Second Language Communication and Interference from L1

Ahmad Fawad Kakar¹*, Kawita Sarwari¹
¹ Herat University, Afghanistan

Abstract A vast body of available literature presents controversial perspectives on the role of L1 in learning and communicating an L2. The current exploratory qualitative study attempted to investigate the reported experiences of ten Afghan EFL learners regarding their L1 (Farsi Dari) role in communicating an L2 (English). The data collected through Skype interviews with ten participants were analyzed thematically. The findings indicated that both positive and negative transfers of L1 occur at different levels in L2. The emerging themes revealed that L2 is scaffolded with L1 proficiency; further, it helps generate ideas, improve self-esteem, and reduce anxiety. The findings also indicated some L1 interferences in L2 communication particularly pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. The current study's findings suggest that the language instructors should be aware of the language transfers, both positive and negative, to provide quality teaching to EFL learners. Further research studies can be conducted through a different research design such as quantitative or mixed-method exploring the EFL perspectives.

Keywords: Positive transfer, Negative transfer, Interference, Grammar, Vocabulary

* Corresponding Author:
Ahmad Fawad Kakar
fawadkakar65@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Afghanistan, located in south-central Asia, is a diverse country where people enjoy various cultures, languages, and ethnicities. Farsi and Pashtu are the official languages having the most speakers in the country. However, the country's unstable sociopolitical situation throughout history has affected the local and foreign languages. It has always been the power to decide which language or languages, both local and foreign, should be dominant. For instance, Russian was the dominant foreign language during the Soviet invasion from 1978 to 1989. Similarly, after the Taliban regime collapsed in 2001, the international communities offered military and financial support to Afghanistan. With that said, English became the dominant foreign language in Afghanistan. People started to learn English for different purposes such as employment, education, and business (Miri, 2016; Sarwari, 2018). Afghan students take English as a disciplinary subject from fourth grade, and it continues until grade twelve. Moreover, Herat University's two English departments offer English language teaching and English literature studies.

Unfortunately, several decades of war and conflicts have devastated different areas, particularly research in Afghanistan (Babury & Hayward, 2014). With that said, the Afghan context is underrepresented in English language studies. There is little or no published literature exploring the Afghan EFL students' experiences with L1 interfering with their L2. Therefore, the current study aimed to explore the reported experiences of five Afghan EFL learners regarding the interferences of their L1 (Pashtu or Farsi) in their L2 (English). It specifically investigated the challenges Afghan EF learners face in phonology (oral communication), vocabulary, and grammar, as well as the strategies they employ to overcome the negative transfer of their L1. This study mainly attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the five Afghan EFL learners' reported experiences with the interference effects of L1 in their L2?
2. How do the Afghan EFL learners overcome the negative transfer of their L1 into their L2?

The first research question explores the Afghan EFL learners' experiences with their L1 (Farsi or Pashtu) interferences in their L2 (English), specifically in the areas such as phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. In other words, this question investigates Afghan EFL learners' challenges while acquiring/learning and using English due to their L1 negative transfer. The second research question explores the strategies that learners transfer from their L1.

According to Köpke and Genevska-Hanke (2018), when a monolingual becomes multilingual, the different languages are no longer independent but constantly interact and influence each other. The researchers refer to the term "interferences" to discuss the negative transfer of the learners' L1 into their L2.

The current research contributes to SLA in the Afghan context, which is underrepresented in this area. Further, this study's findings help English language instructors better understand their student's needs and design their courses' syllabuses and in-class activities accordingly. Furthermore, it raises students' awareness regarding the areas where their L1 interfere with their L2.

2. Theoretical Framework

This section mainly focuses on the scholarships related to L1 interference in EFL learners' L2. It specifically discusses the negative transfer EFL learners encounter in the areas such as Phonology, vocabulary, and grammar.

2.1. First Language (L1) and Second Language (L2) Acquisition

According to Mitchell et al. (2019), second language learning occurs sometime later than infants' first language. In other words, second languages can be the learners' second, third, fourth, or fifth language that takes place later than the first. Further, since the authors believe that the learning process for a second and a foreign language are similar, the foreign languages are also discussed under the term second languages.

Krashen's (1985) learning-acquisition hypothesis made a terminological distinction between the L1 and L2 acquisition. In other words, according to this hypothesis, Krashen uses the terms implicit and unconscious, also explicit and conscious, to distinguish between learning and acquisition. As cited in Mitchell et al. (2019), for Krashen, acquisition refers to the "subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language", and learning refers to the "conscious process that results in 'knowing about' language" (p. 1).

Numerous scholars have discussed the positive and negative impacts of L1 in L2 from different perspectives. Derakhshan and Karimi (2015) stated that the L1 plays a significant role in learning an L2. He argues that the role of L1 in the L2 depends on the similarities and differences between the two languages. Similarly, Mitchell et al. (2019) noted that learning a second language means replacing the L2 new habits with the L1 old habits. Grosjean and Li (2013) emphasized the positive role of L1 in learning an L2. They stated that bilinguals develop the prerequisite skills required in learning an L2 which facilitates literacy, such as oral language proficiency, metalinguistics awareness, and cognitive

development. Furthermore, if the children know how to read in their L1 or any other language, they have the chance to transfer these skills to the new language. Antoniou (2019) also stated that "Bilinguals' advantages have been reported for executive function, metalinguistics awareness, phonetic perception, cognitive flexibility, and creative thinking" (p. 396).

The most challenging area is that the L1 habits interfere with replacing new habits, either facilitating this process or constraining it. Nation's (2001) study indicates that the first language's influence on the second language is small, but it plays a significant role in communicating meaning and content. Gas and Selinker (1983) believe that there are two types of transfer in a second language: positive and negative. Positive transfer facilitates the process of second language acquisition, but negative transfer indicates the negative impacts of L1 on L2, which interfere with and constrain the learning of an L2. Therefore, the available scholarships emphasize the role of the first language in learning a second language and the positive and negative transfer of the first language into the second language (Sinha et al., 2009).

Moreover, students transfer sense-induced emotions from L1 into L2. They are affected by their emotiancy levels in L1. Emotiancy (a blend of emotion and frequency of senses) refers to the sense-induced emotions, relativizing cognition. When you add more senses to something, you increase the level of emotiancy, moving individuals from exvolvement to involvement (Akbari & Pishghadam, 2022, Pishghadam, 2015; Pishghadam et al., 2016; Pishghadam et al., 2019, Pishghadam et al., 2022).

2.2. L1 Transfer in L2 Pronunciation

Aghai and Sayer (2016) stated that different languages have different consonant and vowel systems, and a language-specific set of sounds is called its phonological inventory. They asserted that there are 24 consonants and 22 vowels and diphthongs in Standard American English, while 32 characters in Persian Alphabet. There are eleven vowels and diphthongs in Persian, where vowels do not change in informal conversations. Further, Persian is a syllable-timed language, while English is a stress-timed language. According to Ferguson (1957), as cited in Aghai and Sayer (2016), when a word in Persian is pronounced in isolation has one syllable of heavier stress. However, when produced in a sentence, the same syllable is stressed, or the word has no syllable. Aghai and Sayer's (2016) study revealed that the errors produced by the beginner level students were traced back to the transfer of their L1 learned habits into their L2. However, intermediate and advanced students made fewer errors when producing segmental features of the English language; however, they shared the same mistakes with the beginner students while growing suprasegmental parts of English.

Abdollahnejad (2020) stated that English has two high front (/iː/ & /ɪ/) and back (/uː/ & /ʊ/) vowels, but Persian has one high front vowel /i/ and one high back vowel /u/. L1 Persian speakers of English need to merge English front vowels /iː & ɪ/ to their L1 front vowel /i/ and English /uː & ʊ/ to their back vowel /u/. He investigates the qualitative and quantitative features of English tense and lax vowels in the L2 speech production of L1 Persian speakers. Ten female advanced L1 Persian speakers of English were compared with a control group of ten female native English speakers to produce these vowels in open and closed syllables. Findings revealed that while English native speakers used both quality and quantity, the L1 Persian speakers had difficulties acquiring this distinction in L2 English on both measures. However, difficulty appeared in acquiring L2 phonetic features rather than phonological ones.

According to Jabbari and Samavarchi (2011), languages have their system of sounds which may be similar and different in some aspects from other languages. Words with different phonological systems are challenging to be learned and lead to re-syllabification due to the learner's first language phonological rules. The various phonotactic constraints in English and Persian in terms of consonant clusters make the L1 Persian learners of English re-syllabify the English words following the phonological constraints of Persian. This process may result in either omission of some consonant or a vowel sound epenthesis between two consonants. In their paper, the researchers explored the L1 Persian learners' syllabification of English word-initial and word-final consonant clusters, considering the structural variations between their representations and different phonotactic constraints in English and

Persian. The study's findings show that onset clusters were re-syllabified by epenthesis while the coda clusters by omission indicated negative transfer of Persian into English.

2.3. L1 Transfer into L2 Grammar

According to Avram et al. (2016), many studies discuss the L1 syntactic transfer in L2. Saville-Troike and Barto (2017) argued that development is an unconscious process in L1 child grammar correlated with cognitive maturation. The child's cognitive skills mature as he/she matures. In contrast, the L2 learner's interlanguage development occurs when mental maturity is no longer a significant factor because L2 learners have already reached a level of proficiency and maturity where they can produce complex utterances in their L1. The authors insisted that the transfer of prior knowledge from L1 to L2 is one of the processes involved in interlanguage development. When an L1 structure is utilized in an L2 utterance appropriately is called positive transfer; however, when an L1 design is employed in an L2 utterance inappropriately is called negative transfer.

Omidipour (2014) states that the most accessible L2 rules and structures exist in L1 with the same form and distribution, making positive transfer possible. Further, any structure in L2 that differs from L1 needs to be learned. The most challenging structures are those with overlap but not equivalence in form, meaning, and distribution, which cause interference or negative transfer. Omidipour's (2014) study's findings indicated that his Farsi native speakers' writing errors were developmental errors, which shows that Farsi was not the main obstacle to inaccurate learning of a second language, namely English. Developmental errors are common among native English speakers and learners of English as a foreign language. In a similar vein, Yahya et al. (2012) study's findings indicated eleven common error categories: fewer possessives, prepositions, pronouns, singular/plural, subject-verb agreement, verbs, infinitive "to", word choices, and spelling. The author emphasized that errors in L2 learners' writing are unavoidable.

2.4. L1 Transfer in L2 Vocabulary

Asgari and Mustapha (2010) point out that learners' exposure to the words increases their knowledge about that word. There are words that the learners acquire quickly, but there are also tricky words that require repetition or organizational techniques. Each vocabulary has specific characteristics, including the conceptual and contextual meaning and the syntactic restrictions imposed on the word by the language. The role of L1 language transfer in L2 vocabulary, specifically in idioms and collocations, is worth discussing.

Taki and Namy Soghady (2013) mention that idiom items are categorized into three types of similarity between L1 and L2: identical, similar, and different idioms. Identical idioms with equivalents in L2 and similar idioms with similar meaning or form in the L1 are easy to learn. However, the phrases with no match in L2 are the most challenging to understand and produce. In their study, Taki and Namy Soghady (2013) attempted to investigate the role of the first language (L1) transfer in Iranian EFL learners' second language (L2) idiom comprehension. The L2 idioms were divided into identical, similar, and different categories based on their similarity to L1 (Persian). Learners of different levels used word-by-word translation as the most frequent strategy to decode similar, identical, and other idioms. Participants were unable to interpret different expressions and find equivalents in L1 Persian. Similarly, Sabzalipour (2012), in a study titled "*Error Analysis on Students' Persian-English Translation*", found that the participants used their Persian-English dictionaries while doing the translation tasks. Copying from the dictionary led to awkward and incorrect translation. The study showed that 31% of participants' errors resulted from the L1 transfer, where about 68% of mistakes involved intra-lingual errors.

3. Methodology

The current qualitative study explored the L1 interferences into EFL students' L2. In other words, it attempted to investigate the possible challenges (negative transfer) and opportunities (positive transfer) that L1 brings into EFL students' L2 using students' reported experiences. Since the present study sought to explore students' lived experiences with their L1 influencing their L2, the researchers found the qualitative research design appropriate for collecting and presenting data. As stated by Galletta (2013),

"Qualitative research is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (i.e., nonnumerical) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest" (p. 7).

3.1. Context

Herat University, located in the western part of Afghanistan, is a major public co-educational Afghan university, offering B.A. in 16 different fields and M.A. in two colleges: Farsi-Dari literature and business administration. A total of 17,086 students, 8332 females and 8750 males study at this university (Sarwari et al., 2021). The English department is one of the five departments at the college of languages and literature at Herat University, where 450 female and male students are enrolled.

3.2. Participants

The researchers invited 15 students from the English department for a virtual (Skype) interview, and only 10 participants responded positively. Three female and seven male students from juniors and seniors, whose mother tongue was Farsi-Dari, were interviewed. Although IRB approval is not required in Afghanistan, the researchers obtained consent before conducting the interviews and the survey. Further, for ethical purposes, participants were provided with pseudonyms.

3.3. Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were designed and employed to collect in-depth data qualitatively. Fifteen students from the English Department of Herat University were invited for a virtual (Skype) interview, and only ten students responded to the invitation. The participants were selected based on the following criteria: a) They are all English Department of Herat University students; b) They are Farsi-Dari native speaking, and c) They are willing to share their experiences of learning English as a second language and how their L1 (Farsi-Dari) interference into this journey.

Table 1
Interviewed Participants' Demographic Information

No.	Name (pseudonym)	Year	Gender	Age
1	Ahmad	Senior	Male	22
2	Mohammad	Senior	Male	21
3	Mahmood	Junior	Male	20
4	Fatemah	Senior	Female	22
5	Zahra	Junior	Female	20
6	Maryam	Senior	Female	22
7	Arash	Junior	Male	20
8	Jawad	Senior	Male	22
9	Reza	Junior	Male	20
10	Rateb	Senior	Male	21

3.4. Data Analysis

First, the researchers transcribed the interview recordings, and then the emerging themes and their frequency were identified through color-coding. A semi-structured interview protocol for qualitative data collection purposes was designed. Each interview took 30–45 min, varying from one interviewee to another. Each interview was transcribed using Microsoft Word, resulting in 15–25 pages, word format, single-spaced, Times New Roman. The researchers color-coded the collected data, keeping the research questions and the literature review in mind. In other words, the relevant collected data were separated from the irrelevant data using different colors. Then, the relevant data were divided into themes based on the frequency of the interviewees' repetition of the answers. Since the researchers aimed to explore the research questions by seeking the participants' reported experiences, thematic analysis was appropriate for analyzing the data in this research.

As a form of peer-review, the researchers employed team checking to ensure the accuracy of the themes. In addition, the analysis of each interview was sent to the interviewee to provide data analysis accuracy.

4. Results

This section mainly focuses on the major themes that emerged from the data collected through interviews with the ten student participants of the current study (Figures 1 & 2).
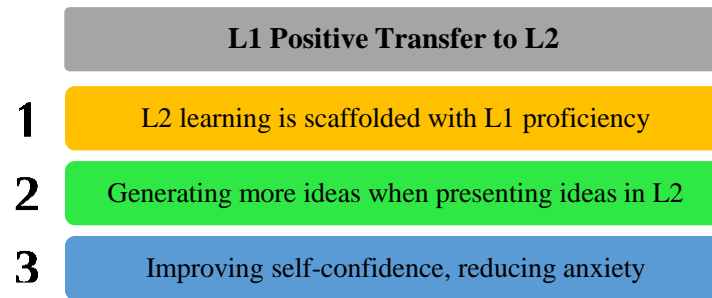
	L1 Positive Transfer to L2
1	L2 learning is scaffolded with L1 proficiency
2	Generating more ideas when presenting ideas in L2
3	Improving self-confidence, reducing anxiety

Figure 1
The Study's Significant Themes (Positive Transfer)

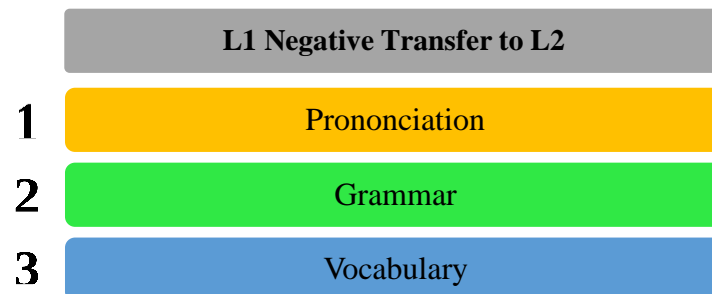|	L1 Negative Transfer to L2
1	Prononciation
2	Grammar
3	Vocabulary

Figure 2
The Findings' Significant Themes (Negative Transfer)

4.1. L1 Positive Transfer to L2 at a Glance

The current study's findings indicated that L1 facilitates an L2 learning process. The participants' experiences revealed different aspects of L2 supported through learners' L1 knowledge. Learners use their L1 expertise to learn an L2. This is particularly important and helpful when the learners reflect on their L1 learning experience. Although one may not recall their L1 learning experience, observing other kids learning their L1 helps to retrieve at least parts of that journey.

Further, the L2 brain is almost prepared for learning an L2. With that said, the L2 learner's brain experiences and stores an L1, which facilitates the learning process of an L2. Moreover, L2 learning is scaffolded with L1 proficiency. In other words, L2 learner has acquired the prerequisite skills which help his/her to transfer them into their L2. According to the participants, the more proficient the bilingual is in his/her mother tongue, the better and easier he/she will be to learn an L2. The learners' metalinguistics awareness and the knowledge of their L1 structure help them to transfer them into L2 and develop critical thinking skills, too.

The participants also stated that having an L1 in place is a plus point in learning an L2 to generate ideas. In other words, according to the participants, generating ideas is one area in that learner's struggle. When it comes to L2 learners, their L1 helps them create and develop ideas in their L2. Thus, the L2 learners do not struggle as much as monolinguals do in generating ideas, especially in writing.

Furthermore, having an L1 already in place helps learners develop self-esteem and reduce anxiety. The participants reported that their L1 helped them gain self-confidence, especially in speaking English. Reza stated, "Speaking in another language causes anxiety which can be reduced with L1 background knowledge and experience". Most speakers believed that although L1 interferes in learning an L2, its significantly important role in learning an L2 cannot be ignored.

4.2. L1 Negative Transfer into L2

4.2.1. L1 Transfer in L2 Pronunciation

The findings indicated that almost all participants attempted to adopt a native-like accent. The majority believed that the only proper way to use English fluently and accurately is to follow and imitate the native speakers of English. Ahmad stated, "I thought I would learn the 'correct' English, particularly the pronunciation of words." He added, "Since I could copy how the first language speakers communicate, I could confidently use the words and structures they used in their communication; as a result, I improved both my accuracy and fluency."

The data demonstrated controversial viewpoints regarding the interference of L1 in L2. Three participants stated that they had not encountered any phonological interferences from their L1 into L2. In other words, they mentioned that their L1 sound system facilitated their L2 learning process. However, most participants believed that Dari and English have unique sound systems where the differences lead to errors and make learning English pronunciation challenging. At least four participants reported difficulties pronouncing the labio-dental sounds V and W accurately because of their vernacular accent interference. Jawad stated, "In some cases, my L1 vernacular accent (pronunciation of V and W) negatively influenced my pronunciation". Furthermore, the interviewed participants also reported experiencing difficulties with [θ] and [ð] pronunciation. Fatemah said that she could not acquire the correct pronunciation of these sounds due to her vernacular accent effects.

The findings also indicated that the complex rules about the connections between English spelling and pronunciation are among other issues that negatively affect the Dari L1 speakers' correct pronunciation of English sounds. Mahmood stated that he struggles with silent letters/sounds after several years of learning English. He added, "I yet struggle with inhibiting the pronunciation of the silent letters/sounds such as P at the beginning of psychology and 'gh' in the middle of, for example, night". Similarly, Jawad reported struggling with English's complex spelling and pronunciation rules. He mentioned that he has no idea if silent sounds/letters exist; therefore, learning these mostly irregular rules and keeping them in mind through memorization makes learning pronunciation of English challenging. With that said, English and Farsi Dari have their unique sound systems. The differences make learning the correct English accent for a Dari speaker challenging.

4.2.2. L1 Transfer in L2 Grammar

The findings revealed grammatical differences between the participants' L1 and L2 [English]. Although the interviewed participants reported similarities in terms of the function of the grammatical structures between Farsi Dari and their L2 [English], the differences are more apparent in how the sentences are structured. This is incredibly vivid when the low-proficient L2 English learners attempt to translate the ideas from their L1 into their L2. In other words, the lower the learners' proficiency in their L2, the more translation of ideas, particularly from L1 into L2, leads to the unnatural, unsound and inaccurate verbal and non-verbal articulation of the language. Ahmad stated, "The sentence structure and grammatical rules might negatively influence the L2 production, particularly for those L2 speakers who translate their thoughts from L1".

Similarly, Fatemah mentioned the significant difference between her L1 and L2 in terms of grammar is how a sentence is structured. In other words, the standard formula for an introductory English sentence is subject + verb + object, whereas, in Farsi Dari, the formula for a basic sentence is subject + object + verb. With that said, the low-proficient English learners do not consider these differences and translate their thoughts and opinions from their mother tongue following the standard grammatical rules and regulations of their native language grammar system in their L2. As a result, following a different structure/grammar system and applying that to another system leads to errors and mistakes. Fatemah also mentioned that passive voice structure is standard in English. It is rarely used in Farsi Dari; therefore, when talking and writing in English, Farsi speakers do not use passive voices as English speakers do.

Some participants discussed the significantly positive role of their L1 grammar system in acquiring the grammatical rules of their L2. In other words, the positive role of L1 grammar rules in learning the

English grammatical structures cannot be ignored. As a result, Mahmood realized the similarities between his mother tongue grammar and the English language grammatical system at the beginning of his L2 journey. He stated that although sentences structured in English differ from Farsi Dari, the function of various grammatical components is the same. With that said, these similarities help the learner/L2 speaker to acquire the language more accessible. Maryam also emphasized the importance of her L1 grammar in facilitating learning English grammar. She added, "My L1 background knowledge has always helped me enjoy and experience ease learning English. Different parts of speech such as verb, subject, and object have the same function in both my L1 and English".

4.2.3. L1 Transfer in L2 Vocabulary

The findings indicated that vocabulary is one of the main areas Farsi Dari speakers experience significant L1 interferences. The writing systems of the two languages are different. In other words, English writing is from left to right, where Farsi writing takes place from right to left. Further, the connection between the English spelling rules and pronunciation is complex and different from Farsi, which relies on the L1 spelling and pronunciation to create a mess among Farsi learners of English.

According to the participants, due to the socio-political situation of the Afghan context, unlike languages such as Urdu and Hindi, where English vocabularies and idioms are widely used, English words are not integrated into Farsi in an Afghan context. After the Taliban regime collapsed in 2001, the international troops, especially those of the U.S. and other English-speaking countries and the international humanitarian organizations, started their missions in Afghanistan. There was a great potential as well as demand for learning English. Mohammad stated, "Afghan EFL learners and those working with the international troops as translators were more willing to bring English words into their daily conversations. However, with the recent political transformations, the attitude towards borrowing and using English vocabularies has dramatically changed."

Participants also stated that they struggle with finding equivalents for the English vocabularies in their mother tongue Dari and from Dari to English. It is particularly true when EFL learners' low-proficient Afghan Dari speakers translate their thoughts and ideas from English to Dari. Translating views and opinions, especially those belonging to the local and indigenous concepts, leads to errors and unnatural articulation of English. Ahmad stated, "Translating some words from L1 to L2 was difficult for me. Besides, relying on the rules and connection between spelling and pronunciation in my L1 negatively affected how I would pronounce L2 words based on their spelling".

5. Discussion

When the participants were asked about the role of their L1 in learning an L2, namely English, they emphasized the positive aspects of L1 in facilitating an L2 learning process. The interviewees stated that having an L1 in place helped them transfer their linguistics awareness and the literacy skills they experienced in their L1 into their L2. Furthermore, participants believed their brains were prepared when learning an L2. This is mainly in line with Grosjean and Li (2013), where authors emphasized the positive role of L1 in learning an L2. They stated that bilinguals develop the prerequisite skills required in learning an L2 which facilitates literacy, such as oral language proficiency, metalinguistics awareness, and cognitive development.

Furthermore, if the children know how to read in their L1 or any other language, they have the chance to transfer these skills to the new language. Further, the findings also indicated that having an L1 in place helps learners generate better ideas in an L2. In a similar vein, Antoniou (2019) stated that "bilinguals' advantages have been reported for executive function, metalinguistics awareness, phonetic perception, cognitive flexibility, and creative thinking" (p. 396).

Participants reported controversial viewpoints regarding their L1 transfer into their pronunciations. The findings indicated that the learners' L1 phonetic awareness helps them be ready to acquire an L2 pronunciation. However, since Farsi Dari and English have unique sound systems, the interferences cannot be ignored. The participants mainly reported their vernacular accent interference in their L2. They struggled to accurately pronounce labio-dental sounds such as V and W, [θ], and [ð]. Similarly, Jabbari and Samarvachi (2011) noted that languages have their system of sounds which may be similar

and different in some aspects to other languages. Words with different phonological systems are challenging to be learned and lead to re-syllabification due to the learner's first language phonological rules.

The current study revealed exciting perspectives on L1 transfer into L2 grammar. Most participants believed that their prior knowledge of L1 facilitated learning English grammar. In other words, different grammatical and syntactic components such as tenses and parts of speech have the same function as Farsi, according to the participants. This is mainly in line with Saville-Troike and Barto (2017), who mentioned that the transfer of prior knowledge from L1 to L2 is one of the processes involved in interlanguage development. When an L1 structure is utilized in an L2 utterance appropriately in the L2 is called positive transfer.

The participants also reported that their L1 prior knowledge and habits are obstacles to learning their L2 grammar. In other words, English follows different formulas for structuring and composing utterances, both verbal and non-verbal; for example, subject + verb + object is the standard formula for structuring a basic English sentence, whereas Farsi follows subject + object + verb. Therefore, when students translate their thoughts from Farsi to English, they experience a negative transfer of their L1 into their L2. According to Omidipour (2014), the most challenging structures are those with overlap but not equivalence in form, meaning, and distribution, which cause interference or negative transfer.

The current study investigated the learners' L1 transfer into their L2. The findings indicated that L1 plays a significant role in facilitating learning an L2. However, the negative transfer of L1 habits and prior knowledge into L2 is unavoidable. The negative and positive transfer of learners' L1 into their L2 pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary were discussed.

The current study's findings contribute to the body of literature on SLA, particularly in an Afghan context which is underrepresented in research in general and in the field of linguistics and SLA in particular. The data collected through the interviews help the language instructors better understand the areas their students struggle with and the sources of their errors. Further, it reminds teachers of the importance of designing appropriate teaching materials and employing methodologies that help students overcome their L1 interferences and benefit from their L1 positive transfer and prior knowledge. Since the current study is an exploratory qualitative design, the findings cannot be generalized to a more significant population. Therefore, further research studies can be conducted following a different research methodology such as quantitative and mixed-methods from the perspectives of the English language instructors, too.

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Appendix 1
Individual Interview Protocol

Brief Description: The following open-ended questions are for the current interview on the study "First Language Interference Effects in a Second Language: Afghan EFL Students Voices." There might be some follow-up questions for more clarifications.

1. Would you please introduce yourself? Your name? Your native language?
2. From what age have you started learning English? Have you learned English in an academic or non-academic context?
3. Have you ever attempted to adopt a native-like language? If yes, why? If yes, have you succeeded?
4. How did you find learning English? Challenging or easy?
5. Do you feel that having a first language is a plus point in learning another language?
6. How did you find the role of your L1 in learning an L2?
   a. Did your L1 help you to learn your L2? If yes;
   b. In what ways did your L1 help you to learn English better?
   c. Did you notice any similarities in terms of phonology, vocabulary, and grammar between your L1 and English? If yes;
   d. In what ways did the similarities help you to develop your L2 (English) effectively and easily?
7. What do you think will be challenging for students in learning a second language in terms of having the first language already in place?
   a. Have you noticed any interference from your L1 in your L2 (English)?
   b. What are the areas you have experienced major interference (negative transfer)?
   c. Have you encountered any L1 negative transfer in your L2 in terms of phonology (pronunciation)? If yes, how?
   d. Have you encountered any L1 interference in your L2 in terms of vocabulary? If yes, how?
   e. Have you experienced any L1 interference in your L2 in terms of grammar? If yes, how?
8. Have you ever tried to overcome the negative transfer of your L1 in your L2? If yes, what were your coping strategies?

Thank you so much for your time and for your contributions to the current research; it is greatly appreciated. Is there anything you would like to add?