

# **The role of the background languages in L3 vocabulary acquisition: The Cumulative Enhancement Model and Typological Similarity Model**

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## **Abstract**

The present study sheds light on cross-linguistic influence in third language learning, and it aims to explore the role of the previously acquired languages in third language acquisition and test the Cumulative Enhancement Model (Flynn et al, 2004) and Typological Similarity Model (Rothman, 2011). The CE Model supports the facilitation role of the previously acquired languages (L1 and L2) during the learning process of a third language (L3). The participants of this study are 35 middle school students who have Arabic as a first language, French as a second language, and they are learning English as a third language. A multiple-choice translation task that aims to test the participants' knowledge of the non-native language they learn, in addition to a text in L3 in which they have to translate into their L1. The findings showed that participants transfer from the more typologically similar language (i.e. French) due to the typological similarity which gives evidence for the Typological Similarity Model in which learners use the languages that is typologically similar to L3 at early stages of L3 acquisition.

**Keywords:** Third language acquisition, background languages, cross-linguistic influence, Cumulative Enhancement Model