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Language learning strategies in third language acquisition

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Abstract

Language learning strategies are specific actions that learners employ in order to make their learning easier, faster, more self-directed and efficient (Oxford, 1990). It is of great interest to both teachers and students to know what these techniques are and how they can be employed, in order to improve their teaching and learning. Even though there is evidence that bilingualism and multilingualism may positively affect an additional language learning in various ways, some studies (Kemp, 2007, Korkmaz, 2013, Mitits & Sarafianou, 2012, Psaltou-Joycey & Kantaridou, 2009, Qasimnejad & Hemmati, 2013, Sung, 2011) have been undertaken to find how exactly multilinguals apply their vast linguistic knowledge when approaching various linguistic tasks in terms of strategies used. This paper investigated the use and frequency of language learning strategies of two multilingual groups of Croatian high school students who had been studying two or three foreign languages, respectively. The research study was carried out using statments based on items from Oxford's SILL questionnaire (1990), and additional items, which were added with the aim to test cross-linguistic strategies in particular. The results showed that the participants with the knowledge of three languages used a wider variety of strategies and used them more often. The same was found in the case of cross-linguistic strategies.

Key words: language learning strategies, third language acquisition, bilingualism, multilingualism

1   Introduction

In trying to discover what makes good language learners, the issue of language learning strategies was raised in order to see whether the use of strategies makes them different from other, less successful learners. Among factors related to choice of language learning strategies are language being learned, level of language learning, degree of metacognitive awareness, gender, motivation and language language learning goals (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989).

The studies in third language acquisition field have shown that bilinguals had some advantages over monolinguals in learning additional languages, for example, they had heightened levels of metalinguistic and crosslinguistic awareness which play an important role in the development of their language learning strategies (Aronin & Singleton, 2012, Jessner, 2006, Cenoz & Jessner, 2009). The aim of this paper is to investigate the influence of the number of languages known on language learning strategy use and the use of cross-linguistic strategies.

The first part of the paper will present the theoretical background of language learning strategies and an overview of the field of third language acquisition. The definitions of the term "language learning strategies" will be presented, along with the comparison of the major taxonomies of language learning strategies. This part also deals with third language acquisition and gives explanations of important terms related to it, such as bilingualism, multilingualism, metalinguistic awareness and crosslinguistic interaction. Finally, this part will provide a review of some studies that investigated language learning strategies of multilingual learners.

In the second part, the study carried out with two groups of multilingual learners showing the differences in the choice and frequency of language learning strategies used by learners who learn two and those who learn three foreign languages will be presented.

2   Language learning strategies and their taxonomies

When it comes to learning, some individuals seem to perform better than others who struggle with acquiring new knowledge. Those differences can also be compared to learning new languages, which is an especially complex and long-lasting undertaking. Some of the differences between effective, fast and ineffective, slow language learners can be attributed to special techniques they use when learning a new language, that is, language learning strategies. Along with a growing interest in what makes a "good" language learner in recent decades, many different definitions in second language acquisition field of what learning strategies are have emerged. However, as there is still no agreement on what exactly they are and how they should be classified, a definition of language learning strategies that would be unanimously accepted has yet to be created.

Firts of all, as there is not a consensus on the terminology, different authors have used different terms, such as "learner strategies" (Rubin, 1987), "learning strategies" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) and "language learning strategies" (Oxford, 1990). Dörnyei (2005, 2006, as cited in Cohen, 2011), on the other hand, proposed the term "learner self-regulation", which referred to the degree to which individuals were active participants in their own learning, arguing that the process of self-regulation merely generated strategies as a product.

Oxford defined language learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more trasferrable to new situations" (1990, p. 8). She claimed that strategies were especially important for language learning because they were "tools for active, self-directed involvement, which was essential for developing communicative competence" (Oxford, 1990, p. 1). O'Malley and Chamot (1999) defined language learning strategies from a cognitive theory point of view and claimed they were "special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning or retention of the information" (p. 1). The expectation based on their view would be that strategies are located in the brain and that learning a language does not differ from learning content, and therefore does not have a role for any specific linguistic faculty (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, as cited in Skehan, 1991). However, Chamot and El-Dinary (2000, as cited in Macaro, 2006) proposed that strategies were not only mental procedures that assisted learning but that they also included overt activities. Similarly, Oxford's definition (1990) included physical activities, such as writing in a notebook, or physically acting out new words, as examples of strategic behaviour. Phakiti

(2003, as cited in Macaro, 2006) defined strategies not in the strictest sense of the term and argued they should be seen as learners' stable long-term knowledge of their strategy use. He, therefore, ruled out action as an integral component of a strategy.

Mayer (1988, as cited in Macaro, 2006) referred to strategies as "behaviours of a learner that are intended to influence how the learner processes information" (p. 11). In his vew, which is similar to Oxford's (1990), strategies were additional to the processing of information in a sense that they facilitated learning and made it more effective (Macaro, 2006). In a similar vein, White (2008) defined language learning strategies as the operations or processes which were consciously selected and employed by the learner to learn the target language or facilitate a language task.

Brown (2000) stated that language learning strategies were moment-by-moment techniques that we employed to solve problems posed by second language input and output. When the learner consciously chooses strategies that fit his or her learning style and the L2 task at hand, these strategies become a useful toolkit for active, conscious, and purposeful self-regulation of learning (Oxford, 2003). According to Cohen (2011), language learning strategies could be defined as thoughts and actions, consciously selected by learners, to assist them in learning and using language in general as well as in the completion of specific language tasks. Cohen made a distinction between language learning strategies (i.e., strategies for the learning of language material for the first time) and language use strategies (i.e., strategies for using the material that has already been learned to some degree), which are deployed in complex and interacting ways, so that at any given moment it is difficult to isolate a single strategy being used.

Griffiths (2013) identified six essential characteristics of language learning strategies: they are active, conscious, chosen, purposeful, regulatory and learning-focused. However, Griffiths (2013) argued that "deliberate" versus "automatic" was a more useful distinction than "conscious" versus "unconscious", and that strategies could operate somewhere on a continuum between the two. Furthermore, Bialystok (1978, as cited in Griffiths, 2013) explained that language learning strategies were optional means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language. It is then, logical, that strategies have to be chosen by learners, since it would be impossible to force them to employ them against their will. According to Griffiths (2013), learning activities that are passively accepted from others can hardly be called strategic. Furthermore, strategic activity must be

purposefully related to a goal, and not just some kind of random behaviour, and it has to be aimed at the regulation of language development (Griffiths, 2013).

Some of the most influential classifications of language learning strategies that have appeared over the years were those of O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Küpper and Russo (1985), Oxford (1990) and Rubin (1987). All three of them distinguished between different categories of strategies depending on the level or type of processing involved. O'Malley et al. (1985, as cited in O'Malley and Chamot, 1999) differentiated between metacognitive (higher order executive skills that refer to planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the success of a learning activity), cognitive (strategies that operate directly on incoming information and manipulate it in ways that enhance learning and are mostly used for the specific type of task) and social/affective strategies (strategies that entail either interaction with another person or control over affect). Both Rubin (1987, as cited in Zare, 2012) and Oxford (1990) distinguished between strategies contributing directly to learning and those contributing indirectly to learning. Rubin further classified direct strategies into metacognitive and cognitive, and indirect into communicative and social strategies. Oxford subdivided these two classes into a total of six groups. Direct strategies consist of memory, cognitive and compensation strategies, while indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective and social strategies. The compensation category seems to be a major addition in Oxford's classification.

As can be seen, in defining language learning strategies the focus has shifted over the years from their product (linguistic or sociolinguistic competence) to their processes and characteristics (Lessard-Clouston, 1997). However, there are many problems in language learning strategy research, which can be summarised as follows: there is no consensus on what language learning strategies do, especially whether they are always facilitative and effective, whether they occur inside or outside the brain, whether they consist of knowledge, intention, action or all three, whether their integrity survives across all learning situations, tasks and contexts, how general or abstract they are and whether and how they could be classified in a framework or a hierarchy (Macaro, 2006).

3   Third language acquisition

In recent times, a significant amount of research on third language acquisition and multilingualism has appeared. Consequently, there has been a lot of effort by experts in the

area of language learning to give a precise definition of a third language (L3) and establish its difference in relation to the first (L1) and the second language (L2).

The term L3 has been used variably in the literature since it is not self-evident what kind of concept it can refer to. Hammarberg (2009) explained that one common practice was to number the speaker's languages chronologically, according to the time of first encounter: L1, L2, L3, L4 and so forth. This chronological scale may seem parallel to the terms monolingual, bilingual, trilingual, quadrilingual and so forth, which represent the result of the acquisition of a certain number of languages. According to Hammarberg (2009), the analogy is superficial, since it will often not be possible to order a multilingual's languages along a linear time scale. Therefore, Hammarberg proposed using the term third language (L3) for a non-native language which is currently being used or acquired in a situation where the person already has a knowledge of one or more L2s (languages encountered and acquired after infancy) besides one or more L1s (languages acquired during infancy). "An L3 is thus a special case of the wider category of L2, and not necessarily language number three in order of acquisition" (Hammarberg, 2009, p. 6). Moreover, De Angelis (2007) suggested the idea of using L3 to refer to a third or additional language, regardless of whether it is a third, fourth or sixth language.

Although many different terms have been put forward to name the field itself, such as Multiple Language Acquisition, Multilingual Acquisition and Third Language Acquisition (TLA), De Angelis (2007) argued that the term „Third or Additional Language Acquisition“ was the most proper one because it refered to all languages beyond L2 without giving preference to any particular language.

Most scholars working with L3 learners agree that learning an L3 differs from learning an L2 in many respects and that a clear distinction between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Third Language Acquisition (TLA) has to be drawn. Jessner (1999) argued that SLA had to be treated differently from TLA due to the increasing complexity of crosslinguistic interaction, the importance of metalinguistic awareness in the acquisition process of an L3, and the increased pressure from language attrition and relearning. One of the most interesting issues regarding TLA is to see whether bilinguals have advantages over monolinguals in learning a further language and to look into the effects of bilingualism on TLA.

The majority of studies on general proficiency indicated a positive effect of bilingualism on TLA which was also linked to language learning strategies and communicative ability, particularly in the case of typologically close languages (Cenoz & Jessner, 2009).

Consequently, when faced with a complex task of acquiring L3, bilingual students are able to use a wider variety of learning strategies and to weigh the effectiveness of these strategies due to their experience in learning languages (McLaughlin & Nayak, 1989, as cited in Molnár, 2008).

Prior language learning experience changes the quality of L3 learning which results in differing language strategies which the experienced language learner develops in contrast to the inexperienced one. These advanced cognitive skills in language learning may, therefore, lead to the speeding up of the language learning process (Jessner, 1999). The complexity of TLA is also linked to individual factors in language learning. The interplay between the various individual factors, such as aptitude, motivation, learning strategies, learning styles and L1 influencing the second language learning process is rather complex so it is not surprising that in TLA the complexity increases (Jessner, 2008). In other words, it is difficult to determine the extent to which each of these factors contribute to the success in learning an L2 and that difficulty only increases with an additional language in a learner's repertoire when learning an L3. For instance, the interplay between an L1 and L2 makes learning an L3 more complex because the learner has more linguistic information he can draw conclusions from. The number and variety of learning strategies increases as well.

4   Multilingualism

As Jessner (2008) stated, bilingualism refers to the mastery of two languages, while multilingualism refers to the familiarity with more than two languages. Multilingual acquisition is a complex and dynamic process which can be a result of either the simultaneous or the consecutive acquisition of foreign languages. When two languages are involved there are only two possibilities: early bilingualism when the two languages are learned simultaneously and second language acquisition when they are learned consecutively. In third language acquisition there are at least four possibilites:

A. Simultaneous acquisition of L1/L2/L3;

B. Consecutive acquisition of L1, L2 and L3;

C. Simultaneous acquisition of L2/L3 after learning the L1; and

D. Simultaneous acquisition of L1/L2 before learning the L3 (Cenoz, 2000, as cited in Cenoz & Jessner, 2009).

Multilinguals seem to possess special characteristics not found in monolinguals or bilinguals. Relative to monolinguals or bilinguals they have larger overall linguistic repertoires, tend to use more learning strategies, seem to have enhanced metalinguistic awareness, seem to acquire greater sensitivity to socio-pragmatic aspects of communication, and are more responsive to both linguistic and non-linguistic factors in communicative situations (Aronin & Singleton, 2012). Language learning skills and language maintenance skills are developed at a higher level in multilinguals as well. They are also more adept at language managment, which is the multilingual art of balancing communicative requirements with language resources. These skills seem to contribute to metalinguistic or language awareness (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000).

Jessner (2006) put forward the idea of linguistic awareness in multilinguals and defined it as an emergent property of multilingual proficiency consisting of at least two dimensions in the form of crosslinguistic awareness and metalinguistic awareness. Crosslinguistic awareness refers to the learner's tacit and explicit awareness of the links between their language systems, while metalinguistic awareness refers to the ability to focus attention on language as an object in itself and to think abstractly about language, to play with or manipulate language. This is multilinguals' most characteristic cognitive ability (Jessner, 2006). Yopp (1988, as cited in Thomas, 1992) reported four general types of metalinguistic ability: phonological awareness, word awareness, syntactic awareness, and pragmatic awareness. According to Mora (2001, as cited in Szerencsi, 2010), metalinguistic awareness incorporates the skills of knowing that language has a potential greater than that of simple symbols (it goes beyond the meaning); that words are separable from their referents (meaning resides in the mind, not in the name), and that language has a structure that can be manipulated (language is malleable).

Metalinguistic awareness allows the individual to step back from the comprehension or production of an utterance in order to consider the linguistic form and structure underlying the meaning of the utterance. Metalinguistic awareness refers to knowing how to approach and solve certain types of problems which themselves demand certain cognitive and linguistic skills (Malakoff, 1992, as cited in Jessner, 2006). In Bialystok's view (2001, as cited in Kuo & Anderson, 2008), metalinguistic awareness involves both the analytical ability to reflect upon and manipulate formal properties of language and the attentional control of the mental mechanism that operates language processing. Bialystok (1978, as cited in Harris, 1992) made a distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge and proposed that facts stored as explicit linguistic knowledge could be articulated in contrast to automatic information that

was used spontaneously and was respresented in implicit linguistic knowledge. Implicit linguistic knowledge contains the information about the target language necessary for spontaneous comprehension, that is, it functions communicatively. Whereas Bialystok emphasized non-communicative functions of explicit knowledge, Odlin (1986, as cited in Harris, 1992) stressed communicative functions of metalinguistic knowledge, suggesting that bilinguals who code-switch were often aware of their lexical choices and, therefore, used formal linguistic knowledge with a communicative purpose.

As can be expected, metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness play an important role in the development of language learning strategies in multilingual learners and users (Cenoz & Jessner, 2009). Furthermore, metalinguistic awareness is closely connected with language aptitude. The bigger the number of languages involved in the acquisition process, the more difficult it is to decide whether language aptitude or metalinguistic awareness influence the language acquisition progress (Jessner, 2006).

The role of an increased level of metalinguistic awareness, which forms an integral part of multilingual proficiency, was emphasized in the Dynamic Model of Multilingualism developed by Herdina and Jessner (2002, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004). This model accounts for linguistic development which involves the cumulative interdependence between language systems of a multilingual (i.e. L1, L2, L3, etc.), resulting in complex cross-linguistic interactions and development of specific skills tied to language learning (Herdina & Jessner, 2002, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004).

Role-function model by Hammarberg and Williams (2001a, 2001b, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004) illustrated different roles the various background languages of a learner might fulfil in the spoken production of the target language. The model distinguished between the instrumental language and the default supplier language. The instrumental language is metalinguistic in nature and performs an instrumental function for target language production, while the default supplier language is the main source for crosslinguistic influence, slipping into target language production without the learner's intention. Only one language will be chosen as the default supplier and the choice depends on how well each of the languages in an individual's repertoire fulfils four criteria: typological similarity (how related the languages are to each other or how related the learner believes they are), proficiency (how well the languages are spoken), recency of use (how often the languages are spoken), and its status as an L2 (foreign languages are more likely to become default suppliers than L1s, while L1s are usually chosen as instrumental languages). Possible reasons for the greater possibility of using

an L2 instead of an L1 as the default supplier are different acquisition mechanisms for foreign languages as opposed to the L1, which leads to an activation of the L2 type of mechanism in L3 acquisition, and a desire to suppress the Ll as "non-foreign" and instead orientate oneself towards a prior foreign language when approaching the target language (Hammarberg, 2001a, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004). This might be due to the fact that foreign languages are generally perceived to be closer to each other than to the native language (De Angelis, 2007). It is worth noting that the roles of the languages may shift over time, with increased competence in the target language leading to a decreased reliance on various other languages. (Hammarberg, 2001a, 2001b; Williams & Hammarberg, 1998, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004).

Yet another model that has been developed to explain and describe multiple language acquisition was Hufeisen's Factor Model (Marx & Hufeisen, 2007, 2004), which emphasized the differences between learning an L2 and learning an L3. Whereas at the beginning of the L2 learning process the learner is a complete novice in the learning process of a second language, in third language learning the learner already knows how to approach a new language. The learning of an L3, therefore, includes a new set of learning factors, that is, foreign/second language learning-specific factors, such as individual second language learning experiences, interlanguages of other learned languages, and foreign language learning strategies. Each factor interacts with the others, but the importance of single factors and their relevance for the success of the learning process is different from learner to learner. This model does not assume difference in learning an L3 and additional languages beyond it (Marx & Hufeisen, 2007, 2004).

The Multilingual Processing Model (Meißner, 2003, Meißner & Burk, 2001, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004) suggested that learners constructed a type of "spontaneous grammar" in the new language, based on what they know of other, related languages and modified according to multilingual strategies. Those strategies strengthen hypothesis formulation and sensitise the learner to differences between languages in terms of syntax or lexis. This model is similar to the role-function model in that it proposes that learners use one or more language systems that the learner already knows and which are called on when understanding the target language - providing these language systems are etymologically related with the new language and the learner had reached a certain degree of competence in them (Meißner, 1998, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004). Each new language in an individual's repertoire adds to the individual's "plurilingual intergrammar", which functions as

a base for any languages that were to be learnt in the future (Meißner, 2003, Meißner & Burk, 2001, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004).

In his strategy model of multilingual learning, Müller-Lancé (2003) offered some essential aspects of the multilingual mental lexicon, such as that the connections between the elements of different foreign languages were not necessarily weaker than those between foreign language elements and L1 elements. Furthermore, he stated that mental connections had different "strengths": extremely strong were those between cognates, that is, phonetically and semantically related words of different languages. When it came to experienced learners, cognates of different languages were more strongly connected mutually than to the respective L1 element, or to the other elements of the respective foreign language. Accordingly, interlingual connections can be stronger than intralingual connections. It is also plausible that the respective forms of L1, L2, L3 etc. are grouped around one common concept. Finally, learners usually make semantic connections between the words, rather than phonetic (Müller-Lancé, 2003).

5 Studies on strategies in third language acquisition

Although a lot of research has been done on multilingualism and L3 acquisition in recent years, there is still little information on how language learning strategies affect L3 acquisition. Jessner (2008) offered a summary of some studies that dealt with multilingual learner strategies. One of those studies, carried out by Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1996[1978]), looked into the characteristics of good language learners and found their success was linked to a number of strategies, such as an active learning approach, realization of language as a system, realization of language as a means of communication, handling of affective demands and monitoring of progress.

Nayak, Hansen, Krueger and McLaughlin (1990, as cited in Cenoz & Genesee, 1998) wanted to see if multilingual learners used different strategies to learn a miniature linguistic system assigned in the study than did monolingual learners. The results showed that the multilingual learners were superior to monolinguals in a number of ways: they demonstrated greater flexibility in switching strategies according to the demand characteristics of the task – for example, they preferred mnemonic strategies for a memory task and linguistic strategies

for a rule-discovery task; they were more likely to modify strategies that were not effective in language learning and were more effective using implicit language learning strategies.

Thomas (1992, as cited in Cenoz & Genesee, 1998) found that bilinguals who were learning an L3 used more communication strategies in comparison with monolinguals who were more worried with grammar and vocabulary. The author explained that the fact that bilinguals had to switch languages according to the situational demands could enhance their sensitivity to the functions of language for social communication. It was concluded that a student's prior linguistic experience influenced the strategies which they subsequently adapted, and their success in the foreign language classroom (as cited in Jessner, 2008). Similarly, Mißler (1999, 2000) found that the increase of language learning experience was reflected in the number of strategies, which also turned out to depend on individual factors (as cited in Jessner, 2008).

The results of Kemp's study (2001) showed that multilinguals developed more grammatical metalinguistic awareness and were, therefore, better at learning additional languages. In her later study (2007), she investigated the use of grammar learning strategies and found that the more languages learners knew, the greater the number of grammar learning strategies they used and the more frequently they used them. This led her to a conclusion that "there may be a threshold effect for the use of grammar learning strategies so that an increase in the number and frequency of strategies used occurs to a greater extent during the acquisition of the third language, increasing more gradually in additional languages, than occurs in L2 learning" (Kemp, 2007, p. 241). The reason behind this may be bilinguals' lack of procedural knowledge of processing that multilinguals have, or the automaticity of use, which multilinguals are able to apply in learning another language (Kemp, 2007), and which allows them to pay greater attention to important aspects of the input. Additionally, the participants in the study were asked to write in strategies they used that were not present in the questionnaire (i.e. idiosyncratic strategies). The most notable strategy that they named was "I compare and contrast the target language grammar with the grammar in other languages I know" (Kemp, 2007, p. 251). This showed that participants did not only have implicit procedural knowledge of their grammar learning strategies, but were also able to identify them (Kemp, 2007). The study showed that prior linguistic knowledge played an important part in how learners approached the study of a target language.

Mitits and Sarafianou (2012) conducted a study involving three successful language learners (two bilinguals with L1 Greek-L2 Serbian and L1 Russian-L2 Greek and a

monolingual with L1 Greek) in order to observe how language learning strategies developed across languages and whether bilingual learners' use of strategies differed quantitatively and qualitatively from that of monolinguals when learning English L3. The results showed that the bilingual learners used more strategies more frequently than the monolingual one. There was also a qualitative difference in strategy use in that the bilinguals tended to transfer more strategies that have to do with implicit rather than explicit language learning and relied more on the typological similarities between languages. Bilingual participants reported a number of strategies they used when encountering new vocabulary, such as drawing from L1 and L2, depending on the word closeness, guessing from context or analysing word parts to come to understanding. They also reported constantly learning from their mistakes and avoiding literal translation. L1 Russian-L2 Greek participant stated that Russian often helped her with her English, but sometimes found it confusing and mixed codes, particularly when lacking the knowledge of Greek vocabulary.

Qasimnejad and Hemmati (2013) also investigated the difference between monolinguals and bilinguals in terms using language learning strategies. The participants were monolingual Persian and bilingual Turkish and Persian university students as EFL learners. The results revealed that both monolingual Persian and bilingual Turkish-Persian university students employed a wide variety of language learning strategies, with bilingual learners employing more strategies than their monolingual peers. The Turkish-Persian students reported using metacognitive strategies to control learning by for example, thinking about their progress in learning English, seeking out ways to improve their learning, setting clear goals in learning English, and planning their schedule to study English. More importantly, they reported greater tendencies than monolinguals to notice their mistakes and to be able to learn from them. The most frequently used strategies among bilinguals were metacognitive, which they used much more often when compared to monolingual students. The second most frequently used strategies by bilingual students were compensation strategies, which they found useful in overcoming their missing knowledge of English through the use of synonyms, guessing, and reading English without looking up every new word. Cognitive strategies were ranked as the third amongst preferred strategies in both groups, although use was higher for the bilingual group. When it comes to affective strategies, both groups were equally aware of their anxiety and tension, however, the bilingual group reported using them more often. Social strategies were reported among the least used strategies by both bilinguals and monolinguals. Still, the majority of the respodents in both

groups reported always or almost always trying to practice English with other students and native speakers. Memory strategies were least favoured of the six categories of strategies by bilinguals.

Sung (2011) investigated Chinese FL learners' strategy use in the US universities and came to a conclusion that the participants who had studied one other foreign language prior to Chinese used the four categories of strategies, cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social strategies, less frequently than those who had studied two or more other foreign languages prior to Chinese. In other words, the more languages the learners studied, the more frequently they used strategies in learning the additional language, Chinese.

Psaltou-Joycey and Kantaridou (2009) conducted a similar study on language learning strategy use, but with bilingual and trilingual Greek university students learning FLs in an academic context. The results of the study indicated that trilingual students used more strategies more frequently than bilinguals. Trilinguals outperformed bilinguals in the use of metacognitive, cognitive, compensation and social strategies. To be more specific, trilingual students reported they made associations between new elements in the target language and what they already knew in order to memorise them and used guessing and synonyms to find out new meanings. They also reported not hesitating to take risks and proved to be more willing than bilingual students to speak in the foreign language.

A study by Korkmaz (2013) explored the most and the least frequently used language learning strategies of TEFL students with Turkish L1 when learning German or French as their L3. The results revealed that the participants from both groups employed the same strategies; compensation strategies emerged as the most frequently used ones, memory strategies as the secondly most frequently used, whereas affective strategies as the least frequently used ones. Using guessing strategy and associating known subjects with new ones were two frequently used strategies for both groups. The participants also reported that they mostly used English, their L2, to guess and associate the meaning in their L3s, which indicated that language learning strategies were transferable and the strategies developed when learning a first foreign language had valuable contribution to learn a later one (Korkmaz, 2013). In a similar vein, a study by Molnár (2008) reported that knowledge of an L2 can play an important role in TLA provided that it was typologically closer to the target language than the L1 was.

Dewaele (2002, as cited in De Angelis, 2007) conducted a study on language anxiety and found that the strongest difference in anxiety levels was between the L1 and the L2.

Speaking in the second language causes higher levels of anxiety than speaking in the first language; anxiety then lowers in subsequent languages. This could lead to a conclusion that multilinguals develop their affective strategies to a greater extent than monolinguals, which helps them cope with negative feelings during language production.

In spite of a body of evidence suggesting coginitive advantages of bilinguals in comparison to monolinguals when learning L3, it still remains unclear whether or not multilingual learners with more languages would use strategies differently from their peers who studied fewer languages. Even though the studies listed here show that knowing more languages leads to a more diverse and frequent language strategy use, this area of TLA calls for further research.

6   Study

6.1   Aims

The aim of this study was to investigate the frequency and potential differences in the use of particular strategies by two groups of Croatian learners; those who studied two foreign languages and those who studied three foreign languages.

6.2   Participants

A total of 42 students participated in the research study. Twenty-three students of German as their second foreign language (Group A) and 19 students of German as the second and Italian as the third foreign language (Group B). Students from both groups had English as their first foreign language. Students from the Group A are 18 years old high-school graduates, while those from the Group B are 17 years old 3rd grade students. Students from both groups attend Tin Ujević high school in Kutina.

All the participants in the Group A (L3 learners) had Croatian as their mother tongue. The mean of years of learning English is 11.91, while the mean for German is 5.43 years. All the participants in the Group B (L4 learners) also had Croatian as their mother tongue. On average, they had been learning English for 12.05, German for 7.05, and Italian for 3.26 years.

Figure 1 shows the students' self-assessment of proficiency in the languages they are learning. The average grades the students in the Group A would give themselves in English

and German are 4.21 and 3.56, respectively. On the other hand, the Group B assessed themselves in the following way: 4.57 in English, 3.26 in German, and 2.63 in Italian.
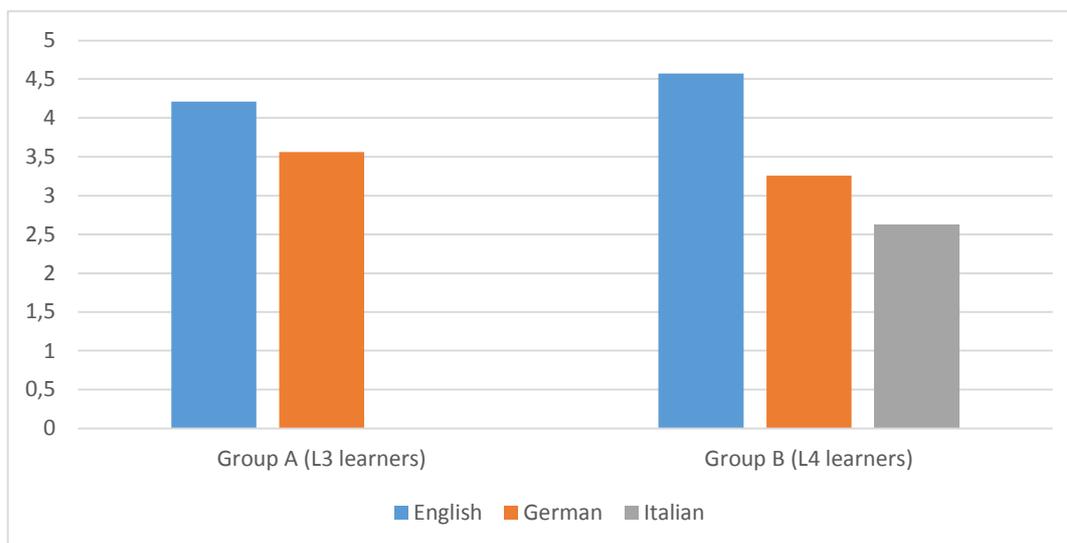

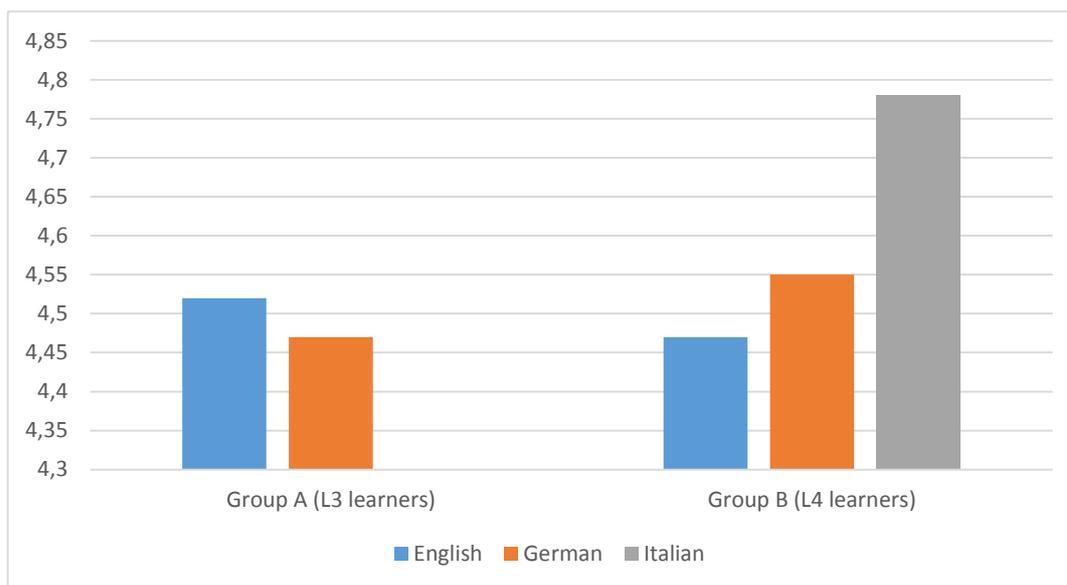Figure 1: Self-assessment of proficiency in foreign languages, Groups A and B

Figure 2: Current grades in foreign languages, Groups A and B

As can be seen in Figure 2, there is not much difference between the two groups in terms of school grades. Groups A and B had almost the same grades in English (means 4.52 and 4.47 for Groups A and B, respectively) and German (means 4.47 and 4.55).

The Group B, who had been studying an additional foreign language, Italian, had an average grade of 4.78 in that language. That contrasts with the self-assessment of proficiency mean, which was 2.63. They had been learning Italian for, on average, only 3.26 years, which, contrasted to a much longer period of time of learning English and German, might have led them to perceive their proficiency as lower. There was also a discrepancy between their self-assesment of proficiency in German and the school grade. This could be explained by the increased awareness of their language performance and the need for improvement.

Next, none of the participants in the Group A stated that proficiency in either English or German was unimportant to them. Ninety-one per cent claimed proficiency in English was "very important", as opposed to 30 per cent of them stating that for German. In the Group B all the participants reported that proficiency in English was very important to them. 52 per cent of them stated that for German, while only two of them claimed it was "not important". Most of them, 84 per cent, agreed that it was "important" to be proficient in Italian, with only three of them finding it very important. The participants agreed that English was the most important language to achieve high proficiency in, while German and Italian were considered to be not as important, although the Group B found German slightly more important than the Group A. The Group B chose Italian as an elective in the first grade of high school, so maybe this reflected their general belief about the importance of knowing foreign languages.

In the Group A 60 per cent of students stated they enjoyed foreign language learning, while in the Group B only one participant stated he did not, which leads to a conclusion that the Group B were more motivated for learning languages. We can assume that students who are interested in languages and seem to be good at learning them would take an additional language as a school subject, as it was the case in apparently more motivated Group B.

6.3   Data collection instrument

Data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of three parts (Appendix 1). The first part elicited background data on the participants' mother tongue, the number of languages they had studied and the length of study. They were also asked to rate their proficiency and state how important they thought high proficiency in the specific foreign languages was. The second part consisted of the statements that were largely based on items from The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which is a self-report questionnaire designed by Oxford (1990) with the aim to assess the frequency of use of language learning strategies.

SILL items are evaluated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being "never or almost never true of me" and 5 "always true of me". The statements represent a wide variety of strategies, from compensation and cognitive to affective and social strategies. Items 7, 12, 23 and 30 elicited cognitive strategies, items 8, 24 and 25 metacognitive strategies, items 19, 20 and 22 compensation strategies, items 26 and 27 affective strategies, items 13 and 28 social strategies, while items 1, 3, 4 and 10 elicited memory strategies. All of these were taken from Oxford (1990). The additional items which tested cross-linguistic strategies were added as well, in order to examine the use of knowledge of other foreign languages in learning an additional one more closely. Those were items: 2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21 and 31. The third part asked the participants to answer a few open-ended questions dealing with strategy use in learning foreign languages. The aim was to elicit a more detailed response and to see if the participants reported using some strategies that were not mentioned in the second part of the questionnaire.

6.4   Data collection procedures

Questionnaires were administered to all the participants on the 4th of May, 2015 by their teachers in Tin Ujević high school in Kutina. Teachers provided brief instructions and explained to the participants what was expected from them, emphasizing that their responses would be completely anonymous. They were instructed to first fill out the background questionnaire, followed by the second part that investigated the frequency of use of learning strategies and the third part which consisted of open-ended questions.

StataCorp (2009), a professional statistical software, was used to analyze the collected data. Means were calculated in order to investigate the background information and use of language learning strategies among different groups.

6.5   Results and discussion

6.5.1   Language learning strategies questionnaire analysis

The first aim of this research was to investigate the frequency of use of language learning strategies within two groups of Croatian students studying different foreign languages as L3 and L4. The results shown in Figure 5 below represent the arithmetic means of items from SILL, additional items which tested cross-linguistic strategies and overall strategy use calculated separately for two groups of students.
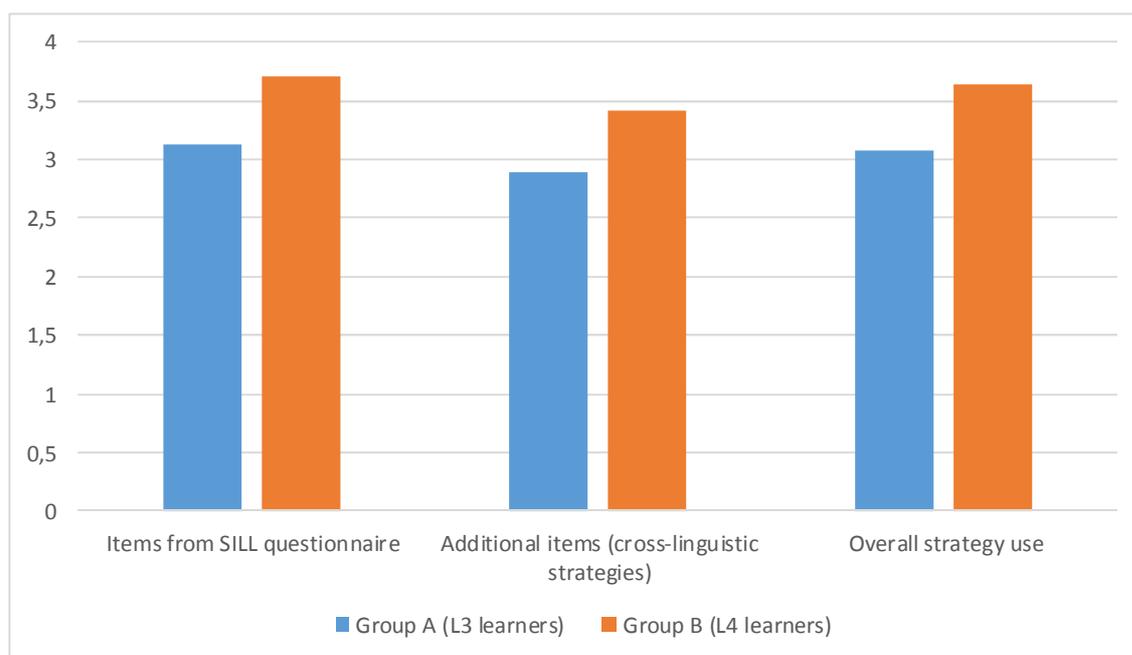
Figure 5: Language learning strategies questionnaire analysis

If we look at the results separately for each group, the Group B (L4 learners) used language learning strategies more often than the Group A (means 3.63 as opposed to 3.07). This may suggest that knowing more languages is reflected in a higher frequency of strategies used when learning an additional language, which is in line with some previous studies, such as the ones by Kemp (2007), Psaltou-Joycey and Kantaridou (2009) and Sung (2011). Mitits and Sarafianou (2012) and Qasimnejad and Hemmati (2013) came to the same conclusions regarding monolinguals and bilinguals, which could be compared with the case of L3 and L4 learners, in that in both cases there is a difference in prior language learning experience leading to a more frequent strategy use. Furthermore, this finding could also mean that the participants who know more languages are more metalingustically aware, as Kemp (2001) suggested, and more conscious of their strategy use in particular situations, while those with fewer languages lack that awareness and are less able to notice when they actually employ strategies, even when they are put to use. As Bialystok (2001, as cited in Kuo & Anderson, 2008) put it, metalinguistic awareness also refers to the attentional control of mental mechanism that operates language processing. In the same vein, Jessner (2006) claimed that, as an emergent property of multilingual proficiency, metalinguistic awareness provided the learners the ability to focus attention on language as an object, which could also refer to the awareness of specific learning techniques.

The Group B had a higher mean in items that were taken from the SILL questionnaire, as well as in additional items which tested cross-linguistic strategies. The means for the Group B in each of the groups of items are 3.71 and 3.42. The means for the Group A for the same categories are 3.12 and 2.89. The results have shown that the students used cross-linguistic strategies less often than strategies that items from SILL elicited (means 3.41 and 3.12).

6.5.1.1 Analysis of the items taken from Oxford's SILL (1990)

Oxford's items from SILL investigate different categories of strategies, from cognitive to social. In Figures 6 and 7, scores for each of the strategy categories are ranked in the order from the most to the least used. As can be seen from Figures 6 and 7, social (SOC) and metacognitive strategies (MET) are the most often used in both groups, and memory strategies (MEM) are the least often used group of strategies. In the Group A, other strategies are ranked as follows, from the most frequently to the least frequently used: affective (AFF), compensation (COM) and cognitive strategies (COG). In the Group B, ranking of other strategies is: compensation (COM), cognitive (COG) and affective strategies (AFF).

Based on the results, we could say that both groups usually use social strategies. In the Group A, almost every other category of strategies could be interpreted as being "sometimes used". On the other hand, almost every other category of strategies was "usually used" by the Group B. However, the exception in both groups were memory strategies, which could be interpreted as being "rarely used" in the Group A, and as being "sometimes used" in the Group B.
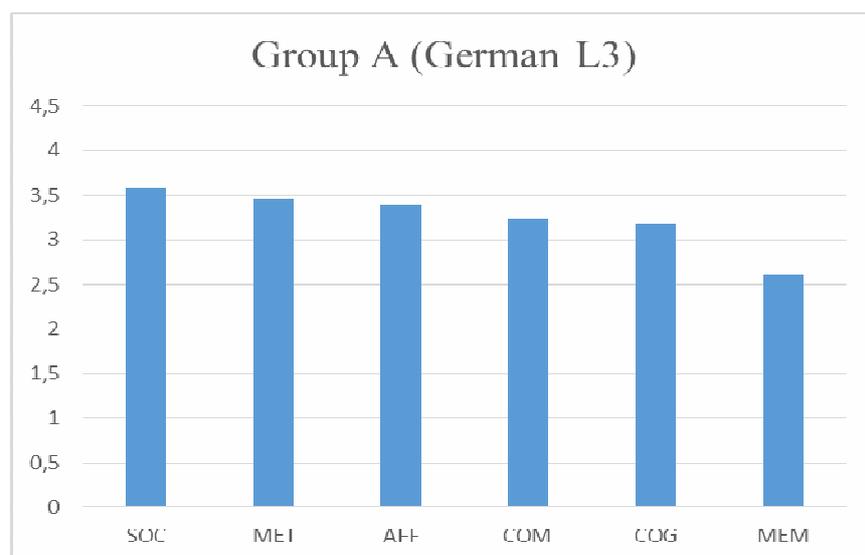

Figure 6: The means for strategy categories of items taken from SILL; Group A
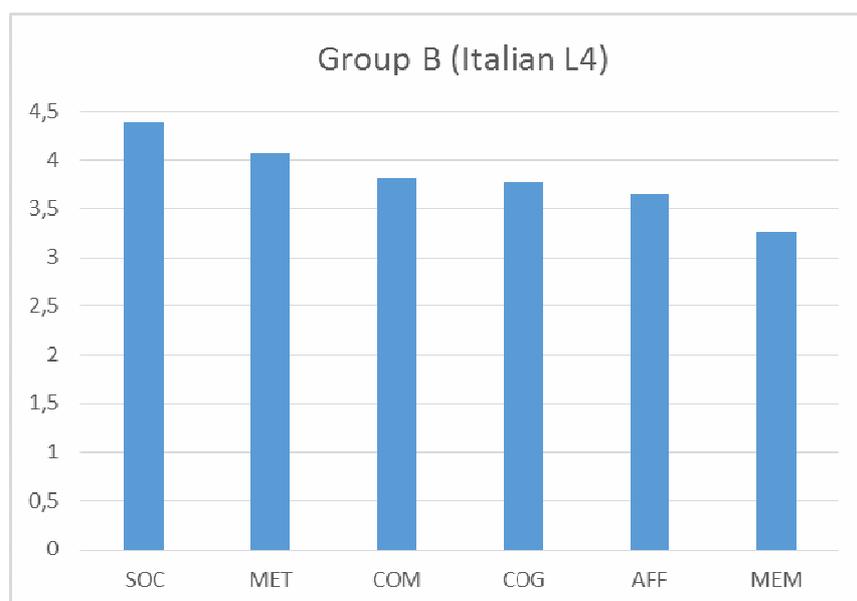
Figure 7: The means for strategy categories of items taken from SILL; Group B

The results of Korkmaz's (2013) and Qasimnejad and Hemmati's (2013) studies, which found that bilingual university students used social strategies the least often, are not in line with these results. The reason for social strategies' high score in this study might be the fact that secondary education curriculum is based on a lot of team work, research and projects. High-school students are more encouraged than in elementary education to work together, not only in foreign language classes, but in other subjects as well. They may also be more interested in spending time with their peers and exploring the world. Moreover, as they grow older and gain more knowledge on language learning, they start realizing that in order to learn a language well, it needs to be practiced as often as possible. Furthermore, Thomas (1982) found that bilinguals used more communication strategies and attributed this to their need to switch languages, which could enhance their sensitivity to the functions of language for social communication. All of that might contribute to social strategies taking the first position.

Metacognitive strategies are the second most often used strategies in both groups. This is in line with the studies by Qasimnejad and Hemmati (2013) and Sung (2011), who found this category to be among the most often used strategy categories. They found that bilinguals control their progress in foreign language learning and seek out ways to improve their learning. As a result of learning more than one foreign language over the years, the participants in this study had gained knowledge on language learning process that helps them plan for, monitor and evaluate the success of a learning activity. They are also more

cognitively mature and have developed a certain level of metalinguistic awareness which permits them to to consider the linguistic form and structures underlying the meanings.

The most frequently used strategies within the Group A (L3 learners) were a compensation, a metacognitive and a cognitive strategy. The item 22 had the highest mean of 3.95 ("When I can't think of a right word, I describe or explain it"), and items 30 and 24 followed with means 3.86 and 3.82, respectively ("I'm careful with direct translation from one language to another" and "I notice my mistakes in foreign languages and use that information to help me do better").

Among the top three most often used strategies within the Group B were items 7, 13 and 19, that is, a cognitive, social and compensation strategy. Item 7 had the mean of 4.57 ("I try to imitate the pronunciation of native speakers of the foreign language I'm learning"), while items 13 and 19 had means of 4.47 ("I try to find opportunities for practice in speaking the foreign languages I'm studying" and "When I don't understand something in the foreign language, I try to guess the meaning"). Students who learn an additional language as an elective are probably more interested in languages and want to sound as native as possible, so it is not surprising that they employ this cognitive strategy so often. The reason for such a high frequency of use of the compensation strategy of trying to guess the meaning could be the fact that their prior language experience made them more willing to take risks when it comes to language performance. Furthermore, as they have more languages in their repertoire, they also have more linguistic information that can be used as a basis for such guesses.

It was shown that the Group B employed all strategies more often, which was in line with Psaltou-Joycey and Kantaridou's (2009), Qasimnejad and Hemmati's (2013) and Sung's (2011) studies, which found that bilinguals and multilinguals use metacognitive, compensation, cognitive and social strategies more often than monolinguals or those with knowledge of fewer languages. This shows that there is a difference between the two groups in terms of their use of prior linguistic knowledge, thinking about their learning and consciously trying to improve it. Both groups have reported that they were careful with direct translation from one language to another (item 30 with a mean score 3.86 for group A and 4.1 for group B), which was also reported by Mitits and Sarafianou (2012), who investigated bilingual learners. Both these groups have substantial experience in language learning which results in their greater awareness of how languages operate.

Within the Group A the lowest mean of 1.86 was calculated for item 10 ("I create my own phonetic spelling of words in the foreign language in order to understand them better")

and item 1, with the mean of 2 ("When learning new words, I classify them into meaningful groups"), which are both memory strategies. One compensation strategy was placed third with the mean 2.08. That was item 20 ("I make up new words when I can't think of the right ones"). Interestingly, among the top three least used strategies within the Group B were the same items, but they were placed somewhat differently. While item 1 was ranked first, items 10 and 20 were ranked second and third.

In comparison to elementary education, secondary education curriculum puts less emphasis on learning through memorization. In high school, students are encouraged to use their analytical and deducing skills. Students are more encouraged to think and expand on already known information. This could explain why both groups of students use memory strategies so rarely and least frequently in comparison to other strategies. This seems to be in line with Qasimnejad and Hemmati's study (2013), which found that memory strategies were bilinguals' least favourite ones. On the other hand, Korkmaz (2013) found that they were among the most often used ones within the group of university students.

6.5.1.2 Analysis of items which tested cross-linguistic strategies

The results have shown that the Group B (L4 learners) sometimes used cross-linguistic strategies (mean 3.42), while the Group A (L3 learners) used them less often (mean 2.89). This confirms the findings of Mitits and Sarafianou (2012), who reported that bilinguals used a number of cross-linguistic strategies, either the ones that employed L1 knowledge or the ones that employed knowledge of other languages. As can bee seen from Table 1, when it comes to employing the knowledge from other languages as a strategy that helps them cope with difficulties in learning the additional language, the Group A relied more on Croatian than other foreign languages they knew (English and German). However, when faced with difficulties in pronunciation, they prefered relying on other foreign languages (item 17) to relying on Croatian (item 18). Items 16 and 15, which elicited the strategies based on the knowledge of Croatian, had the highest mean scores of 3.60 and 3.52, respectively. Items 11, 9 and 8 had the lowest means of 2.52, 2.43 and 2.34. Two of them (11 and 9) tried to investigate the use of other foreign languages as a strategy, while the item 18 tested the use of Croatian in pronounciation of foreign language words.

Table 1: The analysis of items which tested cross-linguistic strategies: Group A

		Cross-linguistic strategy	Group A
1	Item 16	When I can't think of a foreign language word, I use a Croatian one with the most similar meaning.	3.60
2	Item 15	When I encounter something unfamiliar in the foreign language, I translate it from Croatian.	3.52
3	Item 14	When I encounter something unfamiliar in the foreign language, I translate it from other foreign languages I know.	3.17
4	Item 2	When learning new words, I compare them with the words of the same meaning in other languages I know.	3.13
5	Item 5	When learning a new grammar point in the foreign language I find it useful to compare it with its equivalent in Croatian.	3.13
6	Item 31	When speaking in the foreign language, I frequently switch to other foreign languages I'm studying without noticing.	2.86
7	Item 21	When I can't think of a right word, I use synonyms from other languages I know.	2.82
8	Item 17	When I don't know how to pronounce a word in the foreign language, I pronounce it the way I would prounce it in some other foreign language I know.	2.73
9	Item 6	When learning a new grammar point in the foreign language I find it useful to compare it with its equivalent in other foreign language(s) I know.	2.60
10	Item 11	I compare similar-sounding words among the languages I know in terms of their written representation.	2.52
11	Item 9	When learning new things in the foreign language, I try to think of the way I learned a similar thing in some other language.	2.43
12	Item 18	When I don't know how to pronounce a word in a foreign language, I pronounce it the way I would prounce it in Croatian.	2.34

The Group B used other foreign languages (English, German and Italian) slightly more often than Croatian, as can been from Table 2, where all strategies are ranked in the order from the most to the least used. This finding might be in line with the strategy model of multilingual learning by Müller-Lancé (2003), which showed that the connections in the multilingual's mental lexicon between the elements of different foreign languages were not necessarily weaker than those between foreign language elements and L1 elements.

As can be seen from Table 2, the most often used are items 2, 14 and 9 with the means 4.26, 4.05 and 3.73, while the least used were items 11, 17 and 18, with the means 3.15, 3.05 and 2.94.

Table 2: The analysis of items which tested cross-linguistic strategies: Group B

		Cross-linguistic strategy	Group B
1	Item 2	When learning new words, I compare them with the words of the same meaning in other languages I know.	4.26

2	Item 14	When I encounter something unfamiliar in the foreign language, I translate it from other foreign languages I know.	4.05
3	Item 9	When learning new things in the foreign language, I try to think of the way I learned a similar thing in some other language.	3.73
4	Item 15	When I encounter something unfamiliar in the foreign language, I translate it from Croatian.	3.68
5	Item 16	When I can't think of a foreign language word, I use a Croatian one with the most similar meaning.	3.44
6	Item 5	When learning a new grammar point in the foreign language I find it useful to compare it with its equivalent in Croatian.	3.33
7	Item 6	When learning a new grammar point in the foreign language I find it useful to compare it with its equivalent in other foreign language(s) I know.	3.26
7	Item 31	When speaking in the foreign language, I frequently switch to other foreign languages I'm studying without noticing.	3.26
8	Item 21	When I can't think of a right word, I use synonyms from other languages I know.	3.21
9	Item 11	I compare similar-sounding words among the languages I know in terms of their written representation.	3.15
10	Item 17	When I don't know how to pronounce a word in the foreign language, I pronounce it the way I would prounce it in some other foreign language I know.	3.05
11	Item 18	When I don't know how to pronounce a word in a foreign language, I pronounce it the way I would prounce it in Croatian.	2.94

The Group B translate from other languages (item 14) more often than from Croatian (Item 15), but use synonyms from Croatian (item 16) more often than from other languages when they can't think of the right word (item 21). Also, when they do not know how to pronounce a word in the foreign language, they prefer pronouncing it the way they would in some other foreign language they know (item 17) to pronouncing it the way they would in Croatian (item 18), but only slightly so. Group A's tendency to rely more on other foreign languages than on Croatian in pronunciation is more emphasized than in the Group B. However, they use these cross-linguistic strategies less frequently than the Group B overall.

Groups A and B did not differ much in terms of their use of Croatian in learning an additional language. The Group B used all strategies more often, including the strategies that employed the mother tongue, but only slightly so. The Group A, however, used one strategy concerning Croatian more often than the Group B, which was tested by the item 16 ("When I can't think of a foreign language word, I use a Croatian one with the most similar meaning"). In the Group A this item had a mean 3.6, as opposed to a mean 3.44 in the Group B. This the only item which group A ranked higher. A greater difference between the two groups was seen in strategies dealing with translation and comparing the meaning and the sound of words with words from other foreign languages. The Group B employed these strategies more often

than the Group A. The most noticeable difference in individual strategy use between these two groups are found in items 14 ("When I encounter something unfamiliar in the foreign language, I translate it from other foreign languages I know"), 2 ("When learning new words, I compare them with the words of the same meaning in other languages I know") and 9 ("When learning new things in the foreign language, I try to think of the way I learned a similar thing in some other language").

The Group B was ranked slightly higher on the item 26 ("I fear that I sound foolish when speaking the foreign language"), which is in contradiction to Dewaele's (2002) study that found that language anxiety lowers in subsequent languages, leading to a presumption that students with a greater number of languages would be less fearsome about speaking the foreign language. This discrepancy could be attributed to low self-assesment of proficiency in Italian the Group B gave themselves, which resulted in avoidance of communication in that language.

6.5.2 The analysis of open-ended questions

In the third part of the questionnaire we first wanted to know if the participants found that Croatian or other foreign languages (or a language) interfered with their studies of German (for the Group A) or Italian (for the Group B). None of the participants thought that Croatian interfered with their studies of German or Italian. However, in the Group A, three participants thought English interfered with their studies of German, while in the Group B, five thought foreign language interfered with their study of Italian, which can be seen in Figures 8 and 9. The most frequently given reason for interference of English in the Group A was the similarities between the languages at the lexical level. The participants in the Group B stated that the reasons for the interference were the existence of words with similar form but different meaning in English and Italian, the tendency to pronounce the words the way they would in other foreign languages and confusing the grammars of these languages. The Group B had more languages at their disposal which could logically lead to a higher tendency of those languages to interfere with the perfomance in their L4. This could indicate they used their prior lingustic knowledge as a strategy in learning a target language more often than the Group A who reported a lower frequency of interference. As De Angelis states, "additional knowledge in the mind provides further metalinguistic knowledge learners can rely upon during the learning process, particularly if the additional languages are studied in formal learning contexts" (2007, p. 121). This also shows, that there may be a cumulative

interdependence between a multilingual's language systems, as Herdina and Jessner in their Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (2002, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004) put it, resulting in complex cross-linguistic interactions and the development of specific skills related to language learning.
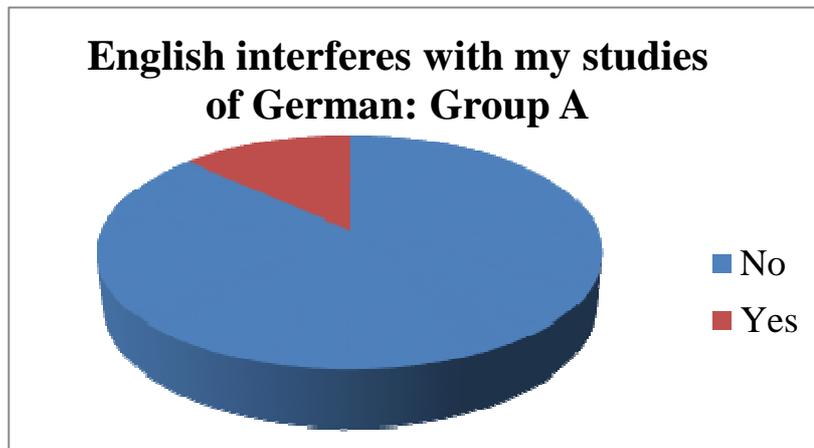
Figure 8: The interference of a foreign language with studies of an additional language: Group A
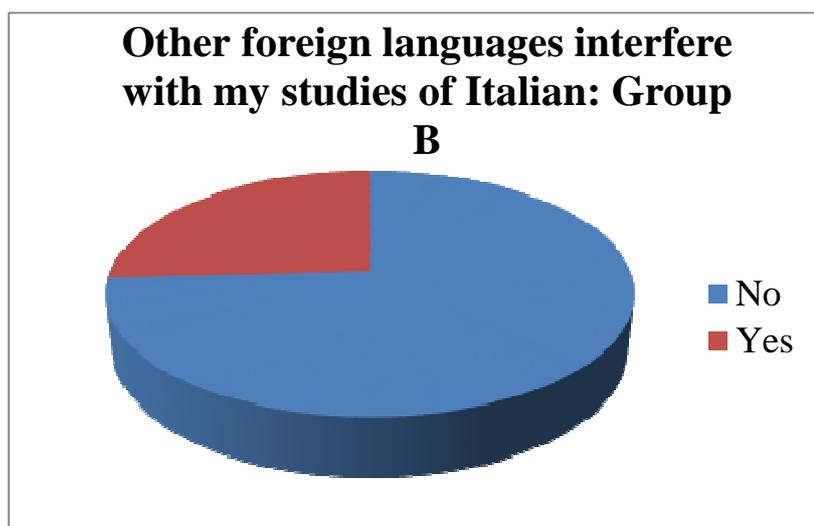
Figure 9: The interference of foreign languages with studies of an additional language: Group B

The last two questions were open-ended and asked the participants to provide the ways in which Croatian and/or other foreign languages helped them in learning German/Italian and state how they dealt with unfamiliar words and structures they encountered when reading in or listening to those languages. The aim was to see what strategies participants would come up on their own, especially regarding the use of their previous linguistic knowledge.

It was shown that both groups employ various social, compensation and cognitive strategies. Guessing from context, translating and comparing with words from other languages were most often reported strategies in the Group A. When asked how knowledge of Croatian or English helped them with their studies of German, most students stated that similarity between Croatian or English grammatical structures and the German ones helped them learn German more efficiently. Here are some of the Group A's answers:

"Some Croatian words were taken from German. In that way I can make associations, which helps to remember the words better.",

"Croatian and English have some grammatical structures that are similar to the German ones.",

"English helps me with pronunciation of some German words."

Some of the Group A's answers to the question of dealing with unfamiliar words or structures when reading in or listening to German were:

"I try to guess their meaning from context and compare them to the ones in Croatian.",

"I try to write down unfamiliar words and translate them so that I would later know their meaning and know how to use them.",

"I ask somebody for help.".

However, one student wrote:

"I don't deal with it well. When I hear an unfamiliar word, I become concentrated on it and try to translate it and find the meaning. However, I am not longer able to continue listening because I keep thinking about that word."

The Group B's answers were more detailed and they provided more strategies than the Group A. A number of studies (such as the ones by Kemp, 2007, Mißler, 1999, 2000, and Thomas, 1992) have shown that the number of languages being learnt and the number of learning strategies being employed were reciprocal to each other. One of the tasks in Kemp's study (2007) was to write in strategies the participants used which were not present in the questionnaire. The most notable one was the strategy that dealt with comparing across languages, which was also the one that the participants in this study wrote in the most often. Kemp's study (2007) showed that multilingual learners were able identify their strategies, pointing to their more developed metalinguistic awareness. Besides comparing across languages, guessing from context was a strategy that was reported very often by both the Group A and the Group B. The Group B also reported using dictionaries and the Internet,

writing down unfamiliar structures, asking somebody for clarification and dividing larger expressions into parts to come to understanding.

Some of the Group B's answers to how they deal with unfamiliar structures when reading in or listening to Italian were:

"I connect the unfamiliar words with similar words from other languages and similar Italian words.",

"First I try to guess from context, and if that doesn't work out, I try to find a similar word in some other language I know better, for example, English. If that doesn't work out, I try to divide the structure into smaller parts that I would maybe understand.",

"I write the unfamiliar structures down and repeat them a few times.",

"I try to find the information in a dictionary or a textbook. Sometimes, I translate using Google Translate or ask the teacher to explain."

This confirms the findings of Mitits and Sarafianou's (2012) study, which found that bilinguals relied on the similarities between languages. This was shown to be correct for both groups. The students reported using similarities between languages to their advantage, especially in terms of words and grammar. The students very often reported using foreign languages, rather than their mother tongue, when learning an additional language. This might have to do more with those languages' typological similarities, rather than with the status of the languages as L1 or a foreign language. As Molnar (2008) explained, L2 may be a source language for third language production, provided that it was typologically closer to L3 than L1 is. Role-function model by Hammarberg and Williams (2001a, 2001b, as cited in Marx and Hufeisen, 2004) put forward the idea of an L2, instead of an L1, being the default supplier language, which slips into target language production without the learner's intentions, and stated typological similarity as one of the main criteria for that choice. However, one student in the Group B stated: "Neither Croatian nor English help me with learning German, because I don't find them to be similar to German at all." Therefore, it might be worth noting that more important could be how similar the learners perceive the languages in question to be, than how similar they really are, as Hammarberg and Williams (2001a, 2001b, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004) illustrated. Furthermore, the Multilingual Processing Model (Meißner, 2003, Meißner & Burk, 2001, as cited in Marx & Hufeisen, 2004) proposed that various language systems that learners already knew were called on in understanding the target language, providing there is an etymological similarity between these languages and the new one.

This study's findings also confirm that learners with the knowledge of three foreign languages have developed some skills, tied to language learning, to a higher degree than the learners with the knowledge of two foreign languages. This could be compared to the case of L2 and L3 learning, which, as Hufeisen's Factor Model (Marx & Hufeisen, 2007, 2004) shows, differ in the existence of specific foreign/second language learning-specific factors in L3 learning, such as individual second language experiences, interlanguages of other learned languages, and foreign language learning strategies. Those factors aid in the learning of an additional language and make the learner more adept at learning an L3 than is the case in the learners who begin to learn an L2. However, this model doesn't account for any real difference in learning languages beyond L3. Accordingly, L3 learning doesn't differ from learning an L4, L5… and so on. However, the results of this paper's study showed that L4 learners have some advantages over L3 learners in the form of specific language learning strategies they put to use in the target language performance.

7 Conclusion

There has been a lot of research in recent years on strategic behaviours that good language learners employ when approaching a language task. Scholars have focused on the variables that can influence the way learners choose and develop their strategies so that these findings could have implications for improving the acquisition process of poorer learners. The emphasis in this paper was on the influence of number of languages known on the choice, frequency and use of language learning strategies.

The research study was carried out in this paper in order to investigate the language learning strategies use within two multilingual groups with specific interest in the differences between them. It can be concluded that, the bigger the number of languages studied, the more often strategies were used and the more varied they were, which is line with some previous studies (Kemp, 2001, Mitits & Sarafianou, 2012, Psaltou-Joycey & Kantaridou, 2009, Qasimnejad & Hemmati, 2013 and Sung, 2011). The results have shown that the participants used a range of strategies that helped them compensate for their missing knowledge, organize and plan their learning and use other foreign languages, as well as their mother tongue, when studying the target one. The most frequently used strategies in both groups were social and metacognitive, while memory strategies were the least often used. In contrast, a study by

Qasimnejad and Hemmati (2013) showed that social strategies were the least frequently used, while Korkmaz (2013) found that memory strategies were the most frequently used.

When it comes to cross-linguistic strategies, the group with three foreign languages in their repertoire were shown to use other foreign languages more frequently as a strategy, while the group with two foreign languages rather use Croatian, with the exception of strategies aimed at acquiring pronunciation. The group with more languages were also able to write in more strategies they used than the group with fewer languages, which was also shown in Kemp's (2007) and Mitits and Sarafianou's (2012) studies. They use both their L1 and foreign languages, compare across languages, guess from context, use dictionaries and the Internet and ask others for help. This may suggest that the group with more languages make better use of their different linguistic systems, are more aware of their strategies, are more attentive to different aspects of the language and in the end seem more concerned with their progress.

This area of language acquistion calls for further research in order to shed some more light on the issue, so that both teachers and students could improve their performances. More research could be done on multilinguals with as many languages as possible in their repertoire, especially in order to gain more insight into the complex interplay between different languages in multilinguals' strategic behaviour. What is known, however, is that multilingualism undoubtedly positively affects language learning strategy development.

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9 Appendix

I Background questionnaire

1. Name: _____2. Date:_____

3. Mother tongue:_____

4. Foreign languages you are now learning: a) English

                                           b) German

                                           c) Italian

                                           d) other:_____

5. How long have you been studying: a) English?_____

                                  b) German?_____

                                  c) Italian?_____

                                  d) other language(s)?_____

6. How do you rate (from 1-5) your overall proficiency in: a) English?   1 2 3 4 5

                                                            b) German? 1 2 3 4 5

                                                            c) Italian?   1 2 3 4 5

                                                            d) other language(s)?

                                                            _____1 2 3 4 5

                                                            _____1 2 3 4 5

7. What is your current grade in: a) English?   1 2 3 4 5

                                    b) German? 1 2 3 4 5

                                    c) Italian?   1 2 3 4 5

                                    d) other language(s)?

                                    _____1 2 3 4 5

                                    _____1 2 3 4 5

8. How important is it for you to become proficient in:

a) English   Very important   Important   Not important

b) German   Very important   Important   Not important

c) Italian   Very important   Important   Not important

d) other languages

_____   Very important   Important   Not important

_____   Very important   Important   Not important

9. Do you enjoy language learning? (Circle one of these options): Yes No

II QUESTIONNAIRE ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Mark the response (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) that tells how true of you the statement is.

1 – Never or almost never true of me   2 – Usually not true of me   3 – Somewhat true of me   4 – Usually true of me   5 – Always or almost always true of me

1. When learning new words, I classify them into meaningful groups.

   1   2   3   4   5

2. When learning new words, I compare them with the words of the same meaning in other languages I know.

   1   2   3   4   5

3. I use new words in a sentence so I can remember them more easily.

   1   2   3   4   5

4. I create a mental image of a new word to remember it more easily.

   1   2   3   4   5

5. When learning a new grammar point in the foreign language I find it useful to compare it with its equivalent in Croatian.

   1   2   3   4   5

6. When learning a new grammar point in the foreign language I find it useful to compare it with its equivalent in other foreign language(s) I know.

   1   2   3   4   5

7. I try to imitate the pronunciation of native speakers of the foreign language I'm learning.

   1   2   3   4   5

8. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in the foreign language I'm learning.

   1   2   3   4   5

9. When learning new things in the foreign language, I try to think of the way I learned a similar thing in some other language.

    1   2   3   4   5

10. I create my own phonetic spelling of words in the foreign language in order to understand them better.

    1   2   3   4   5

11. I compare similar-sounding words among the languages I know in terms of their written representation.

    1   2   3   4   5

12. I construct a longer expression by putting together known elements in a new way.

    1   2   3   4   5

13. I try to find opportunities for practice in speaking the foreign languages I'm studying.

    1   2   3   4   5

14. When I encounter something unfamiliar in the foreign language, I translate it from other foreign languages I know.

    1   2   3   4   5

15. When I encounter something unfamiliar in the foreign language, I translate it from Croatian.

    1   2   3   4   5

16. When I can't think of a foreign language word, I use a Croatian one with the most similar meaning.

    1   2   3   4   5

17. When I don't know how to pronounce a word in the foreign language, I pronounce it the way I would prounce it in some other foreign language I know.

    1   2   3   4   5

18. When I don't know how to pronounce a word in a foreign language, I pronounce it the way I would prounce it in Croatian.

    1   2   3   4   5

19. When I don't understand something in the foreign language, I try to guess the meaning.

    1   2   3   4   5

20. I make up new words when I can't think of the right ones.

    1   2   3   4   5

21. When I can't think of a right word, I use synonyms from other languages I know.

    1   2   3   4   5

22. When I can't think of a right word, I describe or explain it.

    1   2   3   4   5

23. I find the meaning of a foreign word by dividing it into parts that I understand.

    1   2   3   4   5

24. I notice my mistakes in foreign languages and use that information to help me do better.

    1   2   3   4   5

25. I pay attention to specific aspects of the language.

    1   2   3   4   5

26. I fear that I sound foolish when speaking the foreign language.

    1   2   3   4   5

27. I encourage myself to speak the foreign language even when I am afraid of making a mistake or sounding foolish.

    1   2   3   4   5

28. If I do not understand something in the foreign language, I ask the other person to slow down or to say it again.

    1   2   3   4   5

29. I practice foreign languages with other students.

    1   2   3   4   5

30. I'm careful with direct translation from one language to another.

    1   2   3   4   5

31. When speaking in the foreign language, I frequently switch to other foreign languages I'm studying without noticing.

    1   2   3   4   5

III

For students of German

Say whether you agree with the statement and please explain.

1. Croatian interferes with my studies of German.   YES   NO

If yes, in what way?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. English intereferes with my studies of German.

    YES   NO

If yes, in what way?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Answer in as many sentences as you can.

1. How does the knowledge of Croatian and/or other foreign languages help you with your studies of German?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. When reading in or listening to German, how do you deal with unfamiliar words and structures?_____

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

For students of Italian

Say whether you agree with the statement and please explain.

1.   Croatian interferes with my studies of Italian.   YES   NO

If yes, in what way?

_____

_____
_____
_____

2.   Other foreign language(s) I'm studying interefere with my studies of Italian.

YES   NO

If yes, in what   way?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Answer in as many sentences as you can.

1. How does the knowledge of Croatian and/or other foreign languages help you with
    your studies of Italian?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

2. When reading in or listening to Italian, how do you deal with unfamiliar words and
    structures?_____

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

Sadržaj

Strategije učenja jezika su specifične radnje koje učenici upotrebljavaju kako bi učinili svoje učenje lakšim, bržim, samostalnijim i učinkovitijim (Oxford, 1990). Od velikog je interesa, kako za nastavnike, tako i za učenike, znati koje su to točno tehnike i kako one mogu biti usvojene, tako da mogu poboljšati svoje podučavanje i učenje. Iako postoje dokazi kako dvojezičnost i višejezičnost imaju pozitivan utjecaj na učenje daljnjeg jezika, neka istraživanja (Kemp, 2007, Korkmaz, 2013, Mitits & Sarafianou, 2012, Psaltou-Joycey & Kantaridou, 2009, Qasimnejad & Hemmati, 2013, Sung, 2011) provela su se kako bi se otkrilo kako točno višejezični učenici primjenjuju svoje široko jezično znanje u pristupanju raznim jezičnim zadacima, i to u vidu strategija koje pritom koriste. Ovaj rad istražio je izbor i učestalost korištenja strategija učenja jezika unutar dvije grupe višejezičnih hrvatskih srednjoškolaca, od kojih je jedna grupa učila dva, a druga tri strana jezika. Provedeno je istraživanje u kojem su se koristile tvrdnje bazirane na Oxfordinom upitniku SILL te dodatne stavke kojima su se ispitivale međujezične strategije. Rezultati su pokazali da su ispitanici sa znanjem tri strana jezika koristili raznolikije strategije te ih češće upotrebljavali. Isto se pokazalo točnim i u slučaju međujezičnih strategija.

Ključne riječi: strategije učenja jezika, usvajanje trećeg jezika, dvojezičnost, višejezičnost