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MULTILINGUALS' METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS OF FUNCTION WORDS IN L3

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Abstract

Defining metalinguistic awareness as the ability to reflect on and manipulate the structural features of a language, this study aimed to provide an insight into multilinguals' metalinguistic awareness in the use of prepositions in the third language production and its relationship with cross-linguistic influence. Language history questionnaire, a translation task and interviews were used to collect the data from nine Croatian university students majoring in English and Italian at University of Zagreb. The study showed that students possess metalinguistic awareness in the use of Italian prepositions which was manifested in their ability to correct their errors made in an oral task. However, cross-linguistic awareness in the use of function words was rarely identified. From the tendencies found in this study it can be concluded that metalinguistic awareness plays a crucial role in error detection and correction and that higher proficiency may be related to explicit metalinguistic awareness.

Keywords: multilingual learning, metalinguistic awareness, cross-linguistic influence, cross-linguistic awareness, prepositions

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1. Introduction

Humans are remarkable beings because they are capable of acquiring and mastering several languages through their lives. How the mind acquires, stores and organizes linguistic information when two or more languages are involved, has been a topic of great interest to the researchers. However, most studies focused on the acquisition of the first or second language, while studies on languages beyond second language (L2) gained interest only from 1990s onwards; still, nowadays, our knowledge about how non-native languages are acquired is still incomplete (De Angelis, 2007).

Acquiring a third language has become more and more common today, mainly as a result of increased globalization. Some scholars (Singh & Carroll, 1979, Mitchell & Myles, 1998, as cited in De Angelis, 2007) have supported the idea that there is no difference in the acquisition of a second language (L2) or third language (L3) or Ln and that all the languages that come after the native language are second languages. The assumption of "no difference" relies on the fact that most of third language acquisition (TLA) research was primarily based on SLA studies. However, nowadays TLA has become a field in its own right demonstrating notable differences from second language acquisition (SLA) (Jessner, 1999).

One of the principal goals of reasearch on multilingualism is to account for the role of prior language knowledge in TLA. According to Jessner (1999), the development of proficiency in two or more foreign languages can lead to higher levels of metalinguistic awareness (MA). She defined metalinguistic awareness as a "set of skills or abilities that the multlingual user develops owing to his/her prior linguistic and metalinguistc knowledge" (Jessner, 2008, p. 275). De Angelis (2007) claims that the development of metalinguistic awareness in multilinguals must, thus, imply a degree of interaction among the learner's prior languages. Research shows that non-native linguistic influence is particularly visible in the area of lexis (De Angelis, 2007) – that is probably the reason why not many studies have analyzed function words, such as prepositions. Therefore, we decided to look into metalinguistic awareness in the use of prepositions in the third language production.

Prepositions are generally regarded as difficult to acquire, thus, two questions must be answered: how do we acquire prepositions in the foreign language? What makes Italian prepositions so difficult to acquire to Croatian learners?

Italian prepositions are often defined as words used to complement an adjective, adverb, noun or pronoun. Unlike Italian, these grammatical relations in Croatian are expressed through cases, or declension of nouns (although Croatian also has several prepositions). However, Italian prepositions often combine with articles, which do not exist in Croatian. Authors like Škevin and Maroević (2014), Županović Filipin and Mardešić (2013) agree that Croatian cases and the nonexistence of articles in Croatian are the main source of negative transfer of prepositions in Italian L3. Italian prepositions are, thus, always taught as a part of a phrase and not separately. Many Italian textbooks have lists of rules and schematic charts of most common collocations, which have to be memorized. Still, simply memorizing the rules is not enough because there are many exceptions. Therefore, the way through which Italian prepositions are acquired is through drill exercises, and years and years of practice until they become declarative knowledge.

Here are several reasons why Italian prepositions are difficult to acquire. First, prepositions generally are polysemous, which means they have a variety of meanings depending on context. For example, *la torta di Gianna* [Eng. Gianna's cake] vs. *Gianna e' di Roma.* [Eng. Gianna is from Rome], clearly shows the polysemous use of the preposition *di*.

Second, language learners often assume they can translate the prepositions used in their own language into its equivalent in target language. As the use of prepositions in context varies greatly from one language to another, this often results in negative syntactic transfer. As Lam (2009, as cited in Lorinz & Gordon, 2012) points out, if learners do make assumptions of prepositional knowledge from L1 and L2, it often results in prepositional errors. Therefore, language learners cannot depend on their prepositional knowledge from L1.

Finally, there are two types of Italian prepositions – simple prepositions and prepositions combined with an article. It is not the number of prepositions, but the lack of rules that can be applied that make Italian prepositions so difficult to acquire not only for beginner learners but also for advanced ones.

This study aimed to answer two questions: Do multilingual learners possess metalinguistic awareness in the use of prepositions in L3 production (are they conscious of their form and use) and do they possess any cross-linguistic awareness of prepositions. Before presenting the study, a theoretical background will be given covering all concepts necessary for understanding this study.

2. Multilingualism

Although some scholars regard bilingualism as a form of multilingualism, recent research suggests that "the term 'multilingualism' be used as a cover term for the acquisition of more than two languages and the product of having acquired or learned more than two languages" (Jessner, 2006, p.15).

The third language is understood as any language learned after the second language (L2). Although TLA shares many characteristics with SLA, researchers have pointed out that the third language acquisition is a more complex process mainly because it involves not only quantitative but also qualitative differences in language learning and processing.

Multilingual acquisition is defined as a "complex, nonlinear and dynamic process which depends on a number of interacting factors" (Jessner, 2008, p.270). Its complex nature can be linked to various routes of acquisition a third language take. Whereas in SLA, the second language (L2) can be learned after the first language (L1) or both languages can be learned simultaneously, in TLA Cenoz (2000, as cited in Jessner 2006) observed at least four acquisition orders:

1. The three languages can be acquired simultaneously
2. The three languages can be acquired consecutively
3. Two languages are learnt simultaneously after the acquisition of the L1
4. Two languages are acquired simultaneously before learning the L3

In addition, the acquisition process may be interrupted because the language learner starts learning another language, or it could be restarted again, even in each foreign language respectively. Furthermore, language learning can take place either in naturalistic or formal setting or in a combination of both. In TLA the possibility of combinations is thus, even larger than in SLA. The complexity and dynamics of TLA can also be linked to the interplay of various individual or psychosocial factors such as language aptitude, language anxiety, motivation etc., which all exert influence on the learning process.

Whereas in research on SLA it is often assumed the L1 is the dominant language and the L2 is the weaker one, the chronological order of the acquisition in multilingual learner

does not always correspond to order of the dominance of respective languages. Moreover, language attrition or deterioration is a more common phenomenon in multilinguals than it is in bilinguals and monolinguals.

Linguistic and psychological interaction between languages in multilingual mind all add to the complexity of TLA: whereas in SLA we have two systems influencing each other, in TLA we have the interaction between L1 and L3 and that of L2 and L3.

One of the models through which the development of multilingual proficiency is described is Herdina and Jessner's (2002) Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (DMM). The dynamic systems theory (DST) was used as a basis for DMM, on the premises that the development of a multilingual system changes over time; it is non-linear, complex, reversible, and highly variable, because it depends on social, psycholinguistic and individual factors, and contexts of learning (Jessner, 2008c).

The multilingual language system is assumed to consist of various sub-systems (different languages that the multilingual speaks) which interact with each other. In the DMM, multilingual proficiency is defined as "an interplay between a dynamic interaction of various psycholinguistic systems (LS1, LS2, LS3 etc.), cross-linguistic influence and the so-called M(ultiligualism) factor'' (Jessner 2008, p.26), as shown in the following formula:

$$LS1, LS2, LS3, LSn + CLIN + M\text{-factor} = MP$$

LS: language system CLIN: cross-linguistic interaction MP: multilingual proficiency

In the DMM, the psycholinguistic systems are seen as open, because they depend on various social and psychological factors, as well as being interdependent and not autonomous. They are in constant interaction with each other and they are highly variable.

Cross-linguistic interaction (CLIN) is seen as a wider concept than Kellerman and Sharwood Smith's (1986) cross-linguistic influence and includes phenomena such as transfer, interference, code-switching and borrowing (Jessner, 2008b). On the other hand, the M-factor in the DMM refers to those qualities that distinguish a monolingual learner from the multilingual, such as heightened level of metalinguistic awareness and metacognitive strategies.

According to the DMM, multilingual speakers are assumed to develop an *enhanced multilingual monitor* (EMM), that is, the monitor which is used by a multilingual learner to

watch over and correct his or her language. The functions of the monitor expand as the number of the languages increases. The monitor deals with the activation and separation of the languages, error detection and correction or self-repair, as well as with linguistic search (Jessner, 2008a).

Jessner (2006) has noted that this enhanced monitor has the following functions:

1. Fulfilling the common monitoring functions (that is, reducing the number of performance errors, correcting misunderstandings, developing and applying conversational strategies)
2. Drawing on common resources in the use of more than one language system
3. Keeping the systems apart by checking for possible disruptive transfer phenomena and eliminating them, therefore fulfilling a separator and cross-checker function. The multilingual learner habitually transfers elements form one language to another and forms rules according to commonalities and differences in her or his languages.

(Jessner, 2006, p.59)

It is believed that MA can facilitate the acquisition of other foreign languages. MA can facilitate the acquisition process by focusing learners' attention on the relevant features of the language. Due to language exposure and literacy in more than one language, bilinguals and multilinguals have the capacity to focus on form and to pay attention to the relevant features in the language input (Sanz, 2009).

Furthermore, the research shows that MA can speed up the language learning process, which can be expected with growing language experience. However, the catalytic effect of TLA has mainly been detected in experienced language learners in the case of typologically related languages (Jessner, 2008b, p.26).

As already mentioned, there are qualitative differences between first, second and third language learning, and they can be attributed to a heightened level of metalinguistic awareness. Due to their prior linguistic and metalinguistic experience, bilinguals and multilingual develop skills and abilities which cannot be found in monolingual learners. Multilinguals have higher strategic competence, which means they can "overcome linguistic, discursive or pragmatic shortcomings in order to successfully perform language learning tasks" (Bono, 2011, p.31).

3. Metalinguistic awareness

What is it that makes some individuals better language learners than others? Do bilinguals have an advantage over monolinguals when endeavoring to learn a new language? What has been suggested as an answer is the fact that learners of more than one language have higher metalinguistic awareness.

Common sense tells us that an individual who has gone through the experience of learning one or more non-native languages has gained knowledge and skills that could be put in use in later language learning. Such learners are capable of metalinguistic thinking, or in other words, "bilingual and multilingual learners develop an increased awareness of language which aids them in the process of acquiring additional languages" (De Angelis, 2007, p.120). Studies that compared monolinguals and bilinguals have shown that bilinguals develop a heightened awareness of the forms, meanings and rules of the language and the research on multilinguals seems to point at the same direction (De Angelis, 2007).

Metalinguistic awareness enables learners to focus on structural similarities and differences between their language systems. It has been suggested (Bono, 2011; Jessner, 2006) that metalinguistic awareness is a factor that interacts with CLI, as the search for similarities between the languages can be seen as part of the activities related to metalinguistic thinking in the learner. Multilinguals tend to reflect on their language knowledge and use by comparing their language systems; consequently, they develop language learning strategies, which cannot be found in less experienced language learners. For this reason, the presence of metalinguistic awareness in bilinguals can have catalytic and beneficial effect on third language acquisition.

Metalinguistic awareness has been variously defined in literature; Jessner (2006) defines it as "the ability to focus attention on language as an object in itself or to think abstractly about language and, consequently, to play with or manipulate language." In a similar vein, De Angelis (2007) defines it as "learner's ability to separate meanings and forms, discriminate language components, identify ambiguity and understand the use of grammatical forms and structures." In other words, metalinguistic awareness is the ability to reflect on the use of language; it is the awareness that language is malleable - it has a structure that can be manipulated. On the other hand, a *metalinguistic task* is one "which

requires the individual to think about the linguistic nature of the message; to attend to and reflect on the structural features of language " (Malakoff & Hakuta, 1999, p.147). According to Gibson and Hufeisen (2006), heightened metalinguistic awareness is understood to specifically include heightened abilities to differentiate, keep track of and manipulate the two main kinds of systematic input, that is, form versus meaning. Furthermore, Koda & Zehler (2008) claim that metalinguistic awareness includes *declarative knowledge* (linguistic knowledge) with which one can reflect upon and manipulate the structural and functional aspects of the language.

By reading the literature on metalinguistic behaviour, one is confronted with three competing terms – *language awareness, linguistic awareness and metalinguistic awareness*.

Rampillon (1997) defined *language awareness* as a concept being composed of: *linguistic awareness* (or declarative knowledge which refers to linguistic skills and abilites), *communicative awareness* (or executive knowledge - knowledge about the functions of language such as communication strategies) and *learning awareness* (or procedural knoweldge - knowledge about learning, thinking, problem-solving processes) (as cited in Jessner, 2006)

Jessner (2006) defined *linguistic awareness* in multilinguals as an emergent property of multilingual proficiency and as consisting of at least two dimensions in the form of *crosslinguistic awareness* and *metalinguistic awareness*. She defined *crosslinguistic awareness* as the "awareness of specific links, commonalities and connections between different language systems" (Jessner, 2006, p.42). Jessner describes crosslinguistic awareness as a (a) tacit awareness shown by the use of cognates from the background languages and (b) explicit awareness in the case of switches that are introduced by meta-language. She defines it as "the awareness (tacit and explicit) of the interaction between the languages in a multilingual's mind", whereby metalinguistic awareness "makes the objectification possible" (Jessner, 2008, p. 279).

Jessner suggests to use *linguistic awareness* and *metalinguistic awareness* as synonyms and to follow Masny's (1997, as cited in Jessner 2008) definition of *linguistic awareness* or *metalinguistic awareness* as an "indicator of what learners know about language through reflection on and manipulation of language" (Jessner, 2006, p. 42). On the other hand, *language awareness* is a different concept which refers to manipulation of language code in teaching (Jessner, 2006).

Due to the increased language contact, multilingual learners develop skills and abilities that cannot be found in monolingual learners. These skills, which distinguish a multilingual learner from a monolingual learner, include metacognitive and metalinguistic skills in language learning, language management and language maintenance (Jessner, 2006).

Metalinguistic skills start to develop as early as one to two years when children start to monitor their utterances and are capable of self-repairing the language forms or pronunciation. However, metalinguistic awareness in adult monolinguals never develops at the same degree as in bilinguals or multilinguals (except in some professions, like journalism). According to Jessner (2008), bilinguals and multilinguals who are metalinguistically aware also develop "divergent and creative thinking, interactional / pragmatical competence, communicative sensibility and flexibility and translation skills"(Jessner, 2008b, p.277).

Jessner (1999, 2006, 2008a) has suggested that metalinguistic awareness and metacognitive skills should be fostered in the process of third language learning and teaching. Particular attention should be given to cognate-based instruction, as well as to teaching similarities rather than differences between languages and in this way to make use of transfer. It has been proposed that learners can profit from the teaching focused on fostering learners' cross-linguistic awareness both in the process of learning and in the process of production.

Despite the overall enriching research, there seem to be insufficient grounds yet to fully explain the role of metalinguistic awareness in multilinguals. The main interest in multilingual studies so far has been the impact of L1 and L2 on L3 as well as cross-linguistic influence, which will be explained in the next chapter.

4. Cross-linguistic influence

One of the main focuses in multilingual research has been cross-linguistic influence (CLI). CLI is an often preferred term for what is more commonly known as *transfer*, which is a term for different ways in which language systems interact in the learner's mind having affect either on linguistic performance or the linguistic development (or both) (Sharwood Smith, 1983).

L1 or L2 may serve to the learner as a source to compare the systems and come up with a rule that may be the case in the L3. This comparison in many cases may prove to be helpful (*positive transfer*) and thus help the learner progress more rapidly, whereas in other cases it may act as a deterrent (*negative transfer*) and be the cause of errors in the production of language.

In a multilingual mind, CLI can take place not only between the L1 and the L2, but also between the L2 and L3, and the L1 and the L3. It seems logical that when learners of a non-native language try to compensate for the lack of knowledge in L3, they will tend to rely on previously acquired languages. Therefore, "the less the learner knows about target language, the more he is forced to draw upon any other prior language knowledge he possesses." (Ringbom, 1987, p. 155) Various studies on TLA have found out that L3 learners do not rely on their L1 knowledge, as expected, but on their L2. L3 learners whose L1 was typologically unrelated to the L2 and/or L3 tended to transfer knowledge from their L2. (Cenoz 2001, as cited in Jessner 2008)

A number of interacting factors have been found to influence the activation of previously learned languages in L3 production – psychotypology (the perceived language distance between languages), recency of use, the level of proficiency in the TL, the foreign language effect (activation of an earlier L2 in L3 production) and the learner's perception of correctness of the target word.

One of the major factors involved in cross-linguistic influence is psychotypology. Odlin (1989, as cited in Jessner (2006) has noted that the more semantically and categorically related the linguistic structures in two languages are, the greater the likelihood of transfer. However, this depends on learner's subjective perception of the language distance between the languages. Most studies show that multilinguals tend to rely on linguistic information

from non-native languages that are typologically close to the TL (Clyne 1997; De Angelis & Salinker, 2001; Williams & Hammarberg, 1998 etc., as cited in De Angelis, 2005), but there are also some reports that multilinguals rely on non-native languages typologically more distant from the TL (Rivers, 1979; Schmidt & Frota 1986, as cited in De Angelis, 2005)

It is believed that transfer is most frequent or at least most apparent, at the level of lexis. A number of studies explored how bi- and multilingual learners search for words when they encounter a gap in knowledge in the target language - a multilingual learner who is metalinguistically aware, analyzes the points of commonality between his or her languages to obtain the TL item.

The relationship between cross-linguistic influence and metalinguistic awareness was the main focus of Jessner (2006). She has found that learners show cross-linguistic awareness when making use of other languages while performing in the L3. Multilingual language learners tend to search for similarities between their languages transferring elements from one language to another and forming rules according to commonalities and differences in her or his language.

Poulisse and Bongaerts (1994) who examined Dutch L1 learners of English, argue that L1 content words are more likely to be selected correctly than L1 function words because content words carry more semantic weight and learners focus their attention on most meaningful parts of speech. Since function words carry less semantic weight than content words, learners generally devote less attention to them in the production process.

Ringbom (1987) found L2 function words to be used more frequently than L1 function words in the written essays of Finnish L1 learners of English with Swedish as an L2. Findings from Ringbom (1987), Williams & Hammarberg (1998), as cited in De Angelis 2005) suggest that multilinguals seem to favour the use of function words from their non-native languages rather than their native language in production, provided that the source and the target language are typologically close to each other. However, Jarvis and Odlin (2000, as cited in De Angelis, 2005) reported that Finnish speakers with L2s as English and Swedish and Swedish L1 speakers with English and Finnish as L2s were influenced by their L1 in the use of prepositions. Most studies show that the use of L2 function words in L3 production is strongly influenced by typological distance. Learners tend to rely on language that is typologically closest to the target language. However, if both L1 and L2 are close to the TL, learners seem to favour the L2 over the L1 as a source of function words. (De Angelis, 2005)

The study by De Angelis (2005) investigated the use of nonnative function words in the written production of learners of Italian as a third or fourth language with English, Spanish, or French as native or nonnative languages. The rate of subject insertion and omission was analyzed and the results showed frequent use of the French pronoun *il* (he) in learner's texts. The results also showed that in the presence of three typologically related languages (Spanish L1, French L2, and Italian as TL), learners were relying extensively on their nonnative languages for function words.

Letica and Mardesic (2007) were interested in transfer between non-native languages in non-native production. Their aim was to identify cross-linguistic influences in oral production of Croatian L1 speakers of English as L2 and Italian as L3. The sample included 20 participants, university students majoring in English and Italian. Length of study in case of English ranged from 12 to 20 years, while for Italian the length varied between 4 and 12 years, the average lengths being around 14 years and 7 years respectively. Data was collected on participants' language learning history, level of proficiency, exposure to both languages and perceived language distance among L1, L2, and L3. In order to collect language corpus for analysis, they asked participants to perform a picture description task in L2 and L3, as well as, a short oral translation from L1 to L3. Evidence of both lexical and grammatical transfer was found. The source of grammatical transfer was L1 exclusively, while lexical transfer had its source in both L1 and L2. Lexical transfer from L1 was meaning-based only, while lexical transfer from L2 was predominantly transfer of form. Grammatical transfer consisted mainly of syntactic calques. The least proficient learners showed instances of both L1 and L2 transfer in trying to fill the language gap, but L2 transfer was still more frequent than L1. The most proficient in L3 had no L2 transfer and negligible L1 transfer in L3 production. Even though the three languages included in the study were typologically different, the data showed that the language exerting the highest influence on current oral production was the one that was perceived by participants as typologically closer.

5. Research on metalinguistic awareness

Research into metalinguistic awareness in multilingualism has so far mainly explored the effects of bilingualism on L3 learning, cross-linguistic influence and conditions for artificial language learning. According to Cenoz (2003, as cited in Jessner 2008), most studies indicate a positive effect of bilingualism on TLA and that this effect can be related to learning strategies, metalinguistic awareness and communicative ability, especially if languages are typologically close.

The relationship between cross-linguistic interaction and metalinguistic awareness in the use of compensatory strategies was the main focus of Jessner (1999). Her sample were 17 bilingual students (Italian – German) from South Tyrol studying English. According to her results, learners expressed their cross-linguistic awareness by making use of supporter languages. These learners implemented metalinguistic thinking and reasoning in written think-aloud tasks. The learners used all three of their languages to "search for and assess improved phrasing" and to "compare cross-linguistic equivalents" (Jessner, 1999, p. 205). This means they were looking for similarities between their language systems which is part of their metalinguistic thinking. German and Italian had been found to have different roles; German was found to be a main supporter language in case of lexical problems, while Italian was used as a confirmer of lexical choice as students used it after the English target lexical item.

A number of studies were carried out with children in the Basque Country and in Catalonia to explore the effects of bilingualism on TLA (Cenoz 1991; Sanz 1997; Sagasta 2003). In all of these studies, bilingual children outperformed monolinguals in the acquisition of English.

Cenoz (2001, as cited in Gibson & Hufeisen, 2006) investigated the influences among the various foreign languages of Basque and Spanish bilinguals learning English. She has found that the degree of cross-linguistic influence of the three languages on each other is not only influenced by how closely the languages are related to each other, but also by the age and degree of metalinguistic sophistication of the learner.

Bono (2011) focused on the roles played by native and non-native languages in TLA and the impact of metalinguistic awareness upon learning. She examined 42 bilingual

university students learning Spanish in France (L1 was French for all but two, and L2 for most was English. Sixteen had also learned German. Thus, Spanish was their L3, L4, or L5. Forty-eight small-group conversational sessions were recorded under the assumption that less controlled tasks would lead to more code switching and that peer interaction would support shared and contextualized multilingual strategies and joint construction of meaning.

Bono's analysis of conversational data in Spanish pointed towards reliance on English and to a lesser degree, German, to obtain a target item. She concluded that L3 learners could use their L2 to analyze and monitor L3 production and recommended that learners be encouraged to reflect upon similarities and differences among languages to draw on shared resources in their language repertoires.

Gibson and Huffeisen (2011) measured the amount of metalinguistic awareness that multilinguals possess in a task that demands a high degree of attention to be paid to both grammatical and semantical correctness. They wanted to find out if more experienced multilingual leaners of English were able to ignore distracting erroneous semantic information and correctly identify grammatically incorrect sentences than less experienced multilingual learners. The participants were all Germans who had acquired different number of foreign languages, at least two FLs up to five. They were assigned a task containing a made-up mini-mystery story containing eleven preposition errors, which they had to identify and correct. Task version two contained the same preposition errors but was surrounded with semantically nonsensical noun and verb phrases. The participants also had to assess the severity of the grammatical error. The investigation aimed to assess how multilinguals' increased experience with FLs would affect error correction and identification, and how they perceived the effect of such errors on comprehensibility of the text. Their study showed that the very experienced multilinguals are able to detect and correct preposition errors more accurately than less experienced learners, which may be because they are employing more metalinguistic strategies, as well as the tendency of very experienced multilinguals to be less harsh in their condemnation of the preposition errors in both meaningful and nonsensical contexts than the less-experienced FL learners.

Kemp (2001) in her doctoral thesis explored the relationship between language experience, grammatical metalinguistic awareness and attainment in another language. She has found out that multilingual learners were better at learning Basque because they knew more languages and because they had a high level of explicit metalinguistic awareness. The

results have also showed that the more languages multilinguals knew, the better they performed on the tests of metalinguistic awareness. She concluded that their attainment could be related to the development of explicit metalinguistic awareness as well as other abilities they gained through their language learning experience.

A number of studies has investigated the relationship between language aptitude and metalinguistic awareness, which develops in multilinguals due to their previous language knowledge. In most studies both concepts proved to be so related that it is difficult to pinpoint whether language aptitude or metalinguistic awareness influence the language acquisition process, specially the more languages are involved in the process. According to McLaughlin (1990, as cited in Jessner 2008), aptitude is not a static trait, but control over the rules of linguistic input comes with the experience with a number of languages which make an individual aware of structural similarities and differences between languages.

In Croatia, Horvatić Čajko (2014) explored metalinguistic awareness in L3 German classrooms. She wanted to find out whether a systematic input with the purpose of establishing cross-linguistics relations between the students' L1 Croatian, L2 English and L3 German can make a difference in the level of L3 mastering and support the development of students' metalinguistic awareness. Her results showed that focused MA training in the classroom context can contribute to its development and that students who have greater awareness of language and language learning will most probably show higher competence in the target language.

The data used in our study was collected for the purposes of the study by Letica Krevelj (2012). Her study aimed to explore the type and pattern of compensatory strategies in the L3 production of multilingual users of three typologically unrelated languages. The results showed strong evidence of cross-linguistic interaction and awareness. From the data obtained she concluded that there is an interplay of a whole array of learner-, learning- and word-based factors which attribute to the patterns found in the type of strategies used, which were mostly L1-, L2- and avoidance strategies. Through the retrospective interview she found that the use of avoidance strategy among experienced learners was due to cross-linguistic and metalinguistic awareness, and not the perceived language distance.

6. The Study

6.1. Aim

The aim of this study was to explore the nature of metalinguistic awareness of multilingual learners in the use of prepositions in the third language production. Morever, we were interested in the relationship between cross-linguistic interaction and linguistic awareness.

6.2. Sample

The sample consisted of nine university students majoring in English and Italian language and literature at the University of Zagreb. All participants were speakers of Croatian as L1, and, in respect to order of acquisition, English was their L2 and Italian their L3. The average lenght of study of English and Italian was 12 and 6 years, respectively. The participants proficiency in these languages was reather high. All of the participants reported learning Latin in high school, as well as other languages such as German, Spanish and French. The exposure to both languages was within the university curriculum, but the out-of-university exposure varied; their self-estimated exposure to English was 11 hours per week for English and 2 hours per week for Italian.

6.3. Instruments and procedure

The data used in this research was collected for the purposes of the study by Letica Krevelj (2012), which looked into type and pattern of compensatory strategies in the L3 production of multilingual users of three typologically unrelated languages. Our analysis concentrated on the new aspect; metalinguistic awareness in the use of prepositions in the third language production.

As the number of the participants was quite small, it seemed convenient to make an in-depth description and analysis of participants' production by means of a case study approach. The instruments that were used in this research were a language history questionnaire, a translation task and a retrospective interview.

6.3.1. Language learning biography questionnaire

The language history questionnaire was used to collect the data on participants' language history. Two measures of their proficiency were included – the grade obtained at the practical language course and their independent assessment of competence in the oral production of both L2 and L3. The language learning questionnaire also collected the data on participants' psychotypology, that is, their perception of distance between the three typollogically unrelated languages.

6.3.2. Translation task

The participants were asked to perform a short oral translation task from L1 (Croatian) to L3 (Italian) (see Letica Krevelj, 2012 and Appendix A for an example of correct translation in Italian). The translation task consisted of seven sentences which contained 12 prepositions, including the ones which formed part of Italian phrasal verbs and idioms. The translation task was tape-recorded, transcribed and then the prepositions were categorized by the author in terms of correctness and appropriacy of use.

6.3.3. Retrospective task

The construct of metalinguistic awareness was explored by means of a retrospective interview. The transcribed oral trasnslation was presented to the participants in the written form. As the data was used for the purposes of the study by Letica Krevelj (2012), the participants were asked to make corrections in their translation if necessary and to comment on specific lexical items which were categorized as an instance of strategic behaviour by the author of the study. Only the instances where participants spontaneously referred to prepositions were taken as evidence of metalinguistic awareness in the use of prepositions. The interview revealed learners' ability to detect and correct the errors in their translation, but also learners' focus on grammatical aspects of the translation, and not lexical, as it was expected.

The data from the learners' production of the translation was categorized in a way that a distinction was made between correct prepositions in the translation, erroneous ones and correct ones with wrong article use. We then compared similarities and differences between

the participants at the level of the production in L3 and the level of language awareness of the prepositions in L3. Patterns of behaviour were analyzed and presented in the results section.

6. 4. Results

In order to understand better the following results, an overview of Italian prepositions must be given. Italian language has two types of prepositions – 9 simple prepositions (a, di, da, in, con, su, per, tra, fra and prepositions (a, di, da, su, in) that can be merged with a definite article; for example a + il = al (Mario è andato al mare. [Eng. Mario went to the sea]). Most errors were found in cases where prepositions formed part of an idiom or a prepositional verb, and less in cases of prepositions with an article. There were cases where some participants offered a different solution to the translation, but the number of prepositions in each translation remained the same.

Participant A

Participant A is a second year student of English and Italian, who has been learning Italian for 4 years, and English for 14 years. The participant's grade in practical Italian language course, taken as a measure of her proficiency, was C, whereas in English was B. In the language history questionnaire she reported that Croatian and Italian are typollologically similar languages.

Table 1

Correct	Erroneous (not involving article use)	Erroneous (involving article use)
in Francia	non potevo aspettare per	mi sono innamorato di francese
in un hotel	di mattina	di giovani studenti
cominciare a	di pomeriggio	nella biblioteca
per il corso della lingua	*avere intenzione di - *missing*	il corso della lingua
	viaggiare per	nel centro
		ero parte del convinzione

As can be seen in the Table 1, out of total of sixteen prepositions that were in the Italian translation, the participant A had four prepositions correct, five were erroneous and

there were six cases where preposition was used incorrectly with or without an article. Thus, most errors were commited in the use of article with prepositions.

The original text required the translation of the phrasal verb *travel to Paris* as *partire per Parigi*, but this participant used the verb *viaggiare* that does not collocate with the preposition *per* so it was placed in the section of erroneous prepositions. There were two cases of idiomatic use of prepositions – *avere intenzione di* ([Eng. have the intention to do sth]) which this participant avoided translating, and *non vedere l'ora di ([*Eng. cannot wait for]), which the participant translated literally as *non potevo aspettare per* ([Eng. I couldn't wait for]). In this case it was hard to pinpoint whether the transfer of the preposition *per* was from Croatian or English, as the expression is similar in both languages.

In the retrospective interview the participant was asked to reflect upon her translation, and to try to correct it. In two instances, the participant detected the error and mentioned interference from the English language. She said her translation of the preposotional verb *to participate in* as *ero parte del* came from the English expression *I was a part of*, but a few moments later she recalled the correct phrasal verb ([It. *partecipare a]*). The Italian idiom *non vedere l'ora di* [(Eng. can't wait for)] she translated literally as *non potevo aspettare per,* and explained her translation as interference from the English phrasal verb *I couldn't wait for.* The participant pointed out that she was never sure about the use of simple prepositions and prepositions with or without an article, like in the case of *di/dei giovani studenti* ([Eng. of young students]).

In the interview, she recalled the appropriate phrasal verb and corrected her translation of *travel to Paris* from *viaggiare per Parigi* into *partire per Parigi*. She added she thought her translation of *every morning and every afternoon* as *di mattina e di pomeriggio* was correct.

The first thing we can notice from the analysis of the results is that this participant possessed a degree of crosslinguistic awareness, as she explicitly reported about the interference from English in the case of the phrasal verb *I couldn't wait for* . She also showed that she is aware of linguistic forms and functions. Her explicit reference to prepositions as not being able to distinguish the use of simple prepositions and prepositions with or without an article (which was corroborated in the translation), shows she possessed a degree of metalinguistic awareness in the use of prepositions.

Participant B

Participant B is a third year university student of Italian, and second year student of English. She had been learning Italian for 8 years, and English for 11 years. Her grade in practical Italian course, taken as a measure of her proficency, was B, and in English was C. In the language history questionnaire she reported Croatian and Italian to be typologically similar languages - most likely because she comes from a Croatian region of Dalmatia which has a lot of words similar to Italian in the dialect.

Table 2

Correct	Erroneous (not involving article use)	Erroneous (involving article use)
dei giovani studenti	ho partecipato in un consiglio	
corso di lingua	mi sono innamorato in francese	
in un hotel	non potevo aspettare di	
cominciare a	di mattina	
in centro	a libreria	
in Francia	volevo seguire - instead of 'avere intenzione di'	
	in pomeriggio	
	viaggiare a	
	a seguire un corso di lingua	

The table 2 shows that participant B's translation had six prepositions correct, nine erroneous, while no errors were found in the prepositions with or without an article.

By looking at the second column, we can see that the participant made most errors in the prepositions that are part of a collocation, for example; the participant put *partecipare in*, instead of *partecipare a*; *a seguire un corso di lingua* instead of *per seguire un corso di lingua* etc.

It could be argued that there is a direct interference from Croatian in the translation; there are two instances of grammatical transfer in form of syntactic calques – *partecipato in* (instead of *partecipato a*), which is the Croatian equivalent of '*sudjelovati u'* ([Eng. to participate at) and *innamorato in* (instead of *innamorato di*), which has an equivalent in Croatian as *zaljubiti se u* ([Eng. fall in love with]).

This participant, like the majority of others, has written correctly the prepositions that precede a country, a city and a hotel. The transcription of the oral translation showed that the participant has once made a quick self-correction of a preposition, such as *a...in Francia* ([Eng. in France]), which might be an indicative of the fact that she was reconsidering the use of prepositions, or in other words, that she was metalinguistically aware of prepositions during the translation.

Like in the case of the participant A, the participant B translated the Italian idiom *non vedere l'ora di* ([Eng. can't wait for]) literally as *non potevo aspettare di*. It is very likely that the transfer was from Croatian expression *jedva sam čekao da* as the participant considered Croatian and Italian to be typologically similar.

In the retrospective interview the participant corrected the preposition in the phrase 'in mattina e in pomeriggio' into 'di mattina e in pomeriggio' ([Eng. every morning and every afternoon)]. No instances of crosslinguistic awareness were found, but there is a degree of metalinguistic awareness manifested in her quick self-correction during the translation and reference to prepositions in form of a correction during the interview.

Participant C

Participant C is a graduate student of English and Italian. He has been learning Italian for 14 years and English for 16 years. His grade in practical Italian and English language course was C. In the language history questionnaire he reported English and Italian to be typologically similar languages.

Table 3

Correct	Erroneous (not involving article use)	Erroneous (involving article use)
cominicare a	ho partecipato su	nella Francia
mi sono innamorato della lingua francese	con gli altri studenti	nel centro
un corso di lingua	di mattina	
non vedo l'ora di cominciare	viaggiare a	
in un hotel	volevo frequentare - instead of 'avere intenzione di'	
in libreria	dopo dodici	
a fare		

As it can be seen in Table 3, the participant C had seven prepositions correct, six incorrect and two were correct but with wrong article use. This participant was the only one that made a mistake with the preposition that precedes a country, but was quite close to the correct one (the preposition should have been without an article attached to it). This is quite strange because the rule that applies with the countries could be considered elementary, and yet this participant was in his last year of MA studies. An instance of grammatical transfer in the form of syntactic calque was found in the prepositional verb *partecipare su*, as there is a Croatian equivalent *sudjelovati na ([*Eng. to participate in]*).

Like participants A and B, this participant translated *travel to* as *viaggiare a* instead of *partire per,* which is incorrect because the verb *viaggiare* doesn't collocate with the preposition *a.*

In the retrospective interview the participant reported he would change his translation of every morning and afternoon as *di mattina* e *di pomeriggio* which shows that most participants were not conscious that this is an exception where a definite article should be used instead of a preposition. There were no other instances of reference to prepositions in the retrospective interview.

Participant D

      Participant D is a second year student of English and Italian. She has been learnng Italian for 6 years and English for 15 years. Her grade in practical language courses, as a measure of her proficency, was B both in Italian and English. She reported English and Italian to be typologically similar languages.

Table 4

Correct	Erroneous (not involving article use)	Erroneous (involving article use)
ho partecipato a	di mattina	mi sono innamorato di francese
degli studenti giovani	alla biblioteca	
a...in Francia	cominciare di parlare	
partito per Parigi	di pomeriggio	
un corso di lingua		
non vedevo l'ora di		
mi sono sistemato in un albergo		
in centro		
avevo l'intenzione di		
a un corso		

      As the table 4 shows, the participant D had ten prepositions correct, four incorrect and one correct but with wrong article use. The transcription of the translation showed that the participant made a quick self-correction of a preposition that precedes a country (It. a...in Francia), which might indicate she was metalinguistically aware of the use of prepositions. Unlike other participants, she translated correctly both idiomatic uses of prepositions, such as *non vedere l'ora di* and *avere l'intenzione di.* However, like other participants she was not aware that a definite article instead of a preposition should be used in front of *every morning and afternoon* ([It. *la mattina e il pomeriggio]*).

In the retrospective interview she said out loud the rule for the prepositions before a country. This participant has also made an interesting remark; she said that she felt as if there should always be only one word for a verb, and that that was the reason why she would always forget about using phrasal verbs (which require a preposition). In the retrospective interview, the participant corrected the preposition in the collocation *alla biblioteca* into *in biblioteca*. She was also one of the most proficient participants, as confirmed by her grade at the practical language course at university and by excellent production of the translation.

Participant E

Participant E is a second year student of English and Italian. She has been learning Italian for 3 years, and English for 11 years. Her grade at the practical Italian language course was C, and in English B. She reported Croatian and Italian to be typologically similar – most likely because she comes from a Croatian region of Dalmatia which has a lot of words similar to Italian in the dialect.

Table 5

Correct	Erroneous (not involving article use)	Erroneous (involving article use)
dei giovani studenti	ho partecipato sul	
in Francia	mi sono innamorato in francese	
sono partito per Parigi	ho appena aspettato di	corso della lingua
in un albergo	il mattino	nel libreria
in centro	*avere intenzione di - *missing*	
cominciare a	al pomeriggio	
	al corso	

As can be seen in the table 5, the participant E had six prepositions correct, seven erroneous and two correct with wrong article use. Instances of grammatical transfer in the form of syntactic calque were identified in the phrasal verb *partecipare sul*, which can be found in Croatian equivalent *sudjelovati na* ([Eng. to participate in]) and *innamorarsi in*, which has a Croatian equivalent *zaljubiti se u* ([Eng. to fell in love with]). Another example of transfer was found in the idiom *non vedere l'ora di* ([Eng. can't wait for something]) which

was translated literally as 'ho appena aspetatto di'. It is hard to pinpoint whether the interference was from Croatian or English as the expression can be found in both languages. A very unusual translation was found in the noun phrase 'il mattino e al pomeriggio' ([Eng. every morning and afternoon]) – the participant used an article in front of the first noun and a preposition in front of the other noun. It is almost as if the participant knew the rule that an article should be used, but then the noun was assigned in the wrong gender.

In the retrospective interview the participant corrected the preposition in the prepositional phrase *nel libreria* and corrected it into *in libreria*, which was correct. That was the only instance of metalinguistic awareness in the use of prepositions found in this participant. There were no instances of crosslinguistic awareness found.

Participant F

Participant F is a second year student of English and Italian. She has been learning Italian for 6 years and English for 16 years. Her grade at the practical Italian and English language courses was B. She reported Italian and Croatian to be typologically similar languages.

Table 6

Correct	Erroneous (not involving article use)	Erroneous (involving article use)
dei giovani studenti	sono partito a Parigi	un corso della lingua
in Francia	per fare un corso	nel centro
non vedevo l'ora di	ho cominciato di	
in un hotel	da mattina	
il pomeriggio	alla biblioteca	
ho partecipato in....a	Cominciare parlare (preposition missing)	
mi sono innamorato di...del francese		

As can be seen in the table 6, the participant F had seven prepositions correct, six incorrect and two correct with wrong article use. Unlike other participants, this participant made a mistake in the preposition of the phrasal verb *partire per* ([Eng. travel to]*)*; instead of putting the preposition *per,* she put a preposition *a,* which usually collocates with a city but not in this context and not with the verb *partire*. Although she translated *every afternoon* correctly as *il pomeriggio,* and remembered the rule of using a determinate article instead of a preposition, it is strange why she did not apply it to the next noun phrase *la mattina* instead of *da mattina (*[Eng. since morning]). During the translation the participant made two self-corrections of prepositions as can be seen in the table in the case of 'ho partecipato in....a' and 'mi sono innamorato di....del francese', which might indicate she was reconsidering the use of prepositions.

In the retrospective interview the participant said she would correct the preposition in the prepositional verb *partecipato a* into *partecipato in* - quite unnecessary, because the translation was already correct. What might be interesting to add is that this participant found Italian and Croatian to be typologically close, which might explain the syntactic calque. She has noticed in her transcribed translation that she hesitated when it came to the use of a preposition in the case of *mi sono innamorato del francese*, so she repeated the correct version once again, which showed she was quite sure that the preposition in this case should be merged with an article in front of a noun. No instances of crosslinguistic awareness were found.

Participant G

Participant G is a second year student of English and Italian. He has been learning Italian for 4 years and English for 8 years. His grade in practical Italian language course was D and in English C. He reported Italian and English to be typologically similar.

Table 7

Correct	Erroneous (not involving article use)	Erroneous (involving article use)
in Francia	facevo parte in	di giovani studenti

in un hotel	innamorato in francese	nel centro
il pomeriggio	non potevo aspettare di	
per imparare	in mattina	
	un corso della lingua - *missing*	
	al libreria	
	itenzionavo di - instead of 'avere intenzione di'	
	Cominciare a - *missing*	
	ho partito a Parigi	

As can be seen in the table 7, the participant G had four prepositions correct, nine incorrect (although two phrases were not translated at all), and two correct with wrong article use. This participant, like most of the others, had prepositions that precede a country, a city and a hotel correct.

Like the participant F, this participant made the same mistake of combining the verb *partire* with a preposition *a* (which usually precedes a city and would be correct in a different context) instead of *per.* Again, like some other participants, this one resorted to direct translation of the Italian idiom *non vedevo l'ora di* ([Eng. Can't wait for]) as *non potevo aspettare di.* A syntactic calque was detected in *innamorato in* and *far parte in*, which is an intereference from Croatian *zaljubiti se u* ([Eng. to fall in love with]) and *sudjelovati u* ([Eng. to participate in]).

During the retrospective interview, the participant mentioned that his translation of the Italian idiom *I couldn't wait for* as *non potevo aspettare di* sounded too literal. The only preposition he corrected during the interview was in the phrasal verb *partire a* ([Eng. travel to]*)* into *partire per*, as he recalled the correct collocation.

Participant H

Participant H is a third year student of Italian and second year student of English. She has been learning Italian for 6 years andEnglish for 15 years. Her grade at the prsactical

Italian language course was an A, and in English a B. She reported she considered English and Italian to be typologically similar languages.

Table 8

Correct	Erroneous (not involving article use)	Erroneous (invoving article use)
degli studenti giovani	per fare	ho partecipato alla riunione
in Francia	al centro	un corso della lingua
mi sono innamorato del francese		
sono partito per Parigi		
non vedevo l'ora di		
in un albergo		
la mattina		
in libreria		
il pomeriggio		
avevo l'attenzione di		
cominciare a		

As can be seen in table 8, the participant H had eleven prepositions correct, two incorrect and two correct but with wrong article use. The results show this was the most proficient participant. Unlike others, she was the only one that knew the rule that an article, instead of a preposition is to be used in front of a noun phrase *la mattina e il pomeriggio* ([Eng. every morning and every afternoon]).

What was interesting in the case of this participant was that during the retrospective interview she looked straight away at the prepositions in her transcribed translation. Although she made the best translation compared to other participants, she reported that prepositions were her weak spot and that was the reason why she was so focused on them. Moreover, she added she was never sure about the use of simple prepositions and prepositions with an article, as in the example of *in centro/ al centro* ([Eng. in the centre]). This participant, who

was obviously the most proficient one, as confirmed by her grade at the practical language course at the university and as showed in the production of the translation, had the highest degree of metalinguistic awareness in the use of prepositions.

Participant I

The participant I is a third year student of English and Italian. She has been learning Italian for 5 years and English for 13 years. Her grade at the practical Italian and English courses was an A. In the language history questionnaire she reported she found English and Italian to be typologically similar languages.

Table 9

Correct	Erroneous (not involving article use)	Erroneous (involving article use)
in Francia	non vedevo l'ora per	ho partecipato alla riunione
in un albergo	al corso	di giovani studenti
il pomeriggio	alla mattina	mi sono innamorato di francese
in libreria	volevo frequentare - instead of *avere intenzione di*	corso della lingua
cominciare a	viaggiato a Parigi	nel centro

As can be seen in table 9, the participant I had five prepositions correct, five incorrect and five were correct with wrong article use. Like other participants, this one had prepositions that precede a country, a city and a hotel correct. As in the case of some other participants, in the noun phrase *la mattina e il pomeriggio* ([Eng. every morning and every afternoon]), the participant used first an article and then a preposition (instead of an article). Although she was one of the few who knew the Italian idiom *non vedere l'ora di* ([Eng. I couldn't wait for]), she made a mistake with the preposition that collocates with it (instead of

the preposition *di* she used *per*) – most likely this was a grammatical transfer in the form of semantic calque which has an equivalent in Croatian *jedva sam čekao da,* but also in English *I couldn't wait for.*

In the retrospective interview the participant made a correction of the preposition *di* into *del* in the phrasal verb *mi sono innamorato del francese*, because she obviously remembered the rule that languages in Italian have an article which needs to be merged with a preposition. Like other participants, she relied on her metalinguistic knowledge in the use of prepositions.

6.5. Discussion

Although the findings of the study have to be seen as rather limited, considering the small number of participants and the data that emerged, the results showed that all participants possess metalinguistic awareness in the use of declarative knowledge of prepositions in the third language production.

In the retrospective interview, almost all participants referred to prepositions in some way. Seven out of nine participants managed to correct some of the prepositions in the translation task during the reflection time in the interview. Those that managed to correct their mistakes had explicit knowledge of rules and collocations and have, thus, relied on their declarative knowledge. This finding corroborates Jessner's (2006) claim that metalinguistic awareness is crucial in error detection and correction.

The languages involved in this study were all typologically unrelated (Slavic, Romance and Germanic). However, typological similarity as perceived by the participants was looked into as a possible source of transfer. The oral translation task provided evidence of both lexical and grammatical transfer. In the study by Letica & Mardesic (2007) lexical transfer had its source in both participants' L1 and L2, while the source of grammatical transfer was participants' L1 exclusively. In this study, there were some dubious cases like in the idiom *non vedevo l'ora di*, which was translated in most cases as *non potevo aspettare per* where the preposition *per* could be transfer either from Croatian *jedva sam čekao da* or English *I couldn't wait for.* The grammatical transfer was found mostly in the prepositions which form part of the prepositional verbs and idioms. The transfer consisted mainly of syntactic and semantic calques, e.g. *innamorato in* (instead of innamorato di), which has a

Croatian equivalent *zaljubiti se u* (fall in love with) and *partecipare in* (instead of partceipare a) which has a Croatian equivalent *'sudjelovati u'*. Semantic and syntactic calques were found in the production of participants who found Italian and Croatian to be typologically similar languages, hence, the L1 negative transfer. The research shows that most learners tend to rely on language which they perceive to be typologically closest to the TL, the fact which is corroborated by the results of this study.

Findings from Ringbom (1987), De Angelis (2005), Williams and Hammarberg (1998) have found that learners seem to favour the L2 over the L1 as a source of function words. Our finding does not confirm this fact, as the learners' L1 was the main source of transfer of function words. However, the reason why our results are different might be due to the variables involved, such as typological relatedness between languages (in our study there was a Slavic, Germanic and Romance language) as well as typological similarity between languages perceived by the learners.

Our finding is similar to the findings reported by Jarvis and Odlin (2000, as cited in De Angelis, 2005) who found that Finish speakers with English and Swedish as L2s and Swedish L1 speakers with English and Finnish as L2s were influenced by their L1 in the use of prepositions.

Whereas in the study by Letica Krevelj (2012) cross-linguistic awareness was found to exist in relation to lexis, no cross-linguistic awareness of prepositions was found in this study. This might be due to the fact that in her study the participants were asked to comment further on particular lexical items, from which the author was able to identify cross-linguistic awareness of content words. However, when asked to comment on difficulties they had in translating the task and making corrections if necessary, the participants were referring both to lexis and function words (prepositions). The question stays whether cross-lingusitic awareness of prepositions would have been found if they were asked to comment on particular function words.

At the level of production, almost all participants knew the prepositions that precede a country, a city and a hotel. It is possible to assume that, although prepositions are an aspect of grammar that most learners struggle with in Italian, in these three cases the students performed well due to their explicit knowledge of the prepositional rule. Generally, the results showed that most mistakes were due to prepositions which merge with an article and

lack of knowledge of collocations. This deficit could be overcome by raising awareness of prepositions and their collocations in the classroom.

Another point that showed to be problematic in the production were phrasal verbs and idioms, which were translated literally, e.g. *non potevo aspettare per* (instead of *non vedere l'ora di* ([Eng. I couldn't wait for]), which has a Croatian equivalent *jedva sam čekao da.* Furthermore, only two out of nine students knew which preposition collocates with the verb *to participate in* ([It. *partecipare a]*).

From the data provided by retrospective interviews, it emerged that all learners possess high level of MA and that MA is very important in error detection and correction. This finding could be indicative of Jessner's EMM, the monitor that multilinguals possess which serves to watch and correct their language. During the reflection upon the translation, which activated their metalinguistic thinking, most participants managed to find some of the errors and remembered some expressions they couldn't remember while translating on the spot.

The results also showed that the learners with the best performance in the production of L3 translation had high proficency in the L3. The participant who had the best production of the translation has mentioned that her weak spot were prepositions. We can only assume that her excellent achievement on the task may be connected with her metalinguistic knowledge. Therefore, this study could confirm Kemp's (2001) assumption that attainment could be related to the development of explicit metalinguistic awareness and other abilities that come with language experience.

However, it is important to emphasize that there are some limitations to this study. First, there was a small number of participants and it is hard to say anything conclusive. Second, the data for this study was collected for purposes of the study by Letica Krevelj (2012) which focused on the lexical aspect of the translation. In the retrospective interview direct questions about words that were believed might cause L1/L2 interference were asked, but no such questions were posed in the case of prepositions. Third, participants were in different years of study and had different levels of language experience which might explain why some of them referred to prepositions more than others.

6.6. Conclusion

The results showed that multilingual learners possess a substantial degree of metalinguitic awareness in the use of prepositions when performing in the L3. This was manifested in three aspects – learners' reference to the prepositions, their ability to identify and correct the error, as well as in the intuition of the correctness of certain collocations. However, although the study by Letica Krevelj (2012) found crosslinguistic awareness to exist in regard to lexis, no such evidence was found in the case of prepositions alone.

Although many findings so far have suggested that learners seem to favour L2 function words over L1 function words in the L3 production, our results showed that the main source of transfer of function words was learners' L1. This was manifested in the form of syntactic and semantic calques. The calques were found in the performance of the participants who considered Italian and Croatian to be typologically close languages, which could corroborate Odlin's (1989, as cited in Jessner, 2008) assumption that the more typologically close the participants perceive the languages to be, the greater is the possiblity of transfer. Therefore, our finding could suggest that learners seem to favour function words from the language they perceive to be typologically closest to the TL.

To conclude, metalinguistic awareness is an important factor in language learning. Not only can it help learners in error detection and correction, but it can also facilitate language learning as it informs learners what is transferable from their native and non-native languages and what is not. Students should be, thus, taught to compare their language systems and in that way avoid negative transfer. Metalinguistic awareness of prepositions could be raised in the classroom by explicitly teaching and emphasizing collocations and their prepositions.

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Sažetak

Metajezična svjesnost je sposobnost usmjeravanja pažnje na strukturu jezika. Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je istražiti razinu jezične svjesnosti višejezičara u uporabi prijedloga u produkciji na trećem jeziku te njenu povezanost sa svjesnosti o međujezičnom utjecaju iz prvog i drugog jezika. Istraživanje je provedeno na devet ispitanika, studenata engleskog i talijanskog jezika na Filozofskom fakultetu u Zagrebu. Podaci su prikupljeni pomoću upitnika, usmenog prijevoda s hrvatskog jezika na talijanski jezik, te retrospekcijskog intervjua. Rezultati su pokazali metajezičnu svjesnost u uporabi talijanskih prijedloga kod svih ispitanika, što se najviše manifestiralo kroz njihovu mogućnost da isprave pogrješke u prijevodu, no svjesnost o međujezičnom utjecaju iz prvog i drugog jezika rijetko je pronađena. Najviše pogrješaka u prijevodu nastale su međujezičnim utjecajem iz hrvatskog jezika kod prijedloga u talijanskim fraznim glagolima i idiomima. Iz toga se može zaključiti, da je metajezična svjesnost važan faktor u učenju stranih jezika te bi se ona trebala poticati u nastavi stranih jezika na način da se ukazuje na svjesnu usporedbu jezika kako bi se sprječio negativni međujezični utjecaj.

Ključne riječi: metajezična svjesnost, međujezični utjecaji, treći jezik, prijedlozi

Appendix

Appendix A - Translation task

Sudjelovao sam na skupu mladih studenata u Francuskoj. Tamo sam se zaljubio u francuski. Nekoliko mjeseci kasnije kupio sam kartu u jednom smjeru i otputovao u Pariz na tečaj jezika. Jedva sam čekao da počnem govoriti francuski. Smjestio sam se u hotelu u centru. Pohađao sam tečaj izjutra, a poslijepodne sam namjeravao odlaziti u knjižnicu i čitati francuske časopise. Međutim upoznao sam Jacqueline, njene roditelje i oženio se

Ho partecipato ad un raduno dei giovani studenti in Francia. Lì mi sono innamorato del francese. Alcuni mesi dopo ho comprato il biglietto di andata e sono partito per Parigi a fare un corso di lingua. Non vedevo l'ora di cominciare a parlare il francese. Mi sono sistemato in una pensione in centro. Ho frequentato il corso la mattina e il pomeriggio avevo l'intenzione di andare in biblioteca e leggere le riviste francesi. Però ho conosciuto Jacqueline e i suoi genitori e mi sono sposato.

Appendix B - Language history questionnaire

 I Opći podaci:

1. Dob: _____

2. Spol (zaokruži): M   Ž

3. Država i mjesto rođenja: _____

4. Studijska grupa: A1_____A2_____

5. Materinski jezik: _____

6. Ostali jezici koje ste učili (po redoslijedu učenja) :

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

    4. _____

7. Poredajte jezike koje ste učili prema tome koliko iz dobro znate (1. najbolje):

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

8. Poredajte jezike koje ste učili prema tome koliko vam se sviđaju (1. najviše):

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

II Podaci o učenju TALIJANSKOG jezika:

1. Godina studija talijanskog jezika:_____

2. Prosječna ocjena na studiju talijanskog jezika: _____; na jezičnim vježbama:_____

3. Koliko dugo učite talijanski: _____

4. Koliko ste sati tjedno izloženi talijanskom jeziku na studiju: _____

5. Koliko ste sati tjedno izloženi talijanskom jeziku izvan studija: _____

6. Oblik izloženosti talijanskom jeziku izvan studija (navedite način i/ili mjesto):

_____

III Podaci o učenju ENGLESKOG jezika:

1. Godina studija engleskog jezika:_____

2. Prosječna ocjena na studiju engleskog jezika: ___ ; na jezičnim vježbama:_____

3. Koliko dugo učite engleski: _____

4. Koliko ste sati tjedno izloženi engleskom jeziku na studiju: _____

5. Koliko ste sati tjedno izloženi engleskom jeziku izvan studija: _____

6. Oblik izloženosti engleskom jeziku izvan studija (navedite način i/ili mjesto) :

_____

IV Ostali podaci

1. Ako biste morali ocijeniti govornu kompetenciju na talijanskom i engleskom jeziku, na kojem jeziku se smatrate kompetentnijim? (zaokružite slovo pored odgovora)

    A: engleski   B: talijanski

2. Ako biste morali procijeniti sličnost između talijanskog, hrvatskog i engleskog, koja bi dva jezika po vama bila najsličnija? (zaokružite slovo pored odgovora)

A: engleski i talijanski   B: engleski i hrvatski   C: talijanski i hrvatski

3. Ako ste učili ili znate još neki strani jezik (živi ili klasični) osim engleskog i talijanskog, navedite sljedeće:

Jezik: _____

Broj godina /mjeseci učenja: _____

Jezik: _____

Broj godina/mjeseci učenja. _____

Jezik: _____

Broj godina/mjeseci učenja. _____