

NON-FACILITATIVE TRANSFER EFFECTS OF THE FIRST (L1) AND SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) IN THIRD LANGUAGE (L3) ACQUISITION OF PRONOMINAL POSSESSORS, DIFFERENTIAL OBJECT MARKING, AND RESULTATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

CSILLA IBOLYA SÓLYOM

University of Debrecen, Doctoral School of Linguistics

solyom.csilla@arts.unideb.hu

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to test the hypotheses of several proposed L3 models of morphosyntactic transfer/crosslinguistic influence (CLI)¹ from a generative approach: the Scalpel Model (SM; Slabakova 2017), the Linguistic Proximity Model (LPM; Westergaard et al. 2017, 2020), the Typological Primacy Model (TPM; Rothman 2011, 2013, 2015), the L2 Status Factor hypothesis (L2SF; Bardel & Falk 2007), and the Cumulative Enhancement Model (CEM; Flynn et al. 2004) by investigating the source and nature of transfer in the case of pronominal possessors, differential object marking (DOM) and resultative constructions (RCs) at the initial stages of learning. According to the literature the source of transfer can be the learner's L1 or/and L2, and it can aid or hinder (being facilitative or non-facilitative) the process of learning the target L3. The language combination employed in the study is: L1 Hungarian, L2 Romanian, and L3 English. These languages are typologically distant, belonging to the Finno-Ugric, Romance, and Germanic language families.

The CEM puts emphasis on the cumulative process of language learning and predicts that the L1 and L2 are either facilitative or they remain inactive during L3 acquisition. The L2SF hypothesis highlights the prominence of the L2 serving as the source of transfer due to its recency and cognitive importance. The SM and

¹ Similar to other authors (e.g. De Angelis 2007, p. 19; Odlin 2003, p. 436), I make use of the terms transfer and CLI interchangeably.

LPM predict property-by-property positive or negative CLI from the (perceived) typologically closest language: L1 or L2. CLI across various grammatical properties from both languages would serve as evidence for the SM and LPM. In contrast, the TPM argues for wholesale initial positive or negative transfer, when the learner makes a copy of the typologically nearest language and uses it as a default starting point in learning the L3. The paper attempts to present evidence of non-facilitative transfer in support of the SM and LPM and contra the CEM. Proof of transfer from the L2 would also lend support for the L2SF. The interpretation of the results as demonstrating property-by-property CLI, as supported by the LPM, or wholesale transfer, as predicted by the TPM, is an ongoing matter of debate.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a linguistic context by introducing the target grammatical features in the three languages, referencing exemplary studies, and providing an understanding of the predictions of L3 models of transfer. The experimental investigation is the subject of Section 3, the results are presented in Section 4, and the paper concludes in Section 5.

2. LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

This section is divided into four subsections, providing the linguistic context for the three grammatical features that are the focus of this study: pronominal possessors (2.1), DOM (2.2), and RCs (2.3) in the three languages involved: Hungarian, Romanian, and English. Furthermore, I attempt to present some of the relevant previous research with regard to the target grammatical features of my study, followed by a short overview of the proposed models of L3 transfer (2.4).

2.1. PRONOMINAL POSSESSORS

The types of pronominal possessors under investigation in the present study exhibit differences in the three languages. The primary focus of the study will be on the possibility or impossibility of using the definite article with the third person singular possessive pronoun(s) *his/her*, as well as the distinctions in word order between Hungarian, Romanian, and English when expressing possession. This paper places emphasis on the caseless possessor preceded by the definite article in Hungarian, genitive-marked personal pronouns in Romanian, and agreeing possessive pronouns in English. I will now discuss on the aforementioned characteristics in each of the three languages, following with Table 1 which summarizes the most relevant traits of possessors, and finally, I will discuss some earlier research that served as the foundation for this study's design.

2.1.1. Hungarian

The definite article *a/az* ‘the’ always precedes the caseless possessor *ő* ‘his/her’, as illustrated in example (1) (see É. Kiss 2002: 158).

- (1) az ő könyve Hungarian
 the he/she book.POSS
 ‘his/her book’
 (É. Kiss 2002: 158, (14b))

The spelling out of the caseless possessor is not obligatory in Hungarian (see example (2) below). Nevertheless, it is preferred for use in the focus position and when expressing contrast.

- (2) a könyve Hungarian
 the book.POSS
 ‘his/her book’

The use of the definite article is obligatory in possessive contexts in Hungarian, and it precedes the possessive pronoun, as example (2) shows. Also, possessive nouns always have the possessive suffix *-(j)a/(j)e*, as pointed out by Dékány (2021).

2.1.2. Romanian

According to Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea (2013), Romanian uses genitive-marked forms of the personal pronoun for the third person, which are gender-congruent with the possessor (masculine or feminine head noun). Third-person possessors are marked with genitive case, as example (3) shows.

- (3) a. fata lui / ei / lor Romanian
 girl.F.DEF he.GEN / she.GEN / they.GEN
 ‘his girl’ / ‘her girl’ / ‘their girl’
 (Dobrovie-Sorin & Giurgea 2013: 347, (112a))
- b. fratele lui / ei / lor Romanian
 brother.M.DEF he.GEN / she.GEN / they.GEN
 ‘his brother’ / ‘her brother’ / ‘their brother’

Third-person pronouns are composed of an inflectional morpheme and a common invariable root that demands various forms, as demonstrated by examples (3a) and (3b). The feminine personal pronoun *ea* (she) has the root *-e*, but the masculine pronoun *el* (he) has the root *-l*, regardless of the gender of the head noun. Romanian employs *lor* (their) for both feminine and masculine nouns in the plural. Through different forms of this root, inflectional morphemes reflect number and gender (Dobrovie-Sorin & Giurgea 2013).

Another important factor here is the presence of the definite article in the form of a clitic attached to the noun: *-a* for the feminine noun in example (3a) and *-le* for the masculine in example (3b).² The use of the definite article with the third person possessors is obligatory in Romanian. Also, note that the possessive pronoun follows the noun, so there is a word order difference compared to English.

2.1.3. English

In English, gender is purely semantic because there are no syntactic rules that correspond directly to distinctions in gender. The third person singular possessive determiners for masculine and feminine correspond to the natural gender of the possessor (as presented by Imaz Agirre & Garcia Mayo 2018:207), showed in the examples (4a) and (4b).

- (4) a. He's talking to **his** mother.
b. She's talking to **her** mother.

(Imaz Agirre & García Mayo 2018:207-208)

In this study, possessive pronouns *his/her*, that indicate gender agreement with the possessor in the sentence, are the primary focus. It is important to note that in English, the possessive pronoun and the definite article cannot co-occur (e.g. **the his mother*). This is due to the fact that both of these prepositions serve as determiners in the sentence, and only one can be used at a time. Additionally, pronominals such as *her* have a D feature, which means that they are DPs (see Koenen & Zeijlstra 2017:102). Therefore, a major difference exists between the three languages involved in the study regarding the use of the definite article, as Hungarian and Romanian demand its use with the possessive structures, whereas English forbids it.

Table 1 shows the most important distinctions and similarities among the three languages, with regard to the aims of the present study in terms of possessive structures, the use of the definite article and the various word orders.

In a representative study, Imaz Agirre and Garcia Mayo (2018) examined transfer effects and proficiency in the acquisition of gender agreement in third person singular pronominal possessives *his/her* by L2 and L3 English learners. Two written tasks (a fill-in-the-gap task and a written description task) and two oral production tasks (an oral elicitation and a picture description) were completed by a group of Basque/Spanish speakers ($n = 117$) and a group of Spanish speakers ($n = 70$) who were organized into three proficiency levels. The data indicate that the type of errors evidenced in the L2 and L3 groups appears to be influenced by the previous linguistic knowledge and English proficiency level. In general, L3

² Dobrovie-Sorin & Giurgea (2013: 311) argue that synthetic genitives, such as pronominal possessors, are promptly preceded by either the suffixal definite article attached to the possessee or the possessive article *al*.

learners produced more errors than L2 learners, which is likely attributable to the influence of Basque. The data could be accounted for by the Scalpel Model (Slabakova 2017) if one perceives transfer as a property-by-property phenomenon that proved unfavorable in the case at hand. Regarding proficiency, both groups experience a substantial reduction in errors as proficiency rises, however, L3 learners appear to advance at a delayed pace.

Table 1

Possessive structure, definite article and word order in Hungarian, Romanian, and English

	Hungarian (L1)	Romanian (L2)	English (L3)
Possessive structure	Caseless possessor, represented by the third person singular pronoun i) az ő könyve the he/she book.POSS 'his/her book'	Genitive-marked forms of the third person singular pronoun ii) cartea book.F.DEF.SG lui / ei he.GEN / she.GEN 'his / her book'	Possessive pronouns iii) his/ her book
Definite article	Obligatory <i>a/az</i> (the) preceding the caseless possessor (see example (i) above)	Obligatory clitic as a suffix on the noun (as in example (ii))	Ungrammatical with possessive pronouns iv) *the his book
Word order	Definite article + caseless possessor + noun	Noun + definite article (clitic) + genitive-marked pronoun	Possessive pronoun + noun

Based on their findings, I anticipate that the trilingual learners in the current experiment will produce similar results. It is reasonable to assume that the learners would incorrectly accept ungrammatical sentences in English as a result of detrimental influence from their L1 Hungarian and/or L2 Romanian, as pronominal possessors are represented differently in all three languages that are involved in this study (for examples see subsection 3.2.3, Table 3).

2.2. DIFFERENTIAL OBJECT MARKING (DOM)

Bossong (1985) introduced the term differential object marking (DOM), which serves as a comprehensive term for the cross-linguistic strategies that grammars employ to process specific nominal items, like nouns or pronouns, in (in)direct object position. This grammatical feature is missing from Hungarian and English, but it is obligatory in Romanian. In the following part of this subsection I will briefly discuss about the structure and use of DOM in Romanian and discuss some representative previous studies on L2/L3 acquisition of DOM.

Hill & Mardale (2021) argue, that the strategies associated with DOM are subject to variation both within and across languages, and they can include the use of clitic pronouns, specific affixes and/or particles, and morphological case alternations. Furthermore, the authors claim that in Romanian, DOM can be expressed through the use of clitic pronouns, e.g. *lui* 'for', and dedicated particles,

e.g. *pe* ‘on/onto’. Clitic pronouns, used as differential marking strategy, are applied to indirect objects (see example (5b)), whereas *pe* marking is used for direct objects (example (5a)) (Hill & Mardale 2021). The present study focuses on the particle *pe*, which has the dual function of being a DOM-marker and a locative preposition in Romanian (as argued by Onea 2023).

There is some consensus in the literature about the limitations of using DOM in Romanian: it is obligatory to use DOM alongside personal pronouns and proper names, possible with modified definite animate NPs and indefinite animate NPs, and impossible with definite specific and indefinite inanimate NPs (see Farkas & von Heusinger 2003; von Heusinger & Onea 2008; von Heusinger & Chiriacescu 2009). The present study is interested in obligatory DOM with proper names, as example (5a) shows:

- (5) a. *Îl caut pe Ion.* Romanian
 CL.3SG look for.1SG DOM John
 ‘I am looking for John.’
 b. *I-am dat cartea lui Darius.*
 him.DAT-have.1given book.the DAT Darius
 ‘I gave Darius the book.’

(Hill & Mardale 2021: 1(1a))

Two important studies done by Giancaspro et al. (2015) and Cabrelli et al. (2020) focus specifically on L3 acquisition of DOM in L3 Brazilian Portuguese (BP) by Spanish/English bilinguals. These studies serve as starting points for the present research. Giancaspro et al. (2015) tested Spanish/English successive bilinguals ($n = 43$) and Spanish/English heritage speakers ($n = 20$). They used a grammaticality judgement task (GJT) in oral and written form. In the research questions they wanted to test some of the L3 acquisition models and find out whether complete transfer of DOM takes place in the initial stages of learning a new language in adulthood (in their case L3 BP). In both groups, they observed non-facilitative transfer from Spanish, which supports the Typological Proximity Model (TPM; Rothman 2010, 2011, 2013) by predicting that learners will transfer the most structurally/typologically similar language during the initial stages of L3 acquisition.

In order to evaluate the hypothesis that L2 transfer is more rapidly overcome than L1 transfer, Cabrelli et al. (2020) conducted an updated assessment of the work of Giancaspro et al. (2015) and performed a comparison between their groups and advanced L3 BP learners. Advanced L3 BP groups' data reveal that the L1 Spanish group exhibits patterns similar to those of both initial stage Spanish groups. On the other hand, the L2 Spanish group exhibits patterns with BP controls, indicating that non-facilitative transfer has been overcome by the L2 Spanish group, but not by the L1 Spanish group. They provided evidence that learners who transfer their L2 set the parameters of an L3 more quickly than learners who transfer their L1 in the case of non-facilitative transfer.

In order to return to the aims of the current investigation, it is necessary to pinpoint several key details. The studies that were previously mentioned examined two languages that were typologically similar (Spanish and BP) and one that was different (L2 English). In contrast, I am currently conducting research on three typologically distant languages that belong to a variety of language families (Finno-Ugric Hungarian, Neo-Latin/Romance Romanian, Germanic English). Consequently, the TPM might be unable to predict the outcomes in this instance, and I will endeavor to gain support from other acquisition models (e.g. Linguistic Proximity Model by Westergaard et al. 2017, and the Scalpel Model by Slabakova 2017). The language triad employed here incorporates DOM exclusively in Romanian, which is the L2 of the learners. A comparable scenario was observed in previous research, in which the learners' L1 or L2 (Spanish) contained DOM but their targeted L3 (BP) lacked it, resulting in non-facilitative transfer of DOM from Spanish in the initial stages of learning BP. Similarly, I expect to find nonfacilitative initial transfer of DOM from the learners' L2 Romanian in their L3 English by wrongly accepting ungrammatical sentences with artificial DOM in English (for examples see subsection 3.2.3, Table 3).

2.3. RESULTATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS (RCS)

Constructions that incorporate a resultative phrase are typically referred to as RCs (Broccias 2007). Levin (1993: 101) defines a resultative phrase as “an XP which describes the state achieved by the referent of the noun phrase it is predicated of as a result of the action named by the verb”. With regard to the focus of the study (specifically, resultative secondary predication), Hungarian and English employ similar RC strategies, whereas ³Romanian does not. Now I will present RC typology and use in all three languages and at the end of the subsection Table 2 will summarize the discussion. Furthermore, I will mention some relevant research on L2 acquisition of RCs.

2.3.1. Hungarian & English

Talmy's (1985, 1991, 2000) typology of event lexicalization strategies makes a distinction between satellite framed languages (such as English, German, Dutch, Icelandic, Finnish, Hungarian) and verb-framed languages (e.g. Romance, Japanese, Hebrew). According to Kardos & Szávó (2024), result states in English and Hungarian are represented by a satellite element that is outside the verb, such as a

³ Romanian researchers such as Baciú (2014) and Farkas (2009) argue that with some special exceptional cases, Romanian does not exhibit strong resultatives. According to Baciú (2014) it is possible that Romanian has weak resultatives, particularly those of the pseudo-resultative type. Farkas (2009) concludes that ‘Romanian RCs are based only on transitive and intransitive unaccusative matrix verbs’ in contrast with ‘Germanic languages which abound in RCs based on different types of verbs’ (Farkas 2009: 70).

verbal particle or a resultative secondary predicate. The present study places emphasis on the latter (specifically AP RCs), as example (6) shows:

(6) Jones hammered the metal flat.

(Rapoport 1999: 669, (38a))

The resultative secondary predicate *flat* in example (6) expresses result state morphologically disconnected from the verb. In contrast to weak satellite-framed languages, such as Latin (e.g. Romanian) and Slavic languages, which require the expression of results in syntactically autonomous elements that are also prefixed to the verb, these languages (e.g. English, Hungarian) are described as strong satellite-framed by Acedo-Matellán (2016). Whilst weak satellite-framed Latin does not permit complex RCs, strong satellite-framed English and Hungarian do (Kardos & Szávó 2024).

A crucial distinction between the two languages, though, is the word order: in Hungarian, the RC occurs before the verb, whereas in English, it comes after the verb and the direct object, as the final component of the sentence. Example (7) illustrates a Hungarian RC pattern:

(7) Kati laposra kalapált egy vaslemezt. Hungarian
 Kati flat.SUBJ hammer.PST.3SG an iron_plate.ACC
 ‘Kati hammered an iron plate flat.’

(Kardos & Szávó 2024: 108, (18a))

2.3.2. Romanian

Farkas (2009) contends that the availability or non-availability of AP RCs denoting change of state is a significant distinction between English and Romanian in terms of RCs. According to the literature, it has been widely maintained that Romance languages are lacking AP RCs or, as noted by Ionescu (1998): AP is not the favored category. Furthermore, Farkas (2009) argues that Romanian allows a restricted range of RCs and they are lexically and syntactically less productive than English. She illustrates that an AP RC as in the English example (8a), is not possible in Romanian with a resultative reading characteristic to English RCs (see example (8b)). Otherwise, (8b) is a grammatical sentence in Romanian with the following intended meaning: John hammered the flat metal.

(8) a. John hammered the metal flat.

b. *Ion a ciocănit fierul plat. Romanian
 John has hammer.PERF the metal.SG.M flat.SG.M
 ‘John hammered the metal flat.’

Farkas (2009: 62, (3b))

Table 2 summarizes the most relevant similarities and differences to the present study in the three languages involved.

Table 2

Type of event lexicalization strategy and resultative secondary predication in Hungarian, Romanian, and English

	Hungarian (L1)	Romanian (L2)	English (L3)
Type of event lexicalization strategy (Talmy's)	Satellite-framed language	Verb-framed language	Satellite-framed language
Resultative secondary predication	Possible	Impossible	Possible

Previous research on L2 acquisition of RCs (to the best of my knowledge, no L3 acquisition of RC studies have been published thus far) have been conducted with different L1s including Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese (Lee & Kim 2011; Park & Lakshmanan 2007; Slabakova 2002; Whong-Barr 2005; Yotsuya et al. 2014). The majority of these researchers used grammaticality judgment tasks (GJT) and offered evidence of the influence of L1 syntactic features on L2 learners' acquisition of English RCs (Park & Lakshmanan 2007; Slabakova 2002; Whong-Barr 2005; Yotsuya et al. 2014; among others). Numerous studies have reported significant L1 transfer effects on the L2 acquisition of RCs (Slabakova 2002; Whong-Barr 2005; Yotsuya et al. 2014).

Slabakova (2002) conducted a study on the L2 acquisition of Spanish RCs by L1-English and L1-French speakers. The prediction was that English speakers would mistakenly accept ungrammatical Spanish sentences, as French and Spanish do not permit resultatives that are equivalent to English resultatives. The hypothesis of L1 transfer is strongly supported by the results. The ungrammatical Spanish resultatives were correctly rejected by the French speakers at a rate of 80%, while the English speakers incorrectly accepted them at a rate of 69%. The comprehension of the L2 RCs was weak even among the advanced L1-English learner group, as Slabakova noted.

The study conducted by Whong-Barr (2005) focused on morphosyntactic aspects of L1 transfer in the L2 acquisition of RCs. Whong-Barr conducted a comparison of the acquisition of English RCs by L1-Korean and L1-Mandarin learners of English. She observed that Korean is the sole language among the three which uses a functional morpheme (*-key*) for its resultative formulation. Her hypothesis was that the acquisition of English RCs by Korean learners would be influenced by this language-specific morphological feature in the initial stages of learning. A tendency to reject grammatical English resultative sentences was observed in four out of the 14 Korean participants, whereas only one out of the 32 Chinese participants did so. This supported the hypothesis. The Full Transfer Full Access hypothesis (Schwartz & Sprouse 1996) was firmly supported by the study.

Similar to the predictions of Slabakova (2002) and Whong-Barr (2005), I posited that L3 learners of English would accept ungrammatical English RCs that replicate the word order of their L1 Hungarian RCs, thereby demonstrating significant non-facilitative transfer effects from their L1 during the initial stages of English learning.

Following the presentation of the three grammatical features of the three languages involved, in the next subsection I will introduce some pertinent L3 morphosyntactic transfer models that have been proposed by the literature.

2.4. L3 MORPHOSYNTACTIC TRANSFER/CLI MODELS

The L1 scenario (Na Ranong & Leung 2009; Hermas 2010, 2015) predicts that the L1 will be the preferred language for transfer. Na Ranong and Leung (2009) conducted research on null objects, analysing the performance of 20 L1-Thai L2-English L3-Chinese learners, 7 L1-English L2-Chinese, and 20 native controls. An offline interpretation task tested learners' null object knowledge. Results show L3 learners interpreted null objects similarly in L1 and L2. The L2 and L3 groups' replies are not significantly different. L1 may facilitate the L3 group's performance, according to individual analyses. In L3/Ln acquisition, L1 appears to be preferred for morphosyntactic transfer.

In contrast to the L1 scenario, L2SF (Bardel & Falk 2007; Falk & Bardel 2011) hypothesis states that a second language is chosen for transfer due to its recency and psychological and cognitive importance. Falk & Bardel (2011) conducted research on object placement among English-French bilinguals learning L3-German. Their study used mirror-image groups (22 L1-English L2-French and 22 L1-French-L2 English learners learning L3-German). The researchers created an accuracy-coded grammaticality judgement task (GJT) and compared the two groups' results. The statistics show that English-speaking L2 speakers prefer post-verbal object pronouns, while French-speaking speakers prefer preverbal ones. Bardel and Falk conclude that the L2 is the preferred source of transfer regardless of language combination.

The CEM (Flynn et al. 2004) changes formal language procedures for L3/Ln acquisition, emphasizing prior linguistic influence. Since 'further language learning has a cumulative effect' in the CEM, prior grammatical knowledge distinguishes L2 from L3 acquisition (Rothman et al. 2019:88). CEM proponents claim L3 syntactic transfer from L1 or L2. The CEM states that language learning is sequential and incremental, and past language knowledge might be helpful or unimportant. Proof of non-facilitative transfer would contradict the model. Flynn, Foley, & Vinnitskaya (2004) looked at 33 L1-Kazakh L2-Russian L3 English learners' relative clauses. Without a mirror-image control group, they compare this group to L2-Japanese and L2-Spanish. Kazakh is head-final, Russian and English head-initial. Both groups (irrespective of age and skill) produced target-like restrictive relative clauses in English. These findings demonstrate transfer selection in adult sequential multilingualism if it is fully facilitative.

The TPM (Rothman 2011, 2013, 2015) predicts wholesale initial transfer from the language (L1 or L2) that is typologically nearest. The model allows for both positive and negative transfer. The process of parsing the new input L3 grammar may take a longer or shorter period of time, depending on the similarities between the languages. Rothman and Cabrelli Amaro (2010) study four groups' L2 and L3 French and Italian acquisition: L1-English L2-French, Italian, Spanish L3-Italian, L1-English, L2-Spanish, L3 French, and English natives as controls. They examine grammatical features linked to null-subject licensing. A context/sentence matching task for the Overt Pronoun Constraint (OPC) and a GJT with correction for Null Subject Parameter characteristics are designed by the authors. OPC results showed that both L2 groups behave similarly and transfer L1-English. L2-Spanish is the transferred language for learning Italian and French. L3 groups respond similarly but differently from L2 groups. The GJT and OPC tasks show that L2 learners transfer English and reject null subjects in Italian, while L3 learners transfer Spanish. The authors found non-facilitative transfer in L3-French, contradicting the CEM. The authors found typological proximity between Spanish, French, and Italian to explain the results, hence the TPM was created.

The LPM (Westergaard et al. 2017) argues for property-by-property acquisition and allows input from one or both languages previously acquired, whether facilitative or non-facilitative. CLI occurs when a linguistic feature of a language being taught is structurally similar to features of languages that have been previously acquired. In contrast to the TPM, LPM excludes the complete transfer of one of the previously acquired grammars during the initial phases of L3 acquisition. It concurs with the CEM's assertion that transfer can and does occur at times from L1 and/or L2 and that language acquisition is cumulative. Differently from the CEM, the LPM allows for negative transfer when learners misanalyse the L3 input and they consider it similar to their L1 or L2 in the initial stages of learning. Westergaard et al. (2017) test the LPM's predictions by examining Norwegian-Russian bilinguals who learn L3 English to determine the origin of transfer/CLI in two word order scenarios: verb-second (V2) in Norwegian and subject-auxiliary inversion in English. The results of the GJT show that bilinguals perform better at rating sentences with V2 condition than monolinguals learning L2 English, due to possible Russian effect. However, in subject-auxiliary inversion condition, perform equally well, contra the hypotheses. The fact that they perceive influence from both languages in L3 English supports a structural similarity-based property-by-property model of L3 acquisition.

The SM (Slabakova 2017), similarly to the LPM, argues for property-by-property (contra the TPM) positive and negative transfer from the L1 and/or L2. While Slabakova (2017) puts emphasis on the learner's capacity of making scalpel-like, sharp distinctions between language properties, Westergaard et al. (2017) and Westergaard (2020) highlight the process of co-activation of all known languages

in the learner's mind when acquiring an L3/Ln. According to the SM, language interactions might be detrimental if, for instance, a grammatical feature is insufficiently frequent in the target language input. Clements & Domínguez (2018) examined the SM's predictions for L3-Chinese acquisition in null (NS) and overt subjects (OS). There were two groups: 15 L1-English L2-Spanish L3-Chinese, 10 L1-English L2-French/German L3-Chinese learners and 20 L1-Chinese and 20 L1-Spanish native speakers as controls. The authors created a written production task (WPT) and a pronoun interpretation task (PIT) to assess L3-Chinese learners' use and understanding of NS and OS. Their findings confirm the SM's (and LPM's) assumption that the L2-Spanish group transferred from Spanish to NS and from L1 English to OS pointing to property-by-property transfer/CLI from various sources.

Upon getting through the brief overview of the transfer models, the reader will be provided with a comprehensive account of the experimental study that was conducted to evaluate the predictions of the aforementioned models. The subsections of section 3 give insight into the research question and hypotheses (3.1), methodology (3.2), participants (3.2.1), procedure (3.2.2), and test instruments (3.2.3).

3. THE EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

3.1. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

RQ: How does transfer from L1 Hungarian and L2 Romanian impact the acquisition of pronominal possessors, DOM and RCs in L3 English in the early stages of learning?

H1: Pronominal possessors are anticipated to transfer non-facilitatively in accordance with the SM (Slabakova 2017) and LPM (Westergaard et al. 2017, Westergaard 2020). Previous research on pronominal possessors provide evidence for non-facilitative transfer (see Imaz Agirre & Garcia Mayo 2018).

H2: DOM is predicted to transfer non-facilitatively from the learners' L2 Romanian. This grammatical feature is missing from the learners' L1 Hungarian and L3 English, whereas in their L2 is obligatory. Previous research on DOM found evidence for non-facilitative transfer in L3 Brazilian Portuguese from learners' L1/L2 Spanish (see Giancaspro et al. 2015; Cabrelli et al. 2020).

H3: RCs are expected to transfer non-facilitatively from the learners' L1 Hungarian. Their L2 Romanian does not allow AP RCs in the instances used in the test. Previous research by Slabakova (2002) and Whong-Barr (2005), among others, found evidence for detrimental transfer in L2 acquisition of RCs.

3.2. METHODOLOGY

3.2.1. Participants

Learner participants were chosen from a school in Crasna town, Transylvania, Romania. Inhabitants of the town are predominantly Hungarian, with Romanian serving as their L2, as Romanian is the official language of the country. L3 English is introduced to students in the preparatory grade, which is the year preceding the first grade, at the age of six. They attend one English class per week until they reach the third grade, and they attend two English classes per week thereafter. Fifth graders continue to have two English classes per week. L2 Romanian is also introduced to learners in the preparatory grade, with three classes per week, and fifth-grade learners take four Romanian classes per week. Consequently, these trilingual learners are generally more proficient in their L2 than in their L3.

There were a total of 55 participants involved in the experiment: 39 fifth-grade 11-12 years old learners from two classes, 12 native adult English speakers from the UK, 1 native Romanian speaker from Romania, 4 native Hungarian speakers from Hungary and Romania. The selection of the learners took place according to the following criteria: learning Romanian as an L2 and having B1/B2 proficiency level, learning English as an L3 and being at the initial stages of A2 proficiency level, no knowledge of other languages beside these three languages (Hungarian, Romanian, English). After the selection based on the biographical questionnaire and the Romanian and English placement tests 24 learners remained and 15 learners were eliminated before completing the English experimental test. Also, when considering the results, the number of learner participants varied across the different target grammatical features in the test, because additional Romanian post-tests were administered in order to check their knowledge of particular structures (see the details in subsections 3.2.3 and 4.2) and learners who failed were eliminated. The remaining 24 learners formed the experimental group and the 12 native speakers of English formed the control group. The native speakers of all three languages also helped validating and evaluating the test sentences before they were given to the experimental learner group.

3.2.2. Procedure

Prior to the assessment, the learners' parents provided written consent for their children to participate. A biographical questionnaire was anonymously completed by the participants. In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the individuals' language backgrounds, the biographical questionnaire included questions such as the duration of their English and Romanian language studies, the age and location at which they began their studies, and their perceptions of their proficiency levels (see Appendix 1). For Romanian, an online placement test was implemented (<https://www.17-minute-languages.com/en/learn-romanian/placement-test/>). Only those learners who demonstrated B2 level of proficiency in Romanian were

permitted to participate. For English, the learners completed the Cambridge English online placement test for young learners (Test your English – Young Learners (cambridgeenglish.org)). Learners that were at A2 proficiency level were accepted for the experiment.

After the learners were selected, they were sent two links: one to the acceptability judgement task (AJT) in English and the other to the Romanian AJT, which focused on the Romanian grammatical structures (pronominal possessors and DOM). A Google-form was used for creating each task. The learners (belonging to separate classes) were gathered separately on different occasions in the school's computer laboratory and completed both tasks. Tasks were completed by control participants online, at their homes. A €2 gift card was distributed to each learner participant, regardless of their elimination status, to be redeemed at the coffee store located adjacent to the school. The testing took place in two subsequent weeks in April, 2024.

3.2.3. Test instruments

Using the steps described by Ionin (2012) for AJT design, I constructed two tasks via Google Form:

i) English AJT with Acceptable/Unacceptable answers, using 4 experimental conditions with grammatical and ungrammatical minimal sentence pairs (see Table 3). There was a total of 50 test sentences comprised of 32 target sentences, and 18 filler sentences (grammatical and ungrammatical pairs). In order to prevent learners from copying one another, the sentences were presented randomized in the Google Form. Table 3 presents the experimental conditions and grammatical and ungrammatical sentence pairs used in the test.

Table 3

Experimental conditions for the English AJT

	Conditions	Examples
1	Definite Article+Pronominal Possessor (Romanian word order)	Sue is having lunch and she asks her dad for some bread. *Sue is having lunch and she asks the dad her for some bread.
2	Definite Article+Pronominal Possessor (Hungarian word order)	Dad drives mom's car because his car is in the garage. *Dad drives mom's car because the his car is in the garage.
3	DOM (as in Romanian)	Paul visits Sam every Sunday. *Paul visits to Sam every Sunday.
4	RCs (as in Hungarian)	Grandma wipes the dirty table clean . *Grandma clean wipes the dirty table.

ii) Romanian AJT with pronominal possessor and DOM conditions. There were 16 sentences used, without fillers. The sentences were randomized. Table 4 shows the experimental conditions and examples.

Table 4

Experimental conditions for the Romanian AJT

	Conditions	Examples
1	Definite Article+Pronominal Possessor (Romanian word order)	Sarah folosește stiloul lui Ben pentru că stiloul ei este acasă. Sarah uses pen.DEF he.GEN Ben because pen.DEF she.GEN is home Romanian ‘Sarah uses Ben’s pen because her pen is at home.’
2	DOM (as in Romanian)	Ion o ajută pe mama lui când aceasta pune masa. John CL helps DOM mother.DEF he.GEN when this.F sets table.DEF Romanian ‘John helps his mother when she sets the table.’

Two native speakers of English validated the (un)grammaticality of the test items, prior to the testing. A group of different English native speakers from the UK (London region; N = 12) completed the experimental English test and they performed at ceiling. Additionally, I requested feedback of native Romanian and Hungarian speakers regarding potential translations of the target sentences to ensure that the test sentences accurately reflect their respective Hungarian and Romanian counterparts.

The results with regard to each experimental condition are presented in the following order in section 4: Pronominal possessors (4.1.): Hungarian pattern (4.1.1.), Romanian pattern (4.1.2.); DOM (4.2.); RCs (4.3.). In order to evaluate the results, descriptive statistics and chi-square statistical tests were carried out. In the subsequent subsections, I interpret the chi-square statistic and provide charts to depict the results in relation to the research question and the predictions.

4. RESULTS

4.1. PRONOMINAL POSSESSORS

The experimental condition of pronominal possessors was divided into two parts to account for possible transfer from both L1 Hungarian, and L2 Romanian. Ungrammatical sentences were constructed to replicate the word order of Hungarian and Romanian, respectively. It is important to mention that the total number of participants in this condition was 16 out of 24, as 8 learners were eliminated based on the selection criteria (they failed to demonstrate knowledge of pronominal possessors in L2 Romanian in the post-test). As you may recall, pronominal possessors were anticipated to transfer non-facilitatively from the L1 or/and the L2 as a result of structural differences and word order.

4.1.1. Hungarian pattern

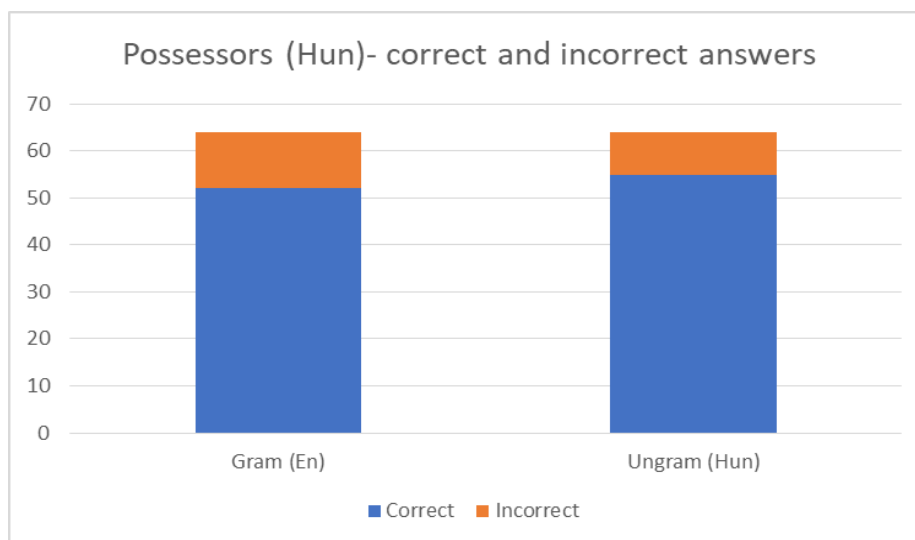


Chart 1. Proportions of correct and incorrect answers given to grammatical and ungrammatical sentences with pronominal possessors – Hungarian pattern

Chart 1 shows that learners rated quite accurately in the case of pronominal possessors with Hungarian word order. In the case of the grammatical test sentences there were 52/64 correct answers, and 12 incorrect answers, while there were 55/64 correct answers, and 9 incorrect answers in the case of ungrammatical test sentences. In terms of percentages, 83.5% of the responses were correct, while 16.5% were incorrect.

It can be observed that learners performed slightly better at rating ungrammatical sentences. The data was submitted to chi-square statistical test, and it did not show statistically significant difference between correct and incorrect answers (chi-square statistic: 0.5, p-value: .4). The acceptance of some ungrammatical sentences may indicate non-facilitative transfer from the learners' L1 Hungarian. When comparing the groups of learners and natives, the chi-square test showed statistically significant difference between the correct and incorrect answers (chi-square statistic: 6.5, p-value: .01).

4.1.2. Romanian pattern

Chart 2 indicates that learners were more successful in rating grammatical sentences than ungrammatical sentences with Romanian word order. The correct responses were 50/64, while 14 were incorrect in the case of grammatical test sentences. With regard to ungrammatical test sentences, there were 45/64 correct

answers, and 19 incorrect answers. This suggests that the letter was more challenging for them. In total 74.2% of the answers were correct and 25.8% were incorrect.

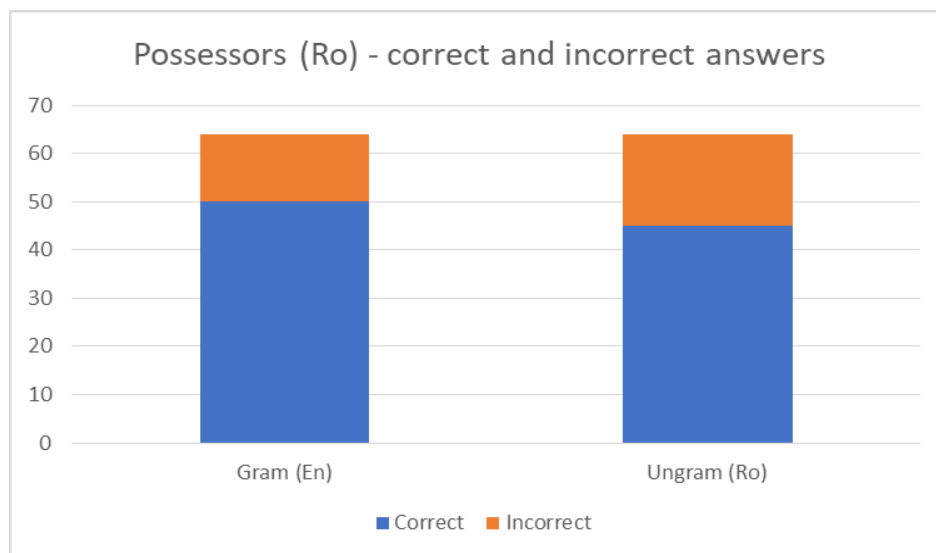


Chart 2. Proportions of correct and incorrect answers given to grammatical and ungrammatical sentences with pronominal possessors – Romanian pattern

In the case of pronominal possessors with Romanian word order in the ungrammatical sentences the learners accepted more grammatical sentences, however the chi-square test did not show statistically significant difference between correct and incorrect answers (chi-square statistic: 1.02, p-value: .3). Acceptance of some ungrammatical sentences may indicate non-facilitative transfer from the learners' L2 Romanian. As expected, the chi-square test showed statistically significant difference between the correct and incorrect answers of the learner and native group (chi-square statistic: 12.5, p-value: .00003) in the case of possessor sentences with Romanian word order (in ungrammatical sentences).

However, when I compared the correct and incorrect answers given to the ungrammatical Hungarian and Romanian word-ordered sentences the chi-square test showed statistically significant difference (chi-square statistic: 4.5, p-value: .03). This result may indicate that non-facilitative transfer from the learners' L2 Romanian has stronger influence than the learners' L1 in the case of pronominal possessors. The data indicate that the preferred source of transfer is the learners' L2 Romanian in the case of pronominal possessors. The results also show transfer effects in smaller amounts from the learners L1. Thus, the result seems to be in line with the SM and LPM which predict property-by-property non-facilitative and facilitative transfer from the L1 and/or L2 and the hypothesis of the study with regard to this condition was confirmed.

4.2. DOM

In the case of DOM an additional Romanian AJT was administered to the learners after they completed the experimental English test in order to make sure that they knew the target grammatical feature in Romanian. Following the Romanian test, 9 learners were eliminated and their results were not taken into account for the statistical analyses, so the total number of participants was 15 learners. Recall that DOM is only present (and obligatory) in the learners' L2 Romanian and it is hypothesized to transfer non-facilitatively into the learners' L3 English. In order to represent DOM in English, I used *to* as a rough translation of the Romanian *pe* (see example test sentences in Table 3, Section 3) in the ungrammatical test sentences to examine the learners' grammatical sensitivity to this possibly transferred structure.

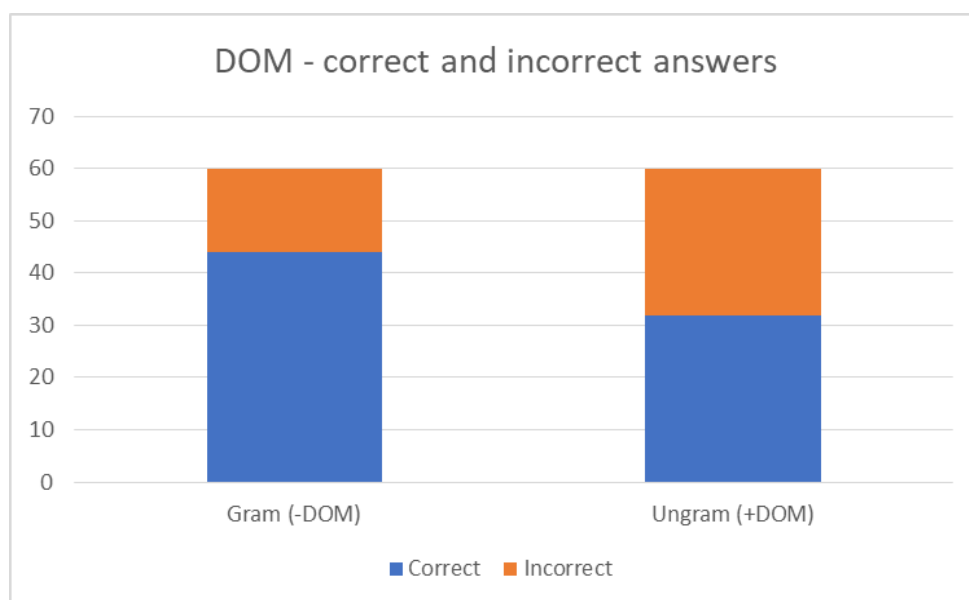


Chart 3. Proportions of correct and incorrect answers in DOM-related test sentences

Chart 3 shows that there were 44/60 correct answers and 16 incorrect answers in the case of grammatical sentences, 32/60 correct answers and 28 incorrect answers in the case of ungrammatical test sentences. The learners were more accurate at rating grammatical sentences without DOM. However, they failed to reject ungrammatical sentences in the same degree. In terms of percentages 63.3% of the answers were correct and 36.7% were incorrect.

Comparing the learners' correct and incorrect answers, the chi-square test showed statistically significant differences (chi-square statistic: 5.1, p-value: .02). The number of incorrect answers may indicate influence from the learners' L2

Romanian, where this structure is obligatory in the target sentences. The chi-square test showed statistically significant difference between the correct and incorrect answers of the learner and native group (chi-square statistic: 41.04, p-value: <.00001).

The data indicate the possibility of L2 Romanian transfer. This confirms the hypothesis and indicates non-facilitative transfer effects from the learners' L2 Romanian, where the use of DOM structures is obligatory in the test sentences. The results seem to support the SM and LPM by showing evidence of property-by-property non-facilitative transfer from the learners' L2, and contradict the CEM (with evidence of negative transfer) and the TPM (with evidence against wholesale transfer). Results may also give support to the L2SF hypothesis which claims an L2 to be the preferred source of transfer.

4.3. RCS

For the condition of RCs the total number of learner participants was 24. RCs were expected to transfer according to the L1 Hungarian, which is similar to the L3 English with word order differences. The L2 Romanian does not allow resultative constructions in the instances used in the test. Non-facilitation from the L1 would be in line with the SM and LPM with learners choosing the source they consider most helpful for acquiring their L3 English.

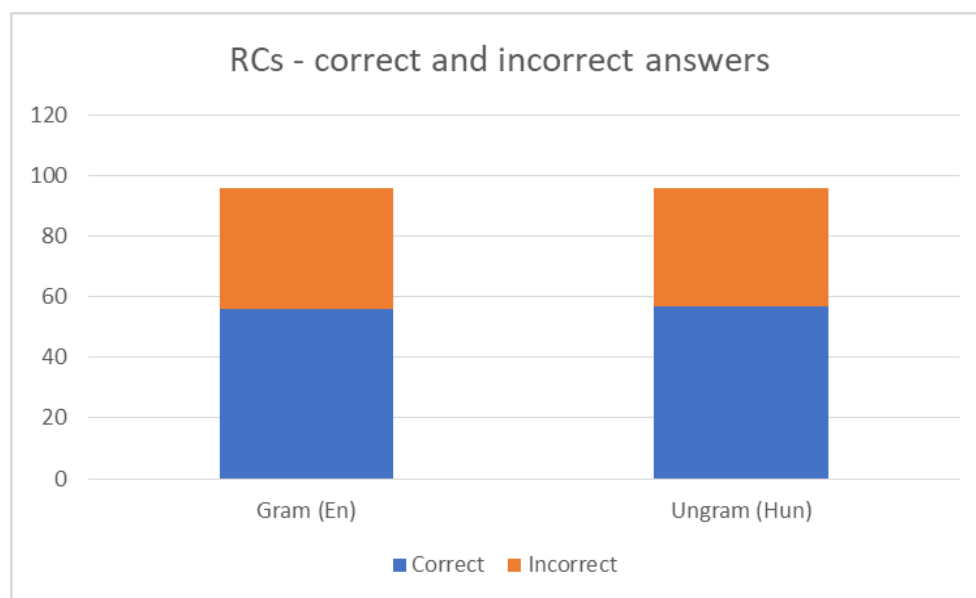


Chart 4. Proportions of correct and incorrect answers in RC-related test sentences

Chart 4 shows the correct and incorrect answers of the learners: 56/96 correct answers, and 40 incorrect answers in the case of grammatical sentences, whereas 57/96 correct and 39 incorrect answers in the case of ungrammatical sentences. In percentages 58.8% of the learners' total responses were correct, while 41.2% were incorrect.

The chi-square test showed no statistically significant difference within the learner group (chi-square statistic: 0.02, p-value: .88). The learners were highly inaccurate in rating both grammatical and ungrammatical sentences to the point of guessing. The chi-square test showed statistically significant difference between the correct and incorrect answers of the learner and native group (chi-square statistic: 32.68, p-value: < 0.00001) in the case of resultative structures. The results may indicate non-facilitative transfer from the learners' L1 Hungarian, giving support to the SM and LPM by providing evidence of property-by-property transfer from various sources (L1 and L2), depending on structural similarity between the languages.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the experimental study was to test some of the L3 models of morphosyntactic transfer/CLI. The hypotheses predicted non-facilitative transfer from both or either of the L1 and L2. The predictions were borne out through the results: Pronominal possessors are primarily transferred non-facilitatively from the L2, although transfer from the L1 is also observed. These can be interpreted as compatible results with the predictions of the SM, LPM, and TPM by showing evidence of non-facilitative transfer from both or either of the L1 or L2 due to perceived structural similarity between the languages (e.g. L2 Romanian and L3 English are similar in featuring natural gender in the case of pronominal possessors *his/her*). The results can also give support to the L2SF, because the preferred source of transfer is the L2. The CEM is contradicted by evidence of non-facilitation; however, the data corroborated the model's prediction regarding cumulative language acquisition.

Negative transfer of DOM solely from the L2 (the only possible source) is also compatible with several models: SM, LPM, TPM in the sense of predicted non-facilitation of wrongly perceived similarity/proximity between the L2 and L3 in the initial stages. The strongest negative transfer was attested in the case of RCs (41.2% of incorrect answers) from the L1. Although the L1 Hungarian and L3 English have structural similarities in the case of RCs used in the test sentences, there is a word order difference that the learners failed to identify. This is normal however due to the low proficiency in the L3. Also, RCs are less frequently used in

conversations, and never explicitly thought in schools. Similarly to the first two conditions, data with regard to RCs is compatible with the SM, LPM, and TPM (with non-facilitation due to perceived similarity from the L1 and/or L2) and contra the CEM and L2SF. In addition, if the entirety of the data is considered, the property-by-property transfer prediction of the LPM and SM is strongly supported with evidence of transfer across various properties from different sources (L1, L2). By providing insight into learners' comprehension and processing of specific grammatical features during the early stages of learning, the novel combination of languages and the analyses of these grammatical features provide a significant contribution to the field of linguistics, specifically in the field of L3 acquisition and language teaching in general.

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**NON-FACILITATIVE TRANSFER EFFECTS OF THE FIRST (L1)
AND SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) IN THIRD LANGUAGE (L3) ACQUISITION
OF PRONOMINAL POSSESSORS, DIFFERENTIAL OBJECT MARKING,
AND RESULTATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS**

Abstract

This paper's objective is to evaluate the hypotheses of some L3 models of morphosyntactic transfer/crosslinguistic influence (CLI) using a generative approach. An experiment was carried out with trilingual child learners (L1 Hungarian L2 Romanian L3 English) to investigate the nature of transfer (positive or negative) and its possible source (L1 or/and L2). An acceptability judgement task (AJT) was used with 3 target conditions: pronominal possessors, differential object marking, and resultative constructions. Results confirm the predictions with evidence of non-facilitative transfer from both the L1 and L2 for the target grammatical properties. The novel combination of languages and the analyses of these grammatical features make a substantial contribution to the linguistic field of L3 acquisition and language teaching in general by providing insight into the comprehension and processing of specific grammatical features during the initial stages of learning.

Rezumat

Obiectivul acestei lucrări este de a evalua ipotezele unor modele L3 de transfer morfosintactic/influență interlingvistică (CLI) folosind o abordare generativă. A fost efectuat un experiment cu copii trilingvi (L1 maghiară, L2 română, L3 engleză) pentru a investiga natura transferului (pozitiv sau negativ) și posibila sursă a acestuia (L1 sau/și L2). O sarcină de judecată de acceptabilitate (AJT) a fost utilizată cu 3 condiții țintă: posesori pronominali, marcarea diferențială a obiectelor și construcții rezultative. Rezultatele confirmă predicțiile cu dovezi ale transferului non-facilitativ atât din L1, cât și din L2 pentru proprietățile gramaticale țintă. Combinația inedită de limbi și analizele acestor caracteristici gramaticale aduc o contribuție substanțială la domeniul lingvistic al învățării limbii a treia și al predării limbilor străine în general, oferind o perspectivă asupra înțelegerii și procesării caracteristicilor gramaticale specifice în etapele inițiale ale învățării.