A mistake may be intentional or unintentional act and self-corrected (James, 1998). In other words, students do not realize when they make errors and think that the language is produced in a correct manner, on the other hand, when students make mistakes they notice them after the production and know how to correct all of them. There are people who get frustrated due to make errors because they do not realize until teacher correct them. However, errors demonstrate learners are developing an autonomous system of language in each one L1 and L2 (Corder , 1967). Error Analysis (EA) is an area which the main focus is the analysis of learners' errors (Gass & Selinker, 2008). In sum, it is

important to know the difference of mistake and errors in order to discover the principal reason students are not learning a second language.

### **2.2.3 Detecting and describing errors**

A difficult task for EA is to detect and describe errors because each learner presents different troubles in their own learning. Students who detect an error, are aware of it. Error detection is not easy as it is seemed. People errors can be produced in spoken and written language, they can be formal and informal (James, 1998). According to James (1998), there are two types of errors: local and global in which are going to be explain later in order to understand the error treatment. On the other hand, there are others errors as Corder (1971) explains: Overt and covert errors. Overt errors are not clear in a grammatical level. Covert errors are correct at the sentence level, for example “I’m ok, thank you so much” the grammar is correct, but is not a correct answer to this question “What do you do?” obviously is a clearly error that is why to detect and describe errors is a complex process that just EA is an expert and the source of error can contribute to solve problems in the acquisition of a second and third language and reduce errors in this field.

### **2.2.4 Sources of errors**

As can be mentioned in errors analysis (EA), the most important aim is to analyze errors and also discover the source of errors and how can affect the students’ learning. Brown

(2000) holds the view that there are two sources of errors which are interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer. Brown (2000) points out knowing a second language contribute to have interlingual transfer or interference, and the L1 is just a previous knowledge. Exists interlingual interference between the L1 and L2 to the third language, specifically if the L2 and L3 are related, the interference is presented and errors are the result of the interlingual transfer and teachers may detect and analyze them, as Jarvis and Jarvis & Pavlenko (2008) (cited in Marijana Kresic' and Tanja, 2012) argue that students activate interlingual transfer when there are similarities between L1 and L2 or L3. In contrast, in intralingual transfer it is found within the target language itself and is an important factor in second language learning. In a few words, interlingual transfer occurs between L2 and L3 and L1 does appear a little bit and the intralingual appears only between L1 and L2 because the rules that learners know in their mother tongue affect in the acquisition of the second language due to overgeneralization. In conclusion, the source of errors help teachers and students to improve their teaching and learning.

### **2.2.5 Error treatment**

In order to understand error treatment and not relate to error correction, it is necessary to make a difference between these terms with the explanation of global and local errors to comprehend more this topic. As Hendrickson (1980) (cited in Brown, 2000) reports that the local errors are sometimes clear and understandable, errors are not needed to be corrected. If the message is clear, the correction could interrupt and distract the students' thought, whereas global errors must be treated because they are



incomprehensible, that is students make errors in place of producing messages. Shahin (2011) the term error treatment is used to describe teachers' treatment of errors in classrooms interaction when they apply techniques and help teacher to correct students' errors while error correction is when a teacher detect immediately the error, he corrects it as soon as he notices, and provide feedback. As a result, there is a incredible difference between those terms, that can help teacher to chose the best way to make a correction. This definition can help in the further research to know how to correct errors in transfer L2 and L3.

### **2.3 Multilingualism/ third language**

Human brain has the capacity to learn third, fourth and more languages. That is, multilingualism can explain, but, as mentioned in previous section learners have errors that can affect their own learning, this area also presents errors. Language transfer understands the real causes of learners do not advance in third language acquisition as well as it suggests what learners have to do in order to be successful. Undoubtedly, multilingual acquisition is a complicated phenomenon (Cenoz & Genesse, 1998). It contributes to obtain meaningful information for pupils who are studying the field of L3 acquisition. In this section, it will be explained about these topics in a deeply way.

### **2.3.1 Multi-competence**

To be a monolingual person means to acquired a mother tongue since childhood (Cook, 2008). Any person can acquire any language, however, learning a L2 is a complicated process because it implies to learn new grammar, vocabulary, rules, and more linguistic areas. In order to become a L2 user, it is necessary to domain all the areas that have been mentioned before. Being a L2 user is better than L2 learner. On the one hand, the L2 user explores all the linguistics fields to deal with daily situations (Cook, 2002). For example, reading a book, explaining a difficult situation, narrating any event and so on. It is crucial to manage the language at determining level to do these actions. On the other hand, L2 learners are who still learn the language system, they memorize vocabulary, repeat after the teacher, write a short paragraph and more actions (Cook, 2002). In fact, L2 learners study the language in a classroom. As it is seemed, being a L2 user involves to have a great knowledge of the L2.

Nowadays, bilinguals are studied by linguistics because it is interesting to research how the human brain keeps two grammars. L2 users are competent, but, people who know more than two languages are multi-competent (Cook, 2012). It is states that Multi-competence is neither a model nor a theory, it is just a perspective or framework of how mind uses more than one language.

### **2.3.2 Cross-linguistic Influence/ language transfer**

Cross-linguistic influence has become an important area that linguistics has taken into account. It has several names to refer the same term such as: linguistic interference, the role of the mother tongue, native language influence, language mixing and language transfer (Odlin, 2003). These are names which are about the same phenomenon. According to Smith (1994) Language transfer is an oldest term that is replaced by Cross-linguistic Influence (CLI). But, whatever term is used, researchers in this field accept mostly the definition that is proposed by Odlin (1989, p 27) who defines: “transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between target language and any other language that has been previously ( and perhaps imperfectly) acquired.” For instance, a German learner of English might be affected by her or his knowledge of Spanish because the direction of transfers can be appeared from mother tongue to the other languages or viceversa Smith (1994). CLI or language transfer is a great field to study the influence of languages after the mother tongue, transfers are good and sometimes not, this distinction will be explained in the following paragraphs with the terms of positive and negative transfers.

### **2.3.3 Positive Transfer**

Positive transfer could not affect the students’ learning at all. They can make a relation between two or more languages. It analyzes the similarities between mother tongue

and target language (Odlin, 1989). In contrast, Ramón Torrijos (2009) argues that positive transfer occurs when the differences of two languages are few. In other words, with this definition it is assumed that positive transfer can appear as well as in two foreign languages and native language. For example, the number of cognates Spanish-English-German as “*camara, camera and Kamera*”, these words have the same meaning and both are nouns. Those words are well-known as true cognates because they share meaning (Hall *et al*, 2009) this cognates will be explain later in the definition of cognate vocabulary. As it can be observed, this type of transfer can help teachers to develop a strategy to instruct students with true cognate vocabulary.

#### **2.3.4 Negative Transfer**

The opposite term of positive transfer is the negative transfer. Negative transfer really affects the acquisition of a new language. This type of transfer produces learners’ errors (Odlin, 1989), because the main disadvantage of it is that learners get confused with words which are seemed similar but the meaning is completely different, in this case of lexicon area. Negative transfer is known as a “false friend” or “false cognates” (Hall *et al*, 2009). Negative and positive can appear in areas such as semantics, syntax, morphology, phonetics, and more other areas (Odlin, 1989). Another area that shows negative transfer, and the Angelovska & Hahn’s study shows that the use of verb “Haben” (Modalverbähnliche Verben) in German with the role of semi-modal verb (English) to express necessity, students put after this semi-modal the word “to” like English, and it is proved that the negative transfer is presented as well in syntax area. Without doubt,

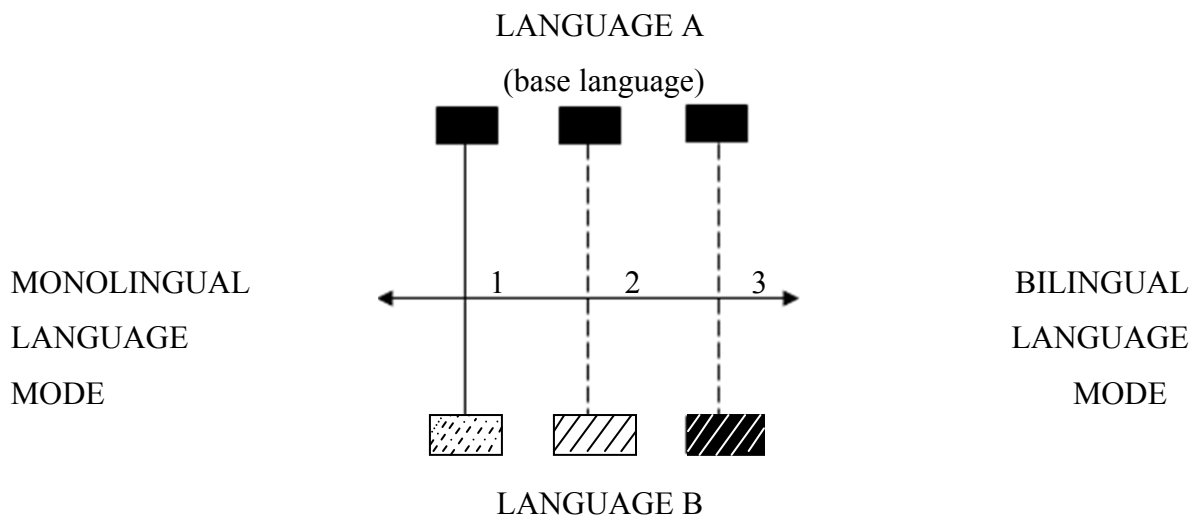
negative transfer is a problem that learners face. This will profoundly be studied in this reaserach and also the following section will be about the errors in negative transfer that learners produce and those are significant information for this reasearch.

## 2.4 Theoretical models of the acquisition of the L3

### 2.4.1 Language Mode

The language mode is the ‘state of activation of the bilingual’s languages and language processing mechanisms at a certain point in time’ (Grosjean, 2001:3). In other words, the model understands how the language is activated in monolingual and bilingual mode. The speaker activates the languages depending on the situation she/he is exposed to (Figure 1).

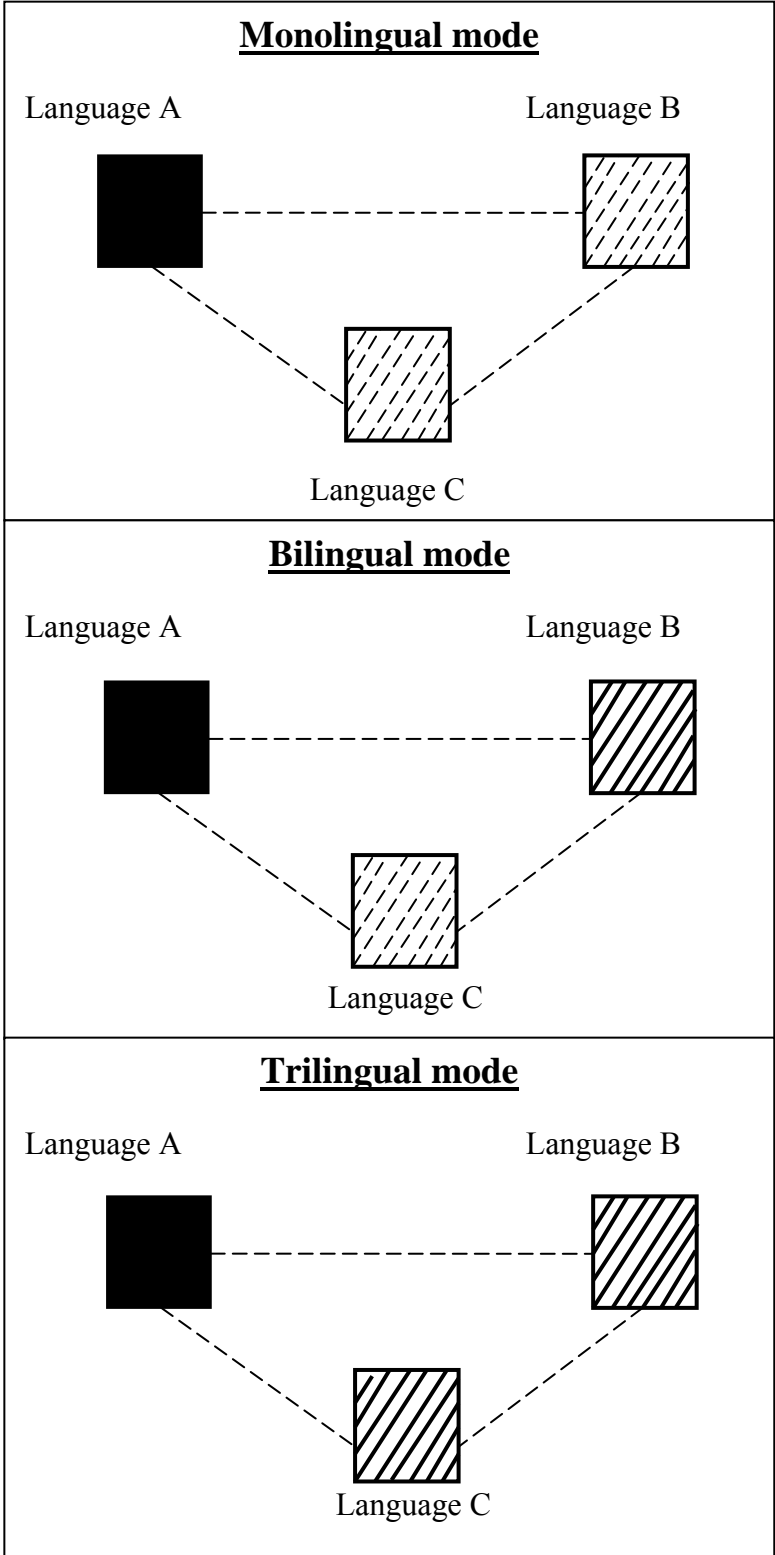
**Figure 1. Language Mode**



In a study of Murphy (2003) explains: when a learner is in monolingual mode, the language B is at low activation and there is not interference, but, in the case of bilingual mode, the language B activates the base language and causes interference. According to Murphy (2003), this model could be used to understand the language process in a trilingual learner. Actually, he states that a L3 learner with low proficiency in monolingual mode will not occur interference from the L1 into the L3 production, but, probably it inferences in L2 unconsciously.

In fact, Grosjean (2001) proposed a representation of a trilingual learner in a monolingual mode (Figure 2) that explains what happen when people use three or more languages daily. In the first part of this figure, it shows how the trilingual person is in monolingual mode; the language A is activated and the others are almost activated. And the second part; Bilingual mode the L3 person shows that his/her language A and B are more active than C, but, Language B is slightly activate. The last part of this diagram shows how L3 person is in trilingual mode and the language A,B and C are activate, but, it is important to observe that the L2 and L3 are activated in the same level.

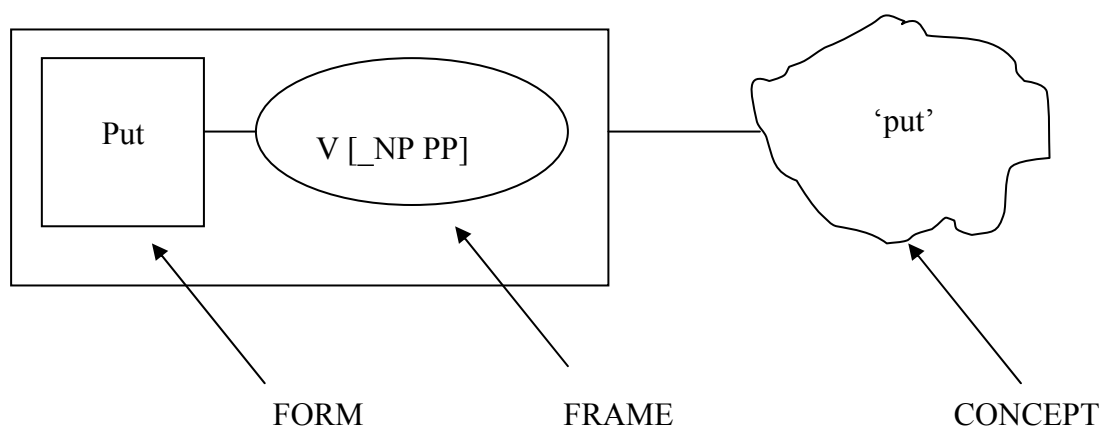
Figure 2. Trilingual mode



### 2.4.2 The Parasitic Model

In a study, Hall et al (2009) have created the mode “Parasitic Model” which explains the process of the acquisition of the words. In order to learn a new word, learners look at the *form*, then they make a connection with the *concept* which is the meaning. In fact, it is translated into the L1 to comprehend better the word, and the next step is to learn the word. Finally, when learners are using the word, they develop it the grammatical representation of the word, called *frame* which is vital to include a little bit in syntax category, the Figure 3 shows how the form, frame and concept are represented (Hall et al, 2009)

Figure 3. Parasitic Model

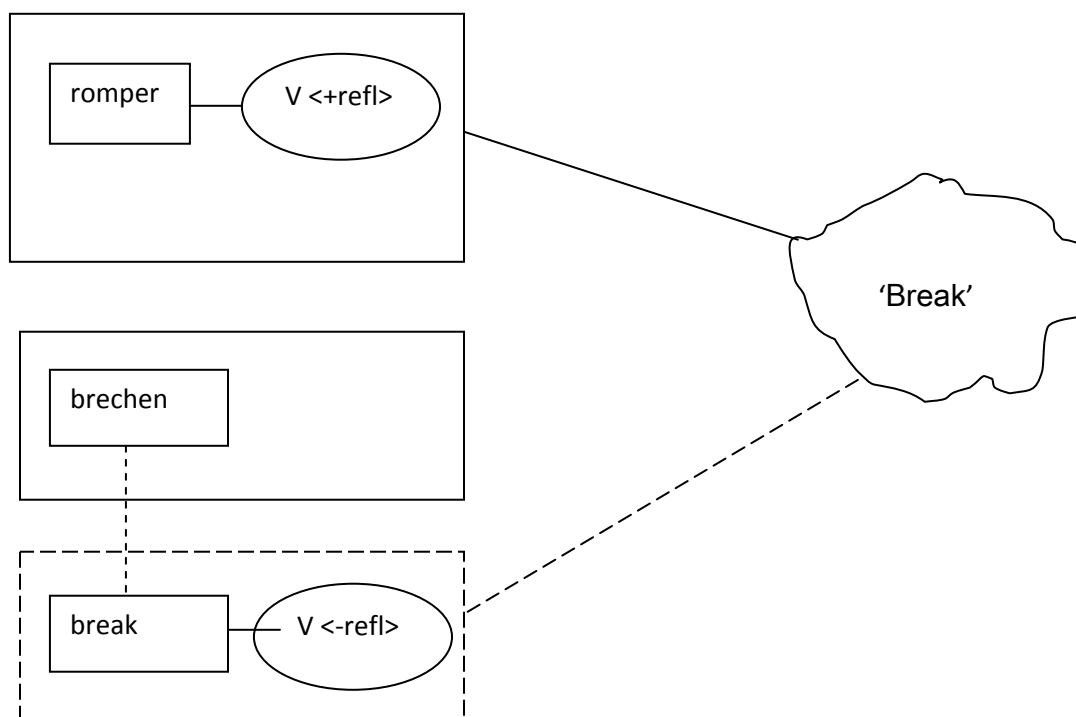


Moreover, this model has different prediction of how to detect form of similarity as well it presents several hypothesis, one explains that when L3 verb is similar in one of



languages learned before, the learners expect that the use of it will be the same in L1 or L2. Hall et al (2009) present the following diagram to explain the similarities between words in the L2 (German) and L3 (English) rather than L1 (Spanish).

**Figure 4** Triad diagram for the L3 German *brechen* and its translation equivalents



Hall et al (2009) conclude that learners tend to assume that those words are similar, as it seems the forms of these words are similar but the use is not the same '*brechen*' is not a reflexive verb like 'break', although in the L1 is a reflexive verb like in the L3. It is important to comment that cognate vocabulary is tended to transfer and that affect the student's learning.

In another cross-sectional study Cenoz (2003) explains the role of the L3 learners by taking into account the 'Parasitic Model' and states that 'the L3 learners use elements from other languages they until they develop a third language system'. In a few words, multilingual learners take words from their previous language knowledge and transfer from one to another. That action helps students learn the new language system.

## **2.5 Individual variation in L3**

Recapitulating the last section, humans can learn languages without problem. That is the case of the acquisition of third language, as already have seemed. The brain has the power to achieve whatever level they want that is why one of the first characteristics that are going to be taken into account is the level of proficiency of students. This topic will explain the importance of having a high or down level between languages. Other topics that are going to be studied are: the linguistic awareness and the age. Those will explain how brain process and learn the new language (L3) in the following section.

### **2.5.1 Age**

An individual variation in the learning of any language is the age. There exists a common belief that is young learners learn without difficulty and more effective than others (Harmer, 2007). On the other side, older children (about 12 years) and adults can manipulate their cognitive abilities, which permit them to learn with ease (Harmer, 2007).

Some learners are good at pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and other skills. Others learners are not good at any skills. The author Cook (1997) states that the variation in language with age may have an inevitable biological effect of ageing. Odlin (1989) also declares that the inevitable process of aging makes the relation between language and age as well there is evidence which presents the relationship between child-adult difference and transfer that should be take in consideration. According to Cenoz (2001) shows a study which explores the acquisition of third language and the participants from grades 2, 6 and 9 with different background show that older children demonstrate more examples of language transfer because they have a high level of proficiency and young learners are not aware of the typological distance than older learners. As Cenoz's study demonstrates that the age plays an important role in L3 acquisition, and it is also an essential variation and/or factor for acquiring any language after their mother tongue.

### **2.5.2 Linguistic Awareness**

As can be seen before, age show different results in the acquisition of third language, but, the most important thing is that students have the possibility to achieve the L3 acquisition. It is assumed that age sometimes makes the acquisition of a language slow or fast. This is not the truth; the reality is that each person is able to develop the ability to learn. No matter the age, individuals are aware when they are learning. The purpose of awareness is to give the opportunity to explore the language as language (andrews, 1998). That means that learners have the ability to learn. The cognitive ability of learners divide nonverbal conceptual meanings from words in different language, that process is called

metalinguistics awareness (Gonzalez, 1999). Metalinguistic awareness goes more about expressing ideas or having a communication among people; the main purpose is the ability to think about languages (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Definitely, learners need the ability to separate one language to another.

*“Awareness is not limited to linguistic structures and semantics but also affects phonological, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic knowledge, and cross-linguistic influence can occur in any of these domains” (Murphy, 2005 p. 11).*

In other words, awareness and language transfer have a relationship. Mägiste (1984) (cited in Murphy, 2003) point out that L3 learners demonstrate examples of negative transfer when learners are active bilinguals. As Byalystok (1988) (cited in Gass & Selinker, 2008) declares that bilingual have a greater metalinguistic awareness than monolingual. Therefore, thinking about the Byalystok (1988) statement, it is easy to assume that trilingual learners are better than bilingual and monolingual because of their metalinguistic awareness.

### **2.5.3 Level of proficiency**

The last variation of this section is proficiency. Proficiency is looked as a goal and it is also called as a 'competence' or 'knowledge of the language' (Stern, 1991). Learners start from zero in the second language acquisition, but this beginning is not a completely zero because they have previous knowledge of their L1 (Stern, 1991). It is difficult to achieve the same knowledge in L2, L3 or more language, but it is not impossible. Proficiency is also considering in transfers of multilingualism field. Bardel (2010) (cited in Angelovska & Hahn, 2012) argues that L2 and L3 proficiency level influences on the activation of previous languages. That is, if the proficiency of the L3 is low, it activates the knowledge of the language with a low proficiency, but, in the case of high level of proficiency of L3, the L2 or the L1 will be activated in high level. Taylor (1975) (as cited in Odlin, 1989) argues that if learners have a low level of proficiency, it may cause the emergence of transfer. On the side, Barbel & Falk (2007) consider that people need to get a high level of proficiency in the L2 if they want to transfer syntactic structures from L2 into L3. As can be seen, the level of proficiency is important. It can cause the transfer between languages, depending of linguistics area the level should be high or low.

### **2.6 Language variation in L3**

In the previous section the variations that are involved in individual variation were mentioned. This section is going to explore the topics which are related to the language variation in L3 acquisition. The language variations help analyze the relationship between

languages, in this case of the relation between the L1, L2 and L3. Williams and Hammarberg's (1998) (cited in Angelovska & Hahn, 2012) establish that language typology, proficiency and recency and more others factors determine the activation of the production of the L3. This section will explain those topics and also cognate vocabulary and word order. These last topics will be taken into account to find more about the language variation in L3, specifically, in lexicon and syntax.

### **2.6.1 Language typology**

Typology means language distance. The work of typology is the types or classification of objects into types. That is, Language typology classifies languages according to their structural characteristics (Finegan, 2012). There are languages which have the same origin. Obviously, there are similarities between two languages. A clear example is the origin of English which is Germanic. So, English and German have more similarities than differences. According to Cenoz (2001) suggest that typology have an important role into the multilingual acquisition. It is also suggested that the relation between L3 and L2 is stronger than L3 and L1, particularly if the L2 and L3 are typologically related (the same origin or family). In fact, Ringbom & Jarvis (2009) observed that L2 has a greater influence on L3 production than L1, principally, in this area typologically and also in others factors such as proficiency and more others. Hence, with language typology learners can study the origin of any language, then make a comparison between them and take the good relations in order to learn easily.

### **2.6.2 The L2 status**

A factor that predicts transfer is called ‘a foreign language effect’ (Meisel 1983, as cited in Cenoz 2001) or L2 status (Hammarberg, 2001). According to Cenoz (2001), several studies have reported that learners tend to transfer more from the L2 rather than the mother tongue. Hammarberg (2001) suggest that L2 status factor has ‘a desire to suppress L1 as being ‘non-foreign’ and to rely rather on an orientation towards a prior L2 as a strategy to approach the L3’ (Hammarberg 2001: 36–37cited in Cenoz 2001). In other words, L1 language is not a foreign language and it cannot help in the acquisition of the L3, on the other side, the L2 and the L3 are foreign languages and they may complement one to another. In addition, L2 status is like a filter in L3 acquisition because it helps to block transfers from L1 (Bardel and Falk, 2007 as cited in Angelovska & Hahn, 2012) Furthermore, L2 status plays an important role in areas such as syntax and lexicon Bardel and Falk (2013). In consequence, the L2 status is essential in the L3 area because there are transfers that can affect the L3, however, L2 status can reduce the transfers from the L1 and benefit the acquisition of the L3.

### **2.6.3 Recency of use**

Recency of use is another factor that predicts transfers. The acquisition process may be affected by recency. It means “how recently a language was last used” (Angelis 2007, p.35). This factor has better results than L2 status. According to Dewaele’s (1998) study (cited in Pavlenko and Jarvis, 2008), learners of Dutch-speaking who had learned English

before French, they rely on Dutch than on English in the case of Frenchword coinages, whereas, learners that had learned English before French rely more on English than on Dutch. According to these findings, Pavlenko and Jarvis (2008:185) observed that “the language that was learned just prior to the target language is the most likely candidate for transfer”. Cenoz (2001) argues that learners tend to borrow from a language that they use in actively way than other languages they could know but do not use frequency. On the other side, Hammarberg (2001) mentioned that recency activates the L2 easily if speaker maintained and has used it recently, it is easy to access to it. Therefore, recency of use of any language contribute to transfer from one language to another, learners rely more on languages that they use recently to attempt to learn a new language.

## **2.7 Studies in the area of the acquisition of L3**

### **2.7.1 Cognate vocabulary transfer**

Cognates are words which come from the same ancestral root. Cognates do not share always the same meaning; they may have different meanings (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). There are two types of cognates: true and false. The first one share meaning, for example the word in English *circle* and Spanish *Círculo*, the second one do not share meaning (e.g., Eng. *embarrassed* and Sp. “*avergonzado (a)*”) clearly, false cognates cause problems to learners who try to learn a language because the acquisition process may be interrupted by them. These types of words trigger positive and negative transfer that have been recognized by cross-linguistic influence. Positive is related to true cognates and



Negative to false cognates. The role of cognates is also noticed in the organization of lexical area (Hall *et al*, 2009). For instance, lexical transfer exists because there is a significant “influence of word knowledge in one language on a person’s knowledge or use of words in another language” (Pavlenko *et al*, 2008:74). In the acquisition of third language cognates could help or affect the learning of vocabulary (lexicon) because if words are similar, learners can make a relation and learn more easier vocabulary, it works like strategy, but, if the words are false cognates, the knowledge of words on person is affected. Clearly, learning words is the sum importance because every word has a place in a sentence and words are part of any language.

### **2.7.2 Syntax transfer**

As it was mentioned before, sentences have words which work distinctly. The order of words is the sum importance for languages, with words in a correct manner the message has sense. Languages have structure rules, order between words that must be respected. As Yule (2006) states that the concentration is on the structure and the order of components within a sentence, the study of syntax in a language is presented. According to Lockwood (2002), the term “syntax” comes from Greek and it means “the study of arrangement”, but, for linguistics this term means the “study of arrangements in language”.

As it is noticed previously, learners make errors because they attempt to use the same word order like their NL into the L2, and in the case of multilingual people try to use the previous knowledge into the L3, and so on. This process is called syntax transfer.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

The main purpose is to analyze whether the level of proficiency in the L2 is the main factor that predicts the cross-linguistic transfer. This chapter provides specific description of the setting, the participants and the instruments used to carry out this research. A step-by-step description of the data collecting and important analysis procedures followed to develop this research is also presented. First of all, the design of this research will focus on the use of qualitative approach and the use of descriptive methodology, which involves collecting data in order to answer a questionnaire. As Brown (1995) says that through questionnaires can be obtained meaningful information on a large scale than many others instruments. Moreover, it will be used a composition to analyze deeply this research.

### **3.1 Subjects**

The study was carried out in the Faculty of languages (BUAP). Twenty native-speakers of Spanish aged between 20-27 years participated in the study: 17 females and 7 males. The participants had learned English as a L2 and decided to German as a third language because one of the requirements to graduate from their BA program is to obtain an A2 level in a foreign language. According to the Common European Framework, A2 level is a “basic user” in which students “can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). As well as, they can

communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Also, learners can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate basic need”.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, all the participants had different levels of proficiency in the L2 (from intermediate to advanced). With respect to the L3, their proficiency level was basic. None of the participants have been in an English country. The majority of the participants are studying science at BUAP. All of them take German courses at the CELE (Centro de Lenguas Extranjeras). It was selected this location because of the accessibility, willingness of the teachers and students to participated in this research.

### **3.2 Instrument**

As was mentioned before, data was collected by a set of 8 questions in a questionnaire that obtain some background information about the subjects, such as gender, age, level of proficiency in English, and the total of hours in which they take German and English language, their score in any proficiency test exam if they have taken it, and so on. Moreover, the questionnaire was made in English in order to prove if students really know English as a L2. That was the first part of this instrument; the second part was a composition in which subjects had to write a paragraph in German between 80-100 words by answering the question *what did you do yesterday?*

The first questionnaire version was designed and it was piloted in a group of 11 Spanish learners of German. Based on the results of this piloting, some questions were added and eliminated. In addition, the topic of the composition was changed and the number of the words increased from 60-80 words to 80-100 words because it did not show expected results. It was reviewed by the thesis director. The subjects did not use complicated structures to express their routine in German that is why it was changed the topic and the number of the words was increased. The final version of the composition has the topic “What did you do yesterday?” in which students explain their action using the “Perfekt” tense.

Then, once the instruction and questions were modified, the final version of the questionnaire was distributed to the subjects. The instrument was given to a group of German (level 5; basic) and their teacher allowed students to answer it during their class. Clearly, all the participants could answer it in that moment without using a German dictionary. They created their sentences in a paragraph. The teacher observed them. The final version of the instrument can be seen in Appendix One.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

The unit of analysis was the errors produced by the learners at the moment they wrote the composition. Data driven was used to analyze them. First, errors were detected and then the categories and subcategories were established. Some of the categories were based on the model proposed by Angelovska & Hahn (2012).

These categories are syntactic, lexical, morphological, punctuation and spelling, and the subcategories are the position of the verb, lexical invention, substitution of words, wrong preposition, the indefinite and definite articles, capital letters, and commas and periods. All are explained in Chapter IV. Linguistic contrastive analysis of the languages involved was needed in order to detect the errors of the L3. For this purpose, a native speaker of the L3 was consulted to account for the reliability and validity in the interpretations.

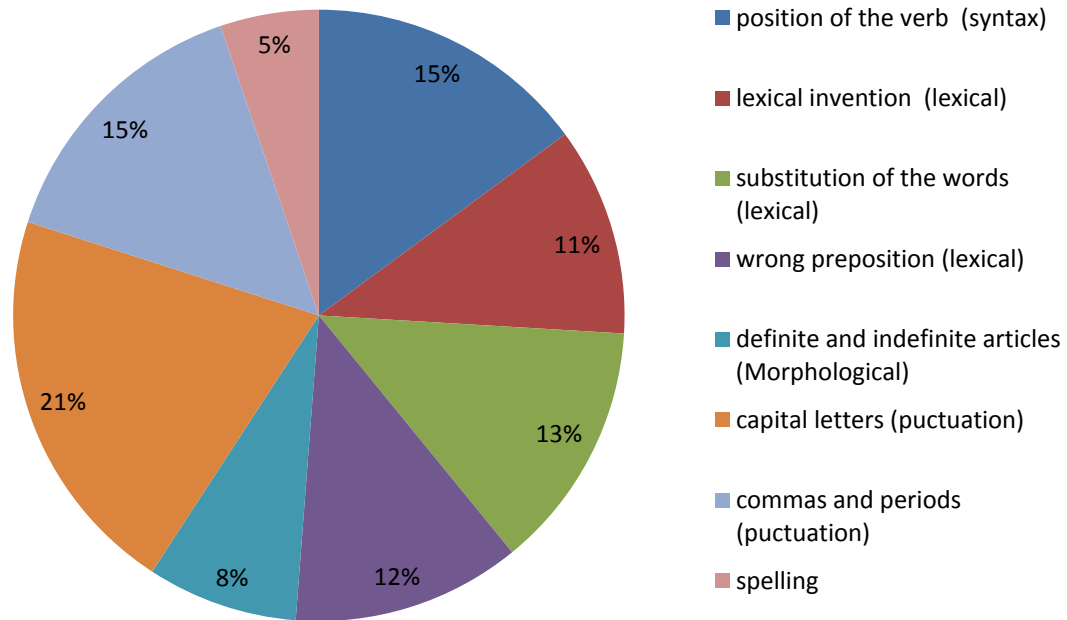
## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

In this chapter, the total results of the 20 participants and their errors committed in all the categories and subcategories will be explained. It was taken into account the errors committed in the composition by the students. The errors were classified and the percentages were estimated. Figure 1 below shows subcategories, categories and percentages.

**Table 1 Categories and subcategories of the errors.**

| <b>Categories</b>     | <b>Subcategories</b>                     | <b>Total of errors</b> |
|-----------------------|--|------------------------|
| <b>1. Syntax</b>      | 1.1 Position of the verb                 | 15                     |
| <b>2. Lexical</b>     | 2.1 Lexical invention                    | 12                     |
|                       | 2.2 Substitution of words                | 14                     |
|                       | 2.3 Wrong preposition                    | 12                     |
|                       | Subtotal                                 | 38                     |
| <b>3. Morphology</b>  | 3.1 The indefinite and definite articles | 7                      |
| <b>4. Punctuation</b> | 4.1 Capital letters                      | 23                     |
|                       | 4.2 Commas and periods                   | 15                     |
|                       | Subtotal                                 | 38                     |
| <b>5. Spelling</b>    | -----                                    | 6                      |

**FIGURE 4.1: Percentages of cross linguistic influence in a composition which was written by 20 students who have L2 (English) and L3 (German)**



#### 4.1 Syntax category

As it is seemed, languages have structure rules, order between words that should be respected and this category analyzes the area of syntax and how language transfer is presented. It has a subcategory that is called “position of the verb” in which the errors that students committed were identified when they are learning English and German at the same



time. It is important to mention that the structures in these languages are not similar. The following example will explain better the structure of both languages.

**(1) German:** Er hat eingeladen mir einen Kaffee.

**\*English:** He has invited me a coffee.

**Corrected:** Er hat mich auf einen Kaffee eingeladen.

**\*He invited me a coffee.** (This is what student tried to write)

As it is seemed, this participant knows the structure in English and wanted to use it in the same way in the German language. However, it is not possible because if the semi-modal “Haben” (German) is used, the verb must be at the end of the sentence and in past participle form.

## **4.2 Lexical category**

As reported by Miller (2003), words sometimes seems similar, but the meaning and the use are different. This lexical category examines the words that were used in a composition. It was divided into three subcategories: Lexical invention, substitution of words and wrong preposition, those are going to be shown with examples.

### 4.2.1 Lexical invention

Lexical invention is a subcategory which explores when a student use a false cognate due to his/her previous knowledge in languages acquired, the example 2 can show it. Also, this category helped to detect when students tried to invent words from a language and use them into another, the example 3 explains it.

(2) **German:** Ich bin 3 Uhr gefahren.

**English:** I drove 3 hours.

**Corrected:** Ich bin 3 Stunden gefahren.

In this case, this subject used a false cognate because he guessed that “Uhr” means “hours”. Actually Uhr is used to indicate time, but, it is not used in the same way. The correct word is “Stunden”.

(3) **German:** Gestern meinem Bruther habt etwas Büchen gekauft.

**English:** Yesterday my brother bought books.

**Corrected:** Gestern hat mein Bruder Bücher gekauft.

In this example, the participant knew that pronunciation of “th” is like the sound “d” in German. So, English is transferring into the German. This student is inventing words and committed errors in syntax.

#### 4.2.2 Substitution of words

This category explains when a student lends words of any other language that s/he knows and uses them into the third language to express his/her ideas.

**(4) German:** ...,weil meine Parents haben ein Restaurant hier in Puebla.

**English:** because my parents have a restaurant here in Puebla.

**Corrected:** ...,weil meine Eltern ein Restaurant in Puebla haben.

In this case, English is transferring into German because this learner has taken the word *parents* instead of *Eltern*. It is important to mention that the subject believed that *Parents* is a correct word in German because the learner wrote a capital letter and in German is important to use capital letter to refer nouns.

(5) **German:** Um 5 Uhr habe ich mit meiner Freunden basquet gespielt.

**Spanish:** A las 5 jugué con mis amigos básquet.

**Corrected:** Um 5 Uhr habe ich mit meinen Freunden Basketball gespielt.

In this case, Spanish was used into German that happened because the participant has a low level in L2 language; he is basic and has A1 in English. Negative transfer is occurring between L1 into the L3.

#### 4.2.3 Wrong preposition

Wrong preposition subcategory provides the following example.

(6) **German:** In der Universität habe ich gefrühstückt.

**English:** In the University I had my breakfast.

**Corrected:** An der Universität habe ich gefrühstückt.

Similarly, as the previous learners used a wrong word. As it is noticed, many structures and words are similar in English and German, but, there are some exceptions like this one. In fact, the preposition *in* exists in both languages as well as this preposition

expresses circumstances of the place in German and English, but, in this case when the word is *Universität* the correct preposition is automatically *an* because it is a rule in this language.

### **4.3 Morphology**

Morphology studies the smallest part of a word which helps to understand the ‘forms of words’ of the language (Matthews,1991). It was taken “Morphology” as a category and the indefinite and definite articles as a subcategory to investigate better this field.

#### **4.3.1 The indefinite and definite articles**

Articles in English are important because they are part of the language and give coherent information that speaker desires to transmit. There are two types of articles: The indefinite article and the definite article. The first one is *a* or *an* “When the head of nominal group is a singular count noun: *a* is used before a word beginning with a consonant sound, *an* before a vowel sound” (Close, 1975). The second kind of definite article is *the*, it can be used before a singular or plural nouns. Also, it is expected that the listener or reader is capable to identify the person or the thing which is being talked about. Furthermore, there is an absence of article when there are nouns in plural form that article is called *the zero article*. (Hewings, 1999). In contrast, the German definite articles (*der,das, die*) change

their form to agree with their noun in gender, number and case. Similarly, the German indefinite articles (ein, ein, eine) agree with the noun in gender and case; ein(e) that can also mean “one”, has no plural (Verlag, 2000).

(7) \***German:** Am Nachts lese ich ein Bücher.

**English:** At Nights I read books.

**Spanish:** En las noches leo unos libros.

\***Corrected:** Abends lese ich Bücher /ein Buch.

This example was analyzed in Spanish, English and German because the sentence has two types of plurals. The first one “Am Nachts” was used like in English “At nights”. However, the word was used incorrectly. This participant invented the word and added “s” (plural) to state her ideas. The correct word is “Abends” to refer “at nights”. To understand better the student’s idea, it was necessary to explore into Spanish (Mother tongue) in order to figure out the main reason this learner used “ein” (indefinite article) with “Bücher” (a plural word). In English, there are not words like this “a books” this is an error. On the other side, In Spanish it is possible to use indefinite plural articles with plurals nouns, for example “unos libros”

## 4.4 Punctuation

As other areas of linguistics are important for a language, punctuation is another crucial field both the teacher and the learner must take into account it, because this category can affect the writing skill. The subcategories of punctuation are: Capital letters and commas & periods.

### 4.4.1 Capital letters

As shown in the following example 8, negative transfer is presented in this subcategory with the use of the capital letters.

(8) **\*German:** Am Samstag war Ich in Orizaba. Dann habe Ich eine Memela gegessen.

**English:** On Saturday I was in Orizaba. Then I ate a Memela.

**\*Correct:** Am Samstag war ich in Orizaba. Dann habe ich eine Memela gegessen.

As it can be observed, the first person of the singular form “I” must be in capital letter in English but it is not applicable for the German language. The first letter of the nouns in German must be in capital letter, it does not matter if words are in the middle or at

the end of the sentences. For example: **B**asketball, **T**elefon, **P**icknick and so on. The rest of the words must be written in small letters. The last examples expose the negative transfer.

#### 4.4.2 Commas and periods

This subcategory is also important like the previous one because when students want to write a paragraph they must know how to separate ideas in order to express their ideas in a correct manner. Negative transfer also appears here in the below example.

(9) **German:** Schileßlich, bin ich um 11 Uhr ins Bett gegangen.

**English:** Finally, I went to my bed at 11:00.

In German it is not necessary to write a comma when students want to finish their text. This is a clear example of the negative transfer in this area.

#### 4.5. Spelling

This last category was found in students who are adding letters or eliminating words. For instance:

(10) **German:** Ich habe meine Hausaufgabe in Deutsch **and** Fanzösisch gemacht.



**English:** I did my homework in German and French.

**Corrected:** Ich habe meine Hausaufgabe in Deutsch und Französisch gemacht.

Doubtless, English is transferring into the German. The use of this connector is the same in both languages but it is written in wrong way.

**(11) German:** Deutch, learnt

**Corrected:** Deutsch, lernt (in second person of the singular form in German)

In “Deutch” word, the participant missed the letter “s” between “t and c” letters. In the case of the written word “learnt” in German, a student made an error because he added the letter “a” in it like in English. In the first example, the negative transfer appeared because of the pronunciation of the particular letters “sh”, “sch”. The learner used the first letters in place of second. The negative transfer is as well occurring in this last category.

## **CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS**

The main purpose of this study was to analyze the cross-linguistic influence and identify the negative transfer in students who have already acquired English as a L2 and who are learning German as a L3. Learners wrote a small composition in German language and a native speaker of German revised the twenty compositions. From these compositions the errors that were the result of negative transfer were selected to classify them and analyze their main causes. Errors that could not be identified as a result of the L2 or L1 were excluded from this research.

This chapter presents a summary of the results, the implications of the study, the limitations and some directions for further research are also provided.

### **5.1 Summary and discussion**

The results and its highlights will be presented below as they relate to the research questions posted in Chapter 1.

1. Is there cross-linguistic transfer from the L2 (English) to the L3 (German)?

First, English (L2) were most often transferred into German (L3). The findings show that this transfer can be observed, first in the punctuation and lexical areas. The second one was syntax; the third one was morphology, and finally spelling. The evidence clearly indicates that the punctuation and lexical could be even more easily transferred from L2 than L1 and it is also showed that L1 is activated in the acquisition of the L3. This insight is important, specifically as some studies did not find any impact of the L1 is transferred into L3.

Negative transfer does play big role in the third language acquisition process because its influences affects many language systems and the acquisition of the language. Learners will have problems if they continue using their knowledge in previous languages in order to understand the L3, when they do not have the same use. In this case, the L2 and L3 are typological related that is why likely the participants use the L3 like L2.

## 2. What are the possible causes of this cross-linguistic transfer?

There are three possible reasons of negative transfer from the L2 into the L3. The first reason may be level of proficiency. It was observed that learners with an advance level of proficiency in the L2 showed a few evidence of L2 negative transfers into L3. It seems that there is a correlation between L2 proficiency level and the L3. The second one is the recency of use; some of the participants use more English than German. Finally, the

language typology, English and German are Indo-European languages and they share similarities such as lexicon.

Undoubtedly, the negative transfer is present during the acquisition of any language. There are many other factors which must be considered to know what happens when learners make an error in L3 due to L2 or even L1.

## **5.2 Implications**

The research points out that some students actually transfer words, structures and more units of languages into another language due to factors which were mentioned before. Sometimes words are similar in two languages but sometimes they are not. Many teachers could probably get desperate with students who use L1 or L2 instead of L3 or vice versa. The results of this research could help teachers understand more about this kind of phenomenon and how to deal with multilingual learners. They could use this information to create a list of words that are similar in two or even three languages, so that students can make a comparison between languages. Moreover, they can focus on the words and structures that are similar in two languages and learn them faster and easier.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

The research intended to analyze the role of the L2 in the acquisition of L3 and the causes of negative transfer. However, given the methodology, the sample and variables controlled in this study, some limitations need to be outline. First of all, the proficiency level of the participants in the L2 (English) was not controlled. Many learners have not taken any proficiency exam; therefore, in this study, the participants had different language levels of English. Second the composition that they had to write was short (only 80 words). For that reason, it was difficult to find a big variety of errors. Finally, these results cannot be generalized because of the limited number of the participants and their backgrounds.

### **5.4 Direction for further research**

First of all, it would be necessary to include more participants in order to detect more types of negative transfer. Moreover, learners who are in more advanced levels of German can give us more insights about the correlation between language level in the L2 and language level of the L3. Also, it could be a good idea to apply a proficiency test before the composition to analyze deeply the level of proficiency factor or create other instruments to analyze the main factors which predicts negative transfer. The categories could be more added or modified in order to research in other linguistics areas such as pragmatics, phonology, and many others.

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## APPENDIX ONE

### Questionnaire

Age:

Gender:

1. How many hours do you take German classes a week?
2. How many hours do you take English classes a week?
3. In your routine, what is the language that you consider to use MORE?  
a) English                      b) German                      c) Spanish
4. Have you ever taken the TOEFL, Cambridge, or another proficiency test exam? If your answer is "YES". Please mention your score.
5. What is the English level you have?
6. If you are studying here at LEI program, please mention in which target language you are.
7. Have you ever been in an English speaking country?
8. How long have you been there?

Part #2:

Write a paragraph between (80-100 words) in German language about what you did yesterday.