The Study of Learners' Educational Level and Their Knowledge of True Cognate Words in Iran

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Abstract—**Our purpose of the study was to determine the learners' educational level and their knowledge of true cognate words. 385 had been selected from 3,789 statistical population participated in 2014–2015 at three levels of associate, bachelor, and master of Islamic Azad University as well as teachers of English in English educational institutions in Zanjan (Iran). The participants' age was between from 18 to 52. The materials were 45 words of true cognate words from 500 words by doing CVR (content validity ratio) and CVI (content validity index) (Lawshe's table with the index of 88% and 82% respectively). ANOVA (Analysis of variance) was used for studying the effect of educational level on the rate of awareness. The results showed there is no significant difference between the awareness of Associate diploma (A.D.), Bachelor of art (B.A.), and Master of art (M.A.) levels, but there is a significant difference between the level of awareness of teachers group and the other groups in true cognate words. Our result showed that all of them were weak in recognizing true cognate words. It also suggested the mean of true cognates recognized by the students based on educational level had increased trend.**

Index Terms—**educational level, knowledge, second language vocabulary acquisition, true cognate words**

I. INTRODUCTION

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the role of learners' educational level and their knowledge of true cognate words. Today's increasing globalization, where people need and use bilingual languages, requires the researchers to understand the importance of bilingualism. There has been a growing interest in research on bilingualism or acquisition of a second or additional language in the last few years (Basnight-Brown & Altarriba, 2007; Bassetti & Cook, 2011; Bultena, Dijkstra, & Van Hell, 2014; Casaponsa, Antón, Pérez, & Duñabeitia, 2015; Gholami, Alavinia, & Izadpanah, 2015. Linck, Hoshino, & Kroll, 2008; Roberts, Davies, & Jupp, 2014; Szubko- Sitarek, 2015).

In this paper, the relationship between EFL learners' educational level (association degree, bachelor, and master of art students) and their knowledge of true cognate words between Persian and English have been compared.

Different world languages have a great deal of contact with each other and have had different impacts on each other. When learning a second language, a student can benefit from knowledge of his/her first language. Cognates are words in different languages which have similar spelling and meaning. These words which have similar spelling and meaning can accelerate vocabulary acquisition and also facilitate the reading comprehension task. The similarity is usually due to either historical reasons (e.g., the Persian word /lab/and its English translation *lip*) or borrowing from one language to another (e.g., the Persian word /keyk/and its English translation *cake*).

True cognate awareness had significant relationship with educational level and it had increased with elevation of educational level. Recognition of cognate has been demonstrated to occur in learners with higher levels of reading proficiency and metalinguistic awareness. Keshavarz and Astaneh (2004) pointed that learners unconsciously do not really admit cognate words as equivalent to their own language words even though these words can be a perfect resource for supposing the meaning and keeping in mind new words.

However, far too little attention has been paid to the learners' educational level and their knowledge of true cognate words in learning, and there are few reports examined it. Learning a new word in a foreign language occasionally consists of connecting a new lexical form with an idea in our mind which is associated to the comparable word in the mother language. The way that this topography is recognized and the way it changes during the time are serious subjects in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). In spite of the number of studies developed to reply these queries (e.g., Bultena et al., 2014; Casaponsa et al., 2015; Sunderman, & Schwartz), they are still object of debate.

The study is true for Persian language in which few studies have been done on true cognate words with English to (the best of) our knowledge. It seems to be the first report and the originality of examples is the representive of modernity of this work. Most of the previous studies have focused on European languages. Therefore, the importance of the present study is that it involves non-European languages, i.e. Persian. In addition, no research has been found that surveyed the learners' educational level and their knowledge of true cognate words in Iran.

The results of the examination may have great focal points for educators and students as they may turn out to be more mindful of lexical and/or linguistic differences amongst English and Persian. Our objectives were to review the learners' educational level and their knowledge of true cognate words in Iran.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

During the past 10 years much more information has become available on true cognate words in European countries. Dressler, Carlo, Snow, August, & White (2011) investigated the effectiveness of the instructional techniques in Spanish-speaking students' use of cognate knowledge to infer the meaning of English words. Dressler et al., (2011) studied twelve fifth-grade students from Santa Cruz, California, which Eight subjects were Spanish–English bilinguals, bilinguals, getting instruction in bilingual classrooms and four monolingual English-speaking students were included for comparative aims. One second of the students in each language group got the Vocabulary Improvement Project (VIP) intervention. The strategy of cognate was the strategy of focus for three of the fifteen weeks. Taught cognates were a subset of the selected academic target words that appeared in the newspaper articles and trade books used as texts in the intervention. (243-255) The authors showed that for the English-language learner (ELLs), correct inferences for Spanish–English cognates, as it was used in 43% of the accurate responses, was associated with use of the Cognate Strategies.

The qualitative results suggested that explicit instruction, students' metacognitive and metalinguistic skills, and the structural characteristics of cognate pairs are associated with recognition of cognate (Dressler et al., 2011).

A similar study was organized by Nagy, Durgunoğlu, García, & Hancin-Bhatt. (1993) to determine how Hispanic bilingual students' ability to identify Spanish-English cognates and their knowledge of Spanish vocabulary relate to their comprehension of English expository text. Within a sample of 74 Spanish–English bilingual, biliterate fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders, the authors found out that students only knew 37% of the English words when they did not know the Spanish cognate. They knew 67% of the English words for which they knew the Spanish cognates. Students circled a mean of 41.7 ±31.2 SD true cognates. The pattern of correlations also showed that knowledge of Spanish target vocabulary was not a very good predictor of performance on the multiple choice test.

Brones and Caramazza (1979) used a lexical decision task with Spanish-English bilinguals to study the effect of cognates on the speed of word recognition. They found out that bilinguals answered faster to L2 (secondary language) cognates than to L2 control words. This cognate facilitation effect was attributed to the theory that cognate words activate the L1 (dominant language) as well as the L2 lexical representation, increasing the activation and speeding word recognition. (212-214)

This experiment supplied the first evidence that lexical access in bilinguals is not language specific. The cognate facilitation effect in L2 has since been replicated in different studies (Dijkstra et al., 1999; Dijkstra & Lemhofer, 2004).

Additionally, research by Lemhofer, Dijkstra (2004) showed that the effect increases with the addition of languages. In an experiment with Dutch- English-German trilinguals, they found out that participants had faster answers to L3 (tertiary language) words that were cognates in all three languages than to words that were only cognates in two. Although Brones and Caramazza's study did not show a cognate facilitation effect when subjects were tested in their dominant language, later research found closer responses to L1 cognate words that the impact raises with the expansion of languages. In a trial with Dutch-English-German trilinguals, they discovered that members had speedier responses to L3 (tertiary dialect) words that were cognates in each of the three languages than to words that were just cognates in two.

Van Hell and Dijkstra (2002) in an experiment with Dutch-English-French trilinguals, demonstrated a cognate effect for L1-L2 cognates and L1-L3 cognates for participants who were extremely good at their third language, French. Dijkstra and Van Hell ascribed their results, which contradicted earlier studies that did not find an L1 cognate effect, to the proficiency of their participants in the L2 and L3 languages. (780-789.)

Fotovatnia, & Taleb, (2012) investigated Mental Representation of Cognates/Noncognates in Persian-Speaking EFL Learner. They investigate the mental representation of cognate and noncognate translation pairs in languages with different scripts to test the prediction of dual lexicon model .Two groups of Persian speaking English language learners were tested on cognate and noncognate translation pairs in Persian-English and English-Persian directions with lexical decision task through masked priming. The findings of the study showed a high level of priming only for cognates with L1 primes. This supports dual lexicon model in the sense that it confirms the role of orthography in establishing shared lexical entries for cognates. Noncognates showed a different pattern from what is predicted by this model.

Marzban, & Chahardahcherik, (2015) have done research about English and Persian Cognates/Pseudo Cognates. Various world languages have had different influences on one another and have a lot of contact with each other. Cognates, words which are similar across two or more languages in several aspects, especially with regard to pronunciation, indicate an interesting and relevant aspect of second /foreign language research and translation.

Overall, most studies on L2 acquisition from a psychological perspective have focused on communicative language learning (CLL) at the lexical level, phonology and morphosyntax and the different factors affecting it. Other linguistic areas such as educational level and their knowledge of true cognate words have been barely considered.

III. METHODS

Three hundred and eighty-five were selected from 3,789 statistical population, 158 of whom were female and the rest of them were male who participated in 2014–2015 academic year at three levels of associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees of Islamic Azad University.

They were native speakers of Persian who were studying in term one as well as teachers of English in English educational institutions in Zanjan, Iran.

All participants were given a book for their participation in the study and written consent was obtained from all participants. Each educational level was considered as one category with the total sample calculated by using Cochran Formula, and the amount of each category was determined by using appropriate proportion and randomized categorical sampling method.

The participants' age was between from 18 to 52, with a mean age of 29 years.

The materials were 45 words of recognizing the origin of words (English or Persian), knowing phonological, semantic, or both of them and to be true cognate or false cognate which had been chosen from different dictionaries and the Internet; various sources were used in the project for the data collection from 500 words by doing CVR and CVI (Lawshe's table with index of 80% and 82% respectively) for being reliable and valid. ANOVA was used for studying the effect of educational level on the rate of awareness. In other words, awareness means have been compared in different educational levels.

IV. STATISTICAL ANALYSES

In this research, inferential and descriptive statistics were used for data analysis and hypothesis testing by run in SPSS 18. In descriptive section, for demographic characteristics analysis, frequency tables as well as statistical figures are used.

As shown in Table 1, the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic, which assessed the normality of the distribution of scores, were given. If the value of Sig be higher than 0.05, the null hypothesis will be assumed to have normal distribution and if it were not, we would use non-parametric test. The Sig. value for this test was more than 0.05, which was in line with the assumption of normality. The results of the data were normal and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normal distribution variables is shown in Table 1, in inferential analysis section, the hypotheses were being tested using parametric test (one sample t-test, independent t-test, and analysis of one-way variance).

TABLE 1
KOLMOGOROV-SMIRNOV TEST

Variable	Sig	Decision	Test results
Root of word in English	0.67	The null hypothesis (Accepted H_0)	▪Normal distribution
Root of word in Farsi	0.85	Accepted H_0	▪Normal distribution
None of them	0.48	Accepted H_0	▪Normal distribution
Semantic	0.53	Accepted H_0	▪Normal distribution
Phonology	0.38	Accepted H_0	▪Normal distribution
Both of them	0.77	Accepted H_0	▪Normal distribution
True cognate	0.78	Accepted H_0	▪Normal distribution
False cognate	0.37	Accepted H_0	▪Normal distribution

▪Sig. value of more than (.05), indicates normality

TABLE 2
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF ANALYSIS OF THE WORDS BASED ON EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Educational Level		English	Persian	None of them	Semantic	Phonol-ogical	Semantic Phonological	True Cognate	False Cognate
AD	Number	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
	Mean	4.46	3.60	1.53	9.73	14.93	3.62	19.46	2.61
	SD	2.50	3.01	2.29	7.62	9.04	8.70	8.37	1.78
BA	Number	135	135	135	135	135	135	135	135
	Mean	6.34	6.92	1.90	11.60	14.00	6.85	20.57	2.69
	SD	3.83	4.91	2.09	8.02	8.48	8.19	7.37	2.90
MA	Number	217	217	217	217	217	217	217	217
	Mean	6.14	7.88	2.88	9.89	10.22	7.56	23.4	3.01
	SD	4.08	5.35	2.57	6.22	7.77	8.90	8.61	4.31
Teacher	Number	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
	Mean	9.33	11.55	4.44	15.11	15.22	8.69	27.55	3.25
	SD	2.35	4.48	2.52	11.76	9.48	10.25	6.65	1.81

The result of Table 2 shows the mean of true cognates recognized by the students based on educational level had increased trend. Therefore, the mean of true cognates recognized in the teacher group was higher than the rest.

TABLE 3
PARTICIPANTS' DISPERSION BASED ON FIELD STUDY AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Major		Level				Total
		AD	BA	MA	Teacher	
Management	Count	2	25	26	0	53
	% within major	3.8%	47.2%	49.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Civil Engineering	Count	1	43	54	0	98
	% within major	1.0%	43.9%	55.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Architecture	Count	7	18	28	0	53
	% within major	13.2%	34.0%	52.8%	0.0%	100.0%
Accounting	Count	3	22	30	0	55
	% within major	5.5%	40.0%	54.5%	0.0%	100.0%
Computer	Count	1	19	23	0	43
	% within major	2.3%	44.2%	53.5%	0.0%	100.0%
Microbiology	Count	1	8	56	0	65
	% within major	1.5%	12.3%	86.2%	0.0%	100.0%
English	Count	0	0	0	18	18
	% within major	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	15	135	217	18	385
	% within major	3.9%	35.1%	56.4%	4.7%	100.0%

According to Table 3, the most of participants in all fields of study were in M.A educational level.

TABLE 4
PARTICIPANTS' AWARENESS OF COGNATES

Variable	Number	Expected Score	Sample Mean	SD	Quantity T	Sig	Significant
Root English	385	7.5	6.30	3.94	5.96	0.000	Significant
Root Farsi	385	11	7.55	5.22	12.94	0.000	Significant
None of them	385	4	2.56	2.47	11.72	0.000	Significant
Semantic	385	18.5	10.73	7.35	20.72	0.000	Significant
Phonology	385	22.5	11.96	8.37	24.67	0.000	Significant
Both	385	18.5	7.21	8.88	24.92	0.000	Significant
True cognates	385	18.5	22.47	8.27	9.42	0.000	Significant
False cognates	385	4	2.89	3.72	5.85	0.000	Significant

As the results of Table 4 shows, the mean awareness of participants were lower than expected score in all variables and there was a significant difference between expected score and observed score.

TABLE 5
MEAN AWARENESS OF COGNATES IN RELATION TO EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Educational level	Number	Variable	Mean	F	Sig	Test result
associate degree	15	Root of word in English	4.46	4.89	0.002	Significant
bachelor	135		6.34			
Master	217		6.14			
Teacher	18		9.33			
associate degree	15	Root of word in Farsi	3.60	7.68	0.000	Significant
bachelor	135		6.92			
Master	217		7.88			
Teacher	18		11.55			
associate degree	15	None of them	1.53	9.29	0.000	Significant
bachelor	135		1.90			
Master	217		2.88			
Teacher	18		4.44			
associate degree	15	Semantic	9.73	3.88	0.009	Significant
bachelor	135		11.60			
Master	217		9.89			
Teacher	18		15.11			
associate degree	15	Phonology	14.93	7.72	0.000	Significant
bachelor	135		14.00			
Master	217		10.22			
Teacher	18		15.22			
associate degree	15	Both of them	3.62	21.38	0.001	Significant
bachelor	135		6.85			
Master	217		7.56			
Teacher	18		8.69			
associate degree	15	True cognate	19.46	23.44	0.000	Significant
bachelor	135		20.57			
Master	217		23.44			
Teacher	18		27.55			
associate degree	15	False cognate	2.61	1.84	0.138	Non-significant
bachelor	135		2.69			
Master	217		3.01			
Teacher	18		3.25			

As the result of variance analysis (ANOVA) in Table 5 shows, the comparison mean of true cognate awareness with educational level increased trend and the relationship was significant.

By the use of Duncan test, it was indicated that in English root of word, there was a significant difference of awareness in A.D, B.A and M.A but there was not significant difference in the level of awareness between teachers' group and the other groups.

TABLE 6
MEAN ATTITUDE TO COGNATES IN RELATION TO PARTICIPANTS' EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Variable	Educational Level	Number	Mean	F Quantity	Sig	Test result
True Cognate	AA	15	3.82	2.15	0.093	Insignificant
	B.A	135	3.81			
	M.A	217	3.90			
	Teacher	18	4			
False Cognate	A.D	15	3.41	2.23	0.078	insignificant
	B.A	135	3.43			
	M.A	217	3.38			
	Teacher	18	3.37			

The results of Table 6 shows that the mean of attitude about true was higher than 3 based on educational level, but there was not statistically significant relationship with educational level among participants.

V. DISCUSSION

In this study, we investigated the learners' educational level and their knowledge of true cognate words in Iran. Our results show that the mean of true cognates recognized by the students based on educational level had increased trend. Therefore, the mean of true cognate words recognized in the teacher group was higher than the rest. The results of this study showed that the awareness of participants were lower than expected score in all variables. True cognate awareness had significant relationship with educational level and it had increased with elevation of educational level. In this regard, several studies have examined cognate knowledge in Spanish-speaking English-language learners. Dressler et.al. (2011) investigated the effectiveness of the instructional techniques in Spanish-speaking students' use of cognate knowledge to infer the meaning of English words. In their study twelve fifth-grade students from Santa Cruz, California, participated.

Eight subjects were Spanish–English bilinguals, getting instruction in bilingual classrooms and four monolingual English-speaking students were included for comparative purposes. One second of the students in each language group got the Vocabulary Improvement Project (VIP) intervention. The strategy of focus for three of the fifteen weeks was the cognate strategy. Taught cognates were a subset of the selected academic target words that appeared in the newspaper articles and trade books used as texts in the intervention. The authors showed that for the English-language learner (ELLs), correct inferences for Spanish–English cognates, as it was used in 43% of the accurate responses was associated with use of the Cognate Strategies.

The qualitative results suggested that students' metacognitive and metalinguistic skills, explicit instruction, and the structural characteristics of cognate pairs are associated with cognate recognition (Dressler et al., 2011). A similar study was conducted by Nagy et al. (1993) to show how Hispanic bilingual students' ability to identify Spanish-English cognates and their knowledge of Spanish vocabulary relate to their comprehension of English expository text. Within a sample of 74 Spanish–English bilingual, biliterate fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders, the authors found out that students only knew 37% of the English words when they did not know the Spanish cognate but they knew 67% of the English words for which they knew the Spanish cognates. Students circled a mean of 41.7 ±31.2 SD true cognates. That Spanish target word knowledge was not a very good predictor of performance on the multiple choice test was also indicated by the pattern of correlations.

There were various interrelated components that may influence bilingual students' utilization of cognates and their insight in their perusing and that may should be checked in the advancement of reasonable instructional practices. Level of bilingualism is one of these variables, while its relationship with education was not significant, the result of above studies in rate of true cognates' awareness was consistent but the relationship with educational level was inconsistent. These results indicated that, students' true cognate awareness was not more. The reason of inconsistency can be differences in the research population of study which in this study they were university students. The result of Perhan's study (2008) showed that there was a significant difference in the means between the Intervention Group and the Target Group on the academic level that is consistent with our study. Jarvis and Odlin (2008) examined Finish and Swedish speakers learning English concluded that none of the variables such as age, length of English instruction, and task type produced as consistent effects as did LI background.

Hence, it could be accepted that age is a controversial variable, which won't influence lexical transfer in any noteworthy way. Holmes and Ramos (1995) have demonstrated that the extent to which cognates are perceived by language learners relies on upon their semantic and orthographic similitude. In an investigation of the cognate awareness with a specimen of local Spanish-and Portuguese-speaking college students who were learning English, Holmes (1995); Gholami, Alavinia, and Izadpanah (2015a) discovered that students were different in what they thought to be a cognate. The significance of orthography in cognate recognition is further underscored by Nagy et al. (1993), who discovered more prominent orthographic coinciding in cognate sets to be connected with higher recognition. An extra quality of cognates thought to impact students' capacity to relate them to each other is the recurrence of the word in composed English and Spanish. This part of cognate similarity was the focal center of a study by Biner (1993) who expected to distinguish Spanish–English cognate pairs within a specific science educational program, and to figure out whether the number of cognates was enough to warrant efficient instructing of this technique. Biner, hypothesized that the cognate strategy depends on the existence of a considerable number of words that appear frequently in Spanish but infrequently in English. In subsequent work, the findings reviewed here suggest that both attributes of cognate pairs and learner variables play a role in cognate recognition. In a detailed way, cognate recognition has been demonstrated to occur in learners with metalinguistic awareness and higher levels of reading proficiency. Keshavarz and Astaneh (2004); Gholami, Alavinia, and Izadpanah (2015b) pointed that learners unconsciously do not really admit cognate words as equivalent to their own language words even though these words can be a perfect resource for supposing the meaning and keeping in mind new words. Pahlavan Nezhad and Zadeh Tavakoli (2013) stated the fact that the only one element which is used in conveying meaning is the actual similarities or dissimilarities of the appearance or form of the words and its meaning. Also the discrimination and judgment of every of learners is important.

The result showed that the mean of true cognate awareness in the teacher group was higher than the learner group and there was statistically significant relationship between two groups. Review of literature showed that there is no similar study to show that relationship. Teachers need to know which cognates facilitate learning and also, which cognates confuse or fail to help their students also many linguists and language teachers agree that dissimilarities and similarities in word meanings, word forms, syntactic structure, morphological properties in two languages play a major role in how quickly and accurately a foreign language will be learned by speakers of another language (Holmes & Ramos, 1995; Ringbom, 1987; Rothman, 2015).

A positive effect of bilingualism on Target Language Acquisition is also attributed to the fact that bilingual students are able to weigh the effectiveness of these strategies due to their experience in learning languages and to use a wider variety of learning strategies and (McLaughlin & Nayak, 1989). Findings from other investigations (Bild & Swain, 1989; Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Thomas, 1988) confirm this by showing that contrary to the belief that bilingualism hampers the acquisition of an additional language, it actually favors it. In the bilingual domain, some evidence proposes that the frequency effect might even be greater in the second as compared with the first language (Van Wijnendaele, & Brysbaert, 2002).

The results of the experiments and the methods that we propose show that there is no significant difference (Root of word in English) between the mean of awareness in A.D. (4.46), B.A. (6.34), and M.A. (6.14) levels, but there is significant difference between the level of awareness of teachers group (9.33) and the other groups.

"True cognate": There is no significant difference among groups of the A.D. (19.46), B.A. (20.57) and M.A. (23.44). There is still no significant difference between M.A. and teachers (27.55).

There are limitations to this study as mentioned below. Interested researchers can fill the gaps mentioned in this study and, hence, provide us with more findings in the area of true cognates .They can also replicate this study in different contexts in order to contribute to the generalizability of the findings of this study.

A number of limitations mean that more work is necessary to qualify the findings of this research. Another limitation is the range and number of items used across the studies. Although selecting true cognate items may lead to findings that are more representative of lexical processing in general, a much greater number of items is essential for qualifying the present discoveries crosswise over various tasks. Cross-linguistic similarity ratings and number of interpretations data for a much more prominent number of researchers would also prove ultimately more useful as data for other researchers who are interested in conducting studies with Persian –English likewise demonstrate at last more helpful as information for different specialists who are keen on directing studies with Persian - English bilinguals.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has explained the role of learners' educational level and their knowledge of true cognate words. This part is committed to convey to the reader a few conclusions for tasks that we handled in this work, furthermore puts a few arrangements for future work to develop our research.

This part is dedicated to bring to the reader some conclusions for tasks that we tackled in this work and also puts into perspective some plans for future work to further develop our research. The main objective of this study was to investigate whether there is relationship between EFL learners' educational level (AD, BA, and MA students and teacher group) and their knowledge of true cognate words between Persian and English. Our findings suggest that the awareness of participants were lower than expected score in all variables. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study was that there are some differences between teachers group and other groups in some variables. But about true cognates, there is no difference between groups. So true cognate awareness had no significant relationship with educational level.

Various investigations have shown that the native language impacts foreign word recognition and this influence is adapted by the dexterity in the nonnative language. Therefore, we conclude that the level of dexterity is more important than the level of education. In conclusion, it is suggested that the association of these factors to be investigated in future studies and more research on this topic needs to be undertaken.

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